

BLUFF FATALITY

Fate of William Burrows.

The Supreme Sacrifice.

NOBLE WORK OF LIFE-SAVING CLUB.

FURTHER light was thrown on the Bluff fatality yesterday, when the inquest was held at the Devonport Courthouse on the death of William Henry Burrows on February 16.

The inquest took place before the coroner, Mr. H. H. McFie, M.H.A. Sergeant Flude conducted the proceedings on behalf of the police.

Addressing the coroner, Sergeant Flude said Burrows was a visitor from New South Wales, who, in a gallant attempt to rescue a girl from drowning, lost his own life. The body had been discovered after 19 days, and the police had secured as much evidence as would be necessary to the bringing in of the verdict.

A Dangerous Action.

Roderick Cuthbert Barker, Uverstone, cousin of Burrows, said that in company with him he visited Devonport on February 16. They went to the Bluff, and at about 4 p.m. they walked round the track near the blowhole. Several girls were sitting in their bathing costumes on the rocks close to the edge of the water, and Burrows passed the remark that it was a silly and dangerous action on their part, on account of the huge waves breaking. Burrows had hardly finished speaking when an extra big wave swept one of them into the water. Burrows immediately stripped off his coat, and rushing across the rocks dived in at the place where the girl had been swept off. The girl was then about 40 yards from the rocks, and deceased, after swimming about 15 yards, tried to return to the shore. Witness got as close to the edge of the rocks as possible in an endeavor to assist him up out of the water, but he could not reach him. Witness was then knocked down by a wave, and could not see for about ten seconds what happened.

When next observed, Burrows was about 15 yards from the rocks. He did not appear to be in distress, and called to witness to throw a rope out. There was no rope handy, and he ran and called the Life-saving Club, who were patrolling the beach about a quarter of a mile away. He returned with them, and the life-line in about six minutes, but no sign could then be seen of Burrows. About two minutes later he saw him rise on the top of a wave about 60 yards out. He raised his hand to witness, and then disappeared. Deceased, who was aged 24 years, was a farmer, of Lockhart (N.S.W.), and a single man. He was in Tasmania on holiday. Witness could definitely identify the skull discovered at the Bluff as that of Burrows. Deceased as a boy had an accident off a horse, resulting in the skull being crushed in a certain spot, leaving a hole over the right eye. Doctors did not give Burrows much hope of living at the time, and no plate was inserted. There was also a disfigurement over the right eye. The trousers, braces, a shoe, collar and tie, and part of a shirt were identified as those worn by Burrows on the day of the fatality.

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A Strong Swimmer.

Continuing, Barker said Burrows was a very strong swimmer, but unused to seawater. The sea was very rough that day, and by the way in which the girl was taken out and the difficulty Burrows experienced, he would say there was a strong current running.

Dr. E. J. Addison stated that he made an examination of a skull, arm bones, and various other bones at the morgue on March 14. All the bones he recognised as human, and apparently those of an adult male. Judging from appearances and the portions of the ligaments and other tissues still attached to the bones he would say that they had belonged to a person whose body had been in the sea some weeks. The skull was denuded of all tissues and in it there was a hole. This hole, more or less circular in shape with a diameter of about that of a penny, was situated in the temporal fossa just behind and on a level with the outer corner of the right eyebrow. It had all the appearances of being the result of an old injury, and would serve as an excellent means of identification of the remains of any person who had met their death under similar circumstances. The hole in the skull further, in his opinion, could quite possibly have been at least a contributing factor or cause in the drowning of deceased. Though not aware if Burrows was accustomed to diving into water or not, one could easily imagine him plunging in with head somewhat inclined to the left side, thus meeting in addition the force of an oncoming wave, causing temporary concussion and paralysis, with fatal results.

Wanted a Shower Bath.

Sylvia May Hamilton, aged 15 years, residing with her parents, William street, Devonport, stated that at 4 o'clock she was seated on the rocks on the beach side of the Blowhole in company with two other girls (Sheila Treanor and Doreen Shaw). The three of them had been in bathing at the beach, and walked round the rocks. Witness saw the spray caused by the waves dashing against the rocks, and suggested that they go closer and have a shower bath. They were sitting on the rocks, when an extra large wave washed witness down into the sea. Sheila Treanor caught hold of her hand as she was falling, but had to release her grip as she was in danger of being pulled in also. Witness called out for help and as she was being carried out she saw Burrows running across the rocks towards the spot where she had been sitting. He threw off his coat, and entered the water when she was about 12 yards out. That was the last she saw of him. Witness could not swim, but managed to tread water, and could feel herself being carried out. After going out about 120 yards she was rescued by Mr. Asa Morris, of the Devonport Surf Life Saving Club and brought in on the life-line by Mr. Bert Robinson, another member of the club. She was quite conscious and remembered everything that happened.

Finding Skull and Bones.

William Austin Holloway, laborer, gave evidence of finding the skull and other bones. He had made a search every day since the drowning fatality. At 7 p.m. on

bones. He had made a search every day since the drowning fatality. At 7 p.m. on March 7 he saw the skull floating in some seaweed on the east end of the beach about half a mile in a direct line from the scene of the accident. He had since that date found various other bones.

Brave Life Savers.

Constable V. Webberley said that at 4 p.m. he was on duty at the Bluff, and hearing of the accident proceeded to the rocks where he saw Sylvia Hamilton in the water about 100 yards out from the shore. He witnessed the rescue effected by the Devonport Surf Life-saving Club, and was informed of the facts of the case. After notifying Senior Constable Woodorth, he with others commenced a search for deceased's body. Several of the life savers at great personal risk dived into the water and swam round in an endeavor to locate the body. The search was continued till that night, and since that date he had made a daily search from the Bluff to the Don heads. On February 21, in company with deceased's father he carried out dragging operations, but without result. On March 8 and subsequently he found a number of human bones and portions of clothing.

This concluded the evidence, and the coroner immediately returned a verdict of accidental death.

The coroner added that he would like to record his appreciation of the heroic effort made by the deceased to save the life of a stranger, and to extend sympathy to the parents in the loss of such a brave and noble son. He had ably kept up British traditions, and he felt that the sympathy of the whole community had been aroused. He congratulated the Devonport Surf Life Saving Club on their very good rescue under such difficulties. The club was doing a very useful service.

The police were also complimented on their work, and the efforts made to find the body; also Mr. Holloway for voluntary assistance.

Sergeant Flude endorsed the coroner's remarks on behalf of the police, referring to the very noble act of the deceased and the work of the Life Saving Club.

Mr. R. C. Barker, on behalf of the parents, expressed appreciation at the excellent work done by the police of Devonport in connection with the finding of the body.