

**Joan Marjory Kennedy**

**Isle of Wight County Press  
8 March 1924**

**TRAGIC CHILD DROWNING AT NEWPORT**

Yesterday (Friday), at about midday, an extraordinary drowning tragedy took place at Newport, the victim being Joan Marjory Kennedy, aged seven years, daughter of a naval war hero, who lost his life in the war, and whose mother, since married again, is Mrs. Andrews, of Victoria-road. The little one was playing with William Smart, another little war orphan of the same age, at the Riverside arches, above the Gasworks, when she fell into the river. In his youthful innocence, the little boy gave no alarm, but went home to dinner, and none of the men working in the yards and stores in the vicinity heard any cries for help. Smart apparently said nothing about the tragic occurrence until about 2.30, when he saw another little boy named Kennedy in the street and said "Joan fell into the water. Let's go down and see if we can see her". They apparently went to the spot without seeing the body, and proceeded to the Quay, where they were playing. Mrs. Andrews was out searching for her missing little one as she had not returned to dinner, and saw the boys. Smart said to her "Are you looking for Joan?" and when told that she was, he added "She's drowned". In reply to the distressed mother's inquiry the boy said she was drowned down by the arches, and on the mother and a friend proceeding to the spot indicated they saw the body, which had recently left by the falling tide, lying on the mud. They got the body out, and Dr. Dowdall was called and pronounced life extinct. An inquest will be held this afternoon.

**Isle of Wight County Press  
15 March 1924**

**DROWNING TRAGEDY AT NEWPORT**

**"THE IRRESPONSIBILITY OF CHILDHOOD."**

On Saturday the Deputy Coroner (F. A. Joyce, Esq.) held an inquest at the Guildhall, Newport, on the body of Joan Marjory Kennedy, aged seven, the daughter by her first husband (lost in the war) of Mrs. Maria Andrews, wife of Prison Officer T. A. Andrews, of 38 Victoria-road, Newport, who drowned under extraordinary circumstances on the previous day. Supt. J. Salter and Inspector W. Evans were present.

Deceased's mother said that the girl left home at about 11 a.m. on the previous day, and, as usual, went out to play with little Willie Smart, aged 7, they being inseparable friends. As she did not come home to dinner witness started making inquiries, and finding that she was not with the boy Smart, she went in search of Joan. She afterwards saw Smart, who said that Joan was in the river. Witness went to the River Medina above the Gas-works with Mrs. Wheeler, who, pointing into the river, said "My God, there she is". The deceased's body was only about three feet from the mud, where it had been left by the tide. Some people started artificial respiration on the body, not knowing that it had been in the water since about midday.

William Smart, aged 7, living with his grandparents at St. Paul's-view, Newport, said he went with Joan Kennedy and played on the green by the arches near the entrance to the Gas-works. Joan had a box in which she was dipping up water from the river, and she slipped into the water. He tried to get hold of her arm, but she was too far out, and as he was very frightened he ran away.—Q. Why did you not call for help?—I was too frightened.—Q. Did Joan call for help?—She did not say anything. He ran home to dinner.—Q. You were too frightened to say anything?—Yes. Later he told a little boy, Jackie Kennedy

(deceased's cousin) about it—that was about two o'clock, when they met in the road, and they went to try if they could see Joan in the river, but the tide was high, and they could not see her. He afterwards saw Mrs. Andrews and told her what had happened. When the accident happened he and Joan were the only ones playing there.—Q. No man or woman came along at the time?—No. No one went by.—Inspector Evans said that witness's grandmother said that the boy came home to dinner just before 12.

Jackie Kennedy, aged, eight, son of John Kennedy, living in the same neighbourhood, said that at about 3.30 on the previous afternoon Smart asked him to go with him to the river to see if they could find Joanie in the water, as she had fallen in in the morning. He went with Smart, who pointed out the place where he said Joan fell in under the arches. He said Joan was trying to fill up a box with water when she fell in. Smart told him not to tell any one else.

The Coroner: The irresponsibility of childhood.

Dr. J. J. Dowdall said he was passing the vicinity at about 4 p.m. on Friday when he was told that a child had fallen into the river. He at once went to the spot and saw deceased lying on the grass and men trying artificial respiration on the body. He could see that deceased had been dead for a few hours, the appearances being consistent with death by drowning.

Inspector Evans said that the men who were trying artificial respiration were, of course, unaware that the deceased had been in the water for some hours.

The Coroner said that the evidence they had heard conclusively proved the cause of death. Those two little children, very young and of irresponsible age, were playing together by the riverside when the little girl fell into the water and was drowned. He had no doubt that Smart had told him the exact truth as to what happened, and he was sure the little girl fell into the water of her own act. It was, of course, regrettable that the little boy did not call or go for help at once, but they could not possibly blame a child of such an utterly irresponsible age for that omission. He did not seem to realize what was happening, or the terrible importance of getting assistance at once. It was one of those tragedies of child life which one occasionally met with. Other children in such circumstances might have gone for help at once, but children of such a tender age did not often realise the importance of such happenings. The Coroner expressed deep sympathy with the family of deceased and returned the verdict that she was accidentally drowned.

It was pointed out that deceased could not have been seen in the river by one passing along the footpath in the ordinary way, nor by anyone in the highway, and if the child did not call out for help there was no chance of any one realising what was happening.

The Coroner said that it added to the sadness of the occurrence that a large number of men were working in the yards, stores, etc in the vicinity, who would have rendered immediate help had the child cried out. She did not seem to have called out, doubtless due to the fact that a child was soon overcome when immersed in water.

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### **NEWPORT**

**The Funeral.**—took place at St. Paul's Church and Cemetery, on Wednesday, of Joan Marjorie Kennedy, the victim of the tragic drowning fatality of last week. The Rev. Miles Atkinson officiated. There was a large attendance at the service, those present including members of the local Tent of Juvenile Rechabites, under Mrs. F. Hayward, wearing regalia, children of the St. Paul's Sunday-school, Mr. F.

Harding (representing the staff of Parkhurst Prison, where deceased's stepfather was an officer), and many others. Mrs. H. J. Way presided at the organ, and the hymn "Loving Shepherd of Thy Sheep" was sung. The personal mourners were Mr. and Mrs. T. Andrews (stepfather and mother), Mary Kennedy (sister), Messrs. P. and C. Kennedy (uncles), Annie Andrews (stepsister), and Mrs. Rugg. There were many beautiful floral tributes, those sending them including the Vicar, superintendent, and primary teachers of St. Paul's Sunday-school; the children of the Infants'-school; Juvenile Rechabites; neighbours; playmates; the staffs of Parkhurst Prison; and of Highlands, Shanklin.

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