



Otago Witness , Issue 2762, 20 February 1907, Page 34

A **drowning** accident resulting in the death of two boys named William Ernest Mullany and Thomas Curran occurred at Lake Waihola yesterday afternoon at about half-past 2 o'clock. Particulars supplied by our Milton correspondent and a young man who was present at the time show that three small boys who were attending the Christian Brothers' School picnic were bathing in some shallow water close inshore on the lake, when a flat-bottomed dinghy came floating by. The dinghy was floating bottom upwards, and the boys got on to it, and amused themselves in this way for some time, unconscious of the fact that the dinghy was drifting into deep water. The three boys, it appears, eventually realised the position, and jumped or slid off the bottom of the dinghy, and found themselves in 7ft of water.

The boy Curran, who was about 12 years of age, and who resided at Kensington, on getting into deep water became frightened and lost confidence, and one of the other boys went to his assistance, but owing to the depth of the water and the struggles of Curran had to let him go and swim to the shore to save himself from **drowning**.

Ernest Mullany, (a son of Sergeant Mullany, of Port Chalmers,) who was bathing by the shore, saw the danger, and promptly went out to the distressed boy's assistance For this purpose he swam out some 300 or 400 yards, and succeeded in reaching Curran, who unfortunately seized him round the neck, and both boys sank together and were drowned. Mullany, who was a strong swimmer, was 14 years of age, yesterday being his birthday.

When the news of the accident became known, all the available boats on the lake were immediately put in requisition, and the place where the accident occurred was dragged with fishing nets and other appliances, and at about 8 o'clock both bodies were recovered, when it was found that Curran had his arms linked closely round Mullany's neck.

Sergeant Mullany proceeded to the scene as soon as possible after receiving news of the accident. The lake is reported to be very shallow at the present time, and it is stated that a man walked right across it about a fortnight ago.

The committee which has been appointed to collect subscriptions with the object of establishing a permanent memorial of the self-sacrifice of William Ernest **Mullany**, who lost his life at Waihola on Tuesday last, has already prepared a circular to be addressed to the various schools and athletic organisations in the district soliciting their assistance. The circumstances surrounding young **Mullany's** death, as recorded by Father Coffey at the public meeting, were of such a nature as must appeal forcibly to the imagination of the entire community. It was pointed out by Father Coffey that **Mullany's** action was not one of sheer, blind, recklessness the lad was conscious of the risk he incurred, and at no time in his vain endeavour to save the life of his young friend Curran did his presence of mind deter him. He was actually clear of Curran twice, and gallantly, and with remarkable pluck, returned to the assistance of the latter lad. It is evident, further, that he endeavoured to support Curran on his back, for, when the bodies were recovered, young Mullany's head rested on Curran's chest, and his right arm was held round Curran's body. But the legs of the two boys were so firmly interlocked, and Curran's left arm so tightly encircled **Mullany's** neck that the failure of the hero's efforts is clearly explained. It is satisfactory to know that the memorial is to take a form which is calculated to encourage the practice of swimming and life-saving in all the schools of the district.

Otago Witness , Issue 2762, 20 February 1907, Page 47

Otago Witness , Issue 2762, 20 February 1907, Page 34

THE INQUEST.

The inquest on the bodies of Thomas Curran and William Ernest Mullany was held at Mr Paterson's house, Waihola, on the 13th before Mr Alexander S. Patterson, J.P., acting-coroner. William Ahern deposed that he left Dunedin with Curran to attend the picnic. Curran left him about 11 a.m at the picnic, but met him again with McKay at 2.15 p.m. at the point close to the lake. He (Curran) asked them, to go for a bathe. They went out into the water and paddled about for a while. Then they saw a small black punt, and got into it. Mullany was not there. They did not notice the boat was drifting, she was in shallow water when they got in.

There were no oars in the boat, which was pretty full of water. When they stood up the boat turned, over, and all were thrown into deep water.

Witness could swim, so could McKay, and they understood Curran could swim also. When Curran got on the keel the boat righted itself, and Curran was thrown on to McKay's neck, but let go again.

They called out to the people on shore, and McKay and witness swam to another boat, about 10 yards away. They saw Mullany swimming out to Curran about 10 yards away from them. Mullany grabbed Curran round the waist to rescue him. Curran caught him round the neck, and they were struggling towards the boat, and witness tried to push the boat towards them.

Curran seemed to get right up out of the water, and seemed to be leaning on Mullany. There was nobody coming from the shore, and they swam to the shore. Mullany was under the water, but his arms were out of the water.

The two sank two or three times and then finally sank. Before Mullany came up to Curran, he (Curran) was struggling in the water. Jerome McKay (14 years of age), residing in South Dunedin, gave evidence to the same effect as the previous witness. He said they had about 30 yards to swim to get to shallow water. There were a lot of people on the shore, but they were nearly all children, except Mt Rogan, who waded out up to his neck.

Mullany and Curran were under the water at this time. Peter Rogan said he was a school teacher residing at Caversham. He heard from someone that there was a boy **drowning**, and went to the lake. He saw the boys struggling in the water. They were about 70 yards from shore. Mullany got free for a moment, and tried to draw Curran towards the yellow boat.

When he got 80 yards from the shore into the water the boy had disappeared. It appeared to him that Mullany let go of Curran and went to his assistance again then let go again, and again returned to him with the intention of getting him along to the yellow boat. Finally Curran caught hold of Mullany, and they both sank. Witness could not swim. With the assistance of a raft he went as far as he could, but was told from shore that swimmers were going out. He gave the alarm to some ladies in a boat, but the ladies did not seem to realise that anything serious had occurred. From the time of the accident till the bodies were recovered Father Coffey, Bro. Brady, and others kept a continuous search.

The jury returned a verdict That the boy Curran met his death from accidental drowning, and that Mullany lost his life in trying to rescue Curran.