

WILLIAMS David

notes curated by John McAlpine

Little is known of **David Williams**, other than he was a sailor, aged approximately 30, who (at the time of his death) worked as a sailor on the waters of the Manukau Harbour, and at South Head near the mouth of the harbour.

Following his death (see the report of the Inquest below) David was buried in the **Saint Peter's Church Cemetery**, Onehunga, 16 June 1865.

See also the biography of **Charles Moore (jnr)** on this website.

Daily Southern Cross: 17 June 1865

FATAL BOAT ACCIDENT: DEATH FROM COLD AND EXHAUSTION.

CORONER'S INQUEST.

A coroner's inquest was held at one o'clock yesterday, at the Royal Hotel, Onehunga, by Dr. Philson, on the body of **David Williams**, whose body was found, apparently drowned, in a boat, near Weekes' Island (*now Puketutu Island*) in the Manukau Harbour.

The following is a list of the jurors enrolled to try the case: Messrs. Pittar, Hoskings, Charman, Simpson, Garrett, Taprel, Cowell, Parnall, Spaulding, Johnson, Forbes, Heyers, Norton, Madden, Raven, and Leahy. Mr. Taprel was chosen foreman. After viewing the body, the jury returned to the room; and after the names had been called over, William Groom, the first witness, deposed:

I am a farm labourer and live at Ihumatao. When I went home from work on Monday last, at about 5 p.m. I was informed that a boat had been seen drifting in towards the beach by Mr. Ellet, at whose house I am lodging. The boat was seen near Weekes's Island and appeared heavily laden. It was very rough that night. I did not go to look after it, but at two o'clock next morning I took a dingy and went by moonlight in search of the boat. I went round Weekes's Island, and found the boat lying upon the rocks, full of water, and I saw something dark on one of the seats. It looked like a lump. I put my hand on it to move it, not knowing what it was, when the keel came above water, and I saw it was the body of a man. I dropped it at once and made the boat fast to the rock by the painter, and went home; and after getting breakfast, went over and informed the police at Onehunga of the affair. Afterwards I heard that Mr. Robinson had on Tuesday been to the place, to see if he could recognize the body. I again went over to the boat with Sergeant Robinson and his son, and found the boat tilted over, and part out of the water, and what remained was of a red colour, evidently blood and water. The body was lying on the face, and the side of the face visible on my second visit. It was clothed. I did not examine the pockets. My attention was drawn by Sergeant Robinson to one of the pockets of deceased hanging out. It was the right-hand pocket. I do not know deceased. There was outside the boat a mast and sail lying alongside. The painter was hanging out. There were neither oars nor rowlocks.

Constable Smith deposed:

I am a constable in the armed police and am stationed at Onehunga. On Tuesday last, between eleven and twelve o'clock, I received information, given by last witness, that a dead body had been found in a boat at Weekes' Island. Constable Lloyd and myself proceeded to the spot in the Customhouse boat, and went to the place, but owing to the tide being low were unable to get to the place. Accordingly next day, Wednesday, I took a boat and proceeded to the spot, and reached the boat at a little after 1 p.m., and found the boat over the rocks. It was a small boat, painted white, and with a square stern. By over the

rocks, I mean that the boat was afloat over the rocks. The boat was close to the shore. On examination, I found the body of a man in the boat, lying on the thwarts of the boat, with his back up and his face and feet touching the floor of the boat. The head was much lower than the back; the face was under water. I looked at the body. I recognised the body as that of David Williams, a seaman, who has been living at Onehunga for some time. His face was pock-marked. I did not see any marks of violence on the body. I saw blood in the water. I think the blood must have come from his nose. The body was clothed in grey tweed trousers, secured with a belt. The right pocket of the trousers was hanging out. It had a small hole in it. The left pocket appeared worn out of the trousers altogether. He had a blue serge smock, and a white flannel shirt near the skin, also short-laced boots on the feet. The body was not decomposed and had been about two days in the water. There was nothing else in the boat. The mast and sail were between the boat and the rock. The sail was a small one and was made fast apparently from the top of the mast to the bow of the boat. I brought the boat and body in tow to Onehunga, where they now lie. The body is deposited in the stable of the Royal Hotel. I should think deceased is between 20 and 30 years of age. I do not think he has any relations at Onehunga. I do not think that deceased was murdered. I saw no marks of violence on him.

James McPike deposed:

I am a labourer, living at Onehunga. I knew deceased. I have known him for two or three months. I think he was a sailor, but he has been working at the South Head for Captain Windle during the last month. I last saw him alive on last Sunday afternoon, between three and four p.m. He was then in the boat getting ready to go away in the same boat as that which I was afterwards shown as the boat in which he was drowned. The boat belongs to Hugh Evans, the pilot. Charles Moore was with him when he went away in the boat. Charles Moore is a carpenter and employed at the Heads also. Charles Moore has been missing ever since Sunday. I was speaking to deceased on Sunday about half-an-hour before going away. Moore was sober, but deceased was rather the worse for liquor. I saw them leave the beach. Moore was rowing with paddles. There was a sail and mast in the boat. The wind was light and from the north-west at the time. They were quite competent to manage the boat. I watched them for about 400 yards. There did not appear to me to be any danger. There were two dogs on board - a Newfoundland and a terrier. Nothing has been heard of the dogs. I heard the men were missing on Tuesday about 12 o'clock. I saw them on Wednesday, when they came in on the beach, and identified the body of David Williams. I do not know if the dogs could swim ashore. The large one had a heavy chain on. I believe deceased died from wet and cold, and not from drowning. I think the boat may have turned over and pitched both men and dogs out, and that deceased clung to the boat till she grounded on the sandbank, and then righted her and got in. I do not think they were sailing. I think the boat filled. I do not think deceased was murdered. The missing man has left a wife and five children at Onehunga.

The jury, after considering for a short time, returned a verdict of: "Found dead in a boat, which was washed ashore at Weekes' Island, on Tuesday, June 13th instant. No marks of violence were found on the body."