

Edith Catherine Way

1865 England, Wales & Scotland Census Carisbrooke, Isle of Wight, Hampshire, England

Name	Relationship	Age	Occupation	Birthplace
William W Way	Head	57	Agent, Fire & Life Co.	London, Middlesex
Adelaide L Way	Wife	53		London, Middlesex
Adelaide M Way	Daughter	25		Newport, Hampshire
<i>Edith C Way</i>	<i>Daughter</i>	<i>20</i>		<i>Newport, Hampshire</i>
Ada Jane Way	Daughter	17		Newport, Hampshire
Emma Jones	Servant	18	General Servant	Newport, Hampshire
Broadley W Way	Grandson	3	Asst. Supt	Newport, Hampshire

Hampshire Advertiser 15 April 1865

MELANCHOLY DEATH OF A YOUNG LADY BY DROWNING IN THE RIVER MEDINA

On Tuesday, about 2 o'clock in the afternoon, the whole town was shocked by the sad intelligence that Miss Edith Catherine Way, second daughter of Mr. William Whitehead Way, of Sydney Lodge, Shide, near Newport, a retired grocer of this town, had been found drowned in the railway lock, at Broken-bridge, Hurststake, on the west bank of the river Medina. The deceased, who possessed considerable personal attractions, was remarkable for her high spirit and vivacity. The coroner, Mr. F. Blake, held an inquest, on view of the body where it was lying, at the Ship and Launch public house, at Hurststake, at half-past 6 o'clock the same evening. The jury, consisting chiefly of tradesmen of Newport, chose for their foreman, Mr. C. Dudley, of High-street, silversmith, and then proceeded to view the body, which presented the appearance of a beautiful piece of marble statuary.

Elizabeth Church, being sworn, said I am the domestic servant to Mr. William Whitehead Way, of Sydney Lodge, near Shide. The dead body now lying here is that of Miss Edith Way; she was my master's daughter, and lived with him and her mother at Sydney Lodge. I have been servant there a month; my sister was servant there and I took her place. Deceased was on a visit at her sister's at Chichester, when I entered Mr. Way's service, and she did not come home till last Thursday fortnight. I had not known her before then. She had not been very well, and has been very low spirited ever since she came home. She was very poorly and very silent but would not own it to her friends. She sat about by herself, and never cared to speak to anyone. She had no disagreement or quarrel with anyone that I know of. I saw her this morning first about 9.30, and when she last left home I saw her go out of the gate, and then she appeared the same as usual. She had her breakfast with her father. At about 12 o'clock she came down stairs, and went straight out of the gate. She had not been out before this. I observed nothing in her appearance different from what I had seen recently. She was not in the habit of walking out alone. She had been out to church but twice since she came home, and last Saturday week she went with her sister to the railway station to see her off for London. Mrs. Way said deceased was going to pay a bill in Newport this morning. I was with Mrs. Way when deceased went out. I have never known deceased walk down this way. She was in the habit of wearing a watch and chain. I do not know that she was wearing them this morning. We expected her home to dinner at 2 o'clock today. She wore her usual dress. She has not had any medical attendance. She said to her mother last Friday, she was very well in

health, but was very miserable. She did not say anything about the cause of her being miserable. She ate but very little.

Mr. W. W. Way said—Deceased was my daughter. She was about 23 years of age. Her health had been good, but her spirits fluctuating like other young people's. I have not observed that she has been desponding lately, though I have seen a good deal of her. She has complained of boils and toothache, but not mental affliction. I have seen nothing in her to excite my anxiety, and I know of nothing likely to cause in her any depression of spirits. She breakfasted with me this morning, and took her mother's breakfast up to her room. At breakfast she appeared cheerful as usual, and I talked with her for some time after breakfast about gardening. She had been cutting a creeper around the house, and, as I understand, intended to finish the cutting this afternoon. I was about the house when she left home this morning, but did not see her leave. Her mother, last evening, told her to go this morning and pay some bills in Newport, and made particular mention of a railway bill respecting her married sister, Ada, at Chichester. Deceased had been in the habit of walking out alone when her sister has been away from home. Her mother used to get her to go out and pay bills. I saw deceased about 11.30 this morning, and talked to her. Last summer she would often walk along the west bank of the river to Dodner and return home by the Cowes road. She did this last summer two or three times a week. I think she had rings in her ears this morning. She was wearing her chain this morning, but I cannot say that she had her watch. I know nothing of a conversation between deceased and her mother on Friday, spoken to by the witness, Elizabeth Church, my servant.

Mr. Edwin Way, corn factor, of High-street, Newport, said I knew the deceased and conversed with her in the street by my shop this morning about 12 o'clock. There was nothing remarkable in her manner or appearance. I do not know whether she was then wearing a chain or not. I believe she went away down Quay-street.

John Sweatman, living at Oyster Shell House, near Shide, said—I am a labourer at the cement mill of Messrs. Francis, at Dodner. Today, about 12.45, in my dinner hour, I was sitting in the window of this public house, when I saw deceased walking along the public path by the house; she was going down towards the cement works. I noticed nothing particular in her pace or manner. There were three portions of the hand-rail gone from Broken-bridge when I passed over the bridge on my way to dinner today, and there was nothing to steady persons passing over the railway lock except the uprights for the bridge rail at intervals, and at that part there is but a single plank, 9 inches wide, to walk on, and that plank is worn hollow in the middle. The carpenters, who had removed the old portions of the rail for the purpose of putting up new, had gone to dinner when I passed over to my dinner. I was at dinner here sitting in the window with other men at about ten minutes past 1 o'clock, when a man came up to us in haste, and said there was a young lady drowned at Broken-bridge. Four of us immediately ran away down to the bridge, and I jumped off the bridge and lifted the lady's head out of the water; it was lying on the mud, about 2 feet under water; the feet were lower down in the lock, about 4 feet under water. The body was about seven feet eastward from the part of the bridge where the portions of rail had been removed. The tide, which was on ebb, had gone down about a foot. I saw that she was quite dead. Froth and water were issuing from her nose and water from her mouth. I did not notice that she had earrings. The body was in the same state when Mr. Superintendent Horan, of the county police, came, as when we took it out of the water. I ran to Newport for Mr. Horan, and left my three companions in charge of the body. The body was warm when we took it out of the water. We made no attempt to restore animation. I turned the body over to let the water run off. I could see no signs of life, and believed that she was quite dead. The planks to walk on at the bridge are condemned planks, in which a rough groove has been worn by wheelbarrows at the cement works, and the bridge is kept in repair by Messrs. Francis, merely for the accommodation of their work-people.

David Lale, a labourer at the cement mills, said,—I was crossing the bridge today, on my way from the mill to dinner, about 12 minutes past 1 o'clock, when, on looking round as I was just leaving the part over

the railway lock, I saw the lower part of a lady's dress standing up above the surface of the water in the lock. I felt some fright at the time, and instead of going in and trying to get the body out, I ran to the public house and gave the alarm. There was no chain or earrings about the body when it was brought out of the water.

William Grant, the carpenter employed in repairing the bridge, said,--I did not return to the bridge to resume the work of repairs today till 1.30 p.m., as I went, after dinner, to look out some planks for the purpose of widening the footway of the bridge at the part where there was but a single plank of 9 inches wide. When I got to the bridge I saw the body lying on the ground in charges of some men. The formation of this lock or gully, for the purpose of carrying off the water from the railway embankment, necessitated the lengthening of the bridge. I know that Messrs. Francis, of the cement works at Dodner, have repaired the bridge for the accommodation of their work-people, from time to time, during the last four years. I saw no chain or earrings on the body.

William Lock, another labourer at the cement works, said,--I assisted in getting the body out of the water and removing it to this house. I saw no chain or earrings on the body.

Alfred John Dore, of Upper St. James's-street, Newport, carpenter, said,--I was at work at the boat-house, here at Hurststake, today, up to one o'clock. I knew the deceased by sight as being Miss Way. As I was passing homeward from the boat-house, by what is called the "Toad" Pond, where there is a raft of timbers, I saw deceased standing out on the floating raft at the further end from the shore, and I noticed that her weight caused the timbers to dip. When I got opposite to her she began to walk. I went on and on looking round towards her, I saw that she stood in the same place on the raft when I had first seen her. There was nothing in her manner calculated to attract particular attention. I merely thought it strange for a lady to be out there alone, but there were some children getting into the water not far off, and I thought she was looking at them.

Mr. George H. Dabbs, retired staff surgeon, R.N., said,--I saw the body of deceased at this house a few minutes before 5 o'clock this afternoon. She was dressed for walking, her hands were gloved, and on her head was a small hat. She was quite dead. There was a slight lividity of countenance. The clothes, which were not deranged, were perfectly saturated with moisture. I examined the body very carefully, and found no appearance of injury on any part of the body. I have no doubt that death resulted from suffocation by drowning.

Mr. Superintendent Horan, of the county police, produced some *cartes de visite* and letters found in deceased's pocket, but there was no letter or paper found, which bore on the sad subject of the enquiry. He had received no information that the chain and earrings, which the deceased normally wore were missing from her home.

The coroner, in summing up the evidence adduced, said there appeared to be nothing in the evidence which would lead to a suspicion that deceased had come to her death through violence offered by any other person; the jury would, therefore, have no difficulty in arriving at the conclusion as to finding that deceased was found drowned. The other point for their consideration was as to how, or by what means, deceased came in the water, whether by accident, or of her own will, with an intention of destroying herself. On the one hand, supposing that she attempted to pass over the bridge at the lock in its then condition, which they had seen would be a highly dangerous passage for a female, there was the probability that she fell into the water by accident. On the other hand, there was the evidence, given by the young servant in a very straightforward manner, as to the depression of spirits she had observed in deceased during the three weeks she had known her, and her expression of being miserable; though the father of the deceased did not appear to have noticed any evidence of mental depression, and knew of no cause which would be likely to produce such depression. Added to this there was the evidence of her being seen within a very short time before the discovery of the body in the water far out on the raft of

timbers. This was an extraordinary position for a young lady when alone, and would seem to favour a suspicion that, at that time, she was contemplating suicide. In his opinion there was no sufficient evidence on the one side or the other for them to arrive with safety at a conclusion as to how, or by what means, deceased came into the water. If the jury were of that opinion, their verdict would be “Found drowned, but as to how, or by what means, she came into the water there was no evidence to show”.

It is but fair to state that some of the jurors at once expressed their concurrence in the opinion given by the worthy coroner, who pursues these sad inquiries with exemplary care and impartiality.

The jury, after about half an hour’s consultation, returned a verdict of “Accidental death”. They requested the coroner to append to their verdict an expression of regret that whoever was liable to keep in repair this Broken Bridge, for the use of the public, should be so wanting in care for the safety of the public as to leave the bridge in its present condition.

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