

Tragedy as West Parley sisters drown.

On a foggy night in January 1908, Elsie(22) and Sybil(16) Green from East Parley drown in the River Stour

THE BOURNEMOUTH DAILY ECHO. THURSDAY, JAN 22, 1908.

JAMMENT. The Parley Drowning Tragedy. FUNERAL OF THE VICTIMS. IMPRESSIVE SCENES.

Mr. Deacon, stated to have the most remarkable with Miss Rebecca and I follow the same...

Important Case at Southampton. BOSCOMBE BUTCHER PROCEEDED AGAINST UNDER DEBTORS' ACT.

At the Southampton Police-court today an important case under the Debtors' Act came on for hearing. Defendant was Charles Adair, of Queen's Road, Bournemouth, and the charges against him were that within four months before the commencement of a bankruptcy petition by himself on June 19th, 1907, he unlawfully, by false representations and other means, had obtained from George Kenneth Reynolds, auctioneer, certain property, namely, sheep and cattle, on credit, and had not paid for the same; also that on the same date he unlawfully incurred a certain debt and liability to the amount of £51 5s. 6d., did obtain credit to the amount of the said debt, and since that time had fraudulently and wilfully concealed the same from George Kenneth Reynolds, a creditor of the defendant.

STOP-PRESS

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RAILWAYMEN AT Annual Gathering of Station Staff

A company of about 150 met for the annual dinner of the station staff at the West Railway Station, in the Prince of Wales Hall of the Grand Hotel, on Wednesday evening last.

Portugal. THE STATE

Spain, the king of Spain, the king of Spain, the king of Spain...

OW ESCAPE

Two boys, aged 12 and 13, were seen near the river Stour, and were taken to the police station...

A WIDOW.

Mr. Deacon, stated to have the most remarkable with Miss Rebecca and I follow the same...

Elsie and Sybil Green lived in Chapel Lane, East Parley, where they were both assistant teachers in the little village school run by their mother, Julia Green. They took the afternoon of Friday the 24th of January off to go shopping in Bournemouth. A parcel and a receipt found later in the river showed they had bought two black straw hats from Bernard Knights shop there.

The day turned very foggy, and the girls crossed the river on their way back at 6.30 in the evening, taking Marshall's Ferry. This small boat ferry, the only way of crossing the Stour in 1908, was some 400 yards from the bottom of today's Church Lane. The way back to their home in Chapel Lane was across the fields, a path they knew well. However the fog was very thick, and the ferryman said he could not see the girls for more than 2 yards. Only a minute or two later Mr Griffiths, a local keeper who was walking on the north bank of the river heard a splash and a woman cry out. With his lamp, he ran to the spot and distinctly saw the two girls in the water.

the Daily Echo



the Redhill ferry, circa 1900

Wading into the river, which he said was running quite fast, he tried to get hold of one of the girls but his lamp went out. He called for help and two people came, but without lights he was unable to spot the girls again.

The girls must have set off on a well known path but gone in a circle in the fog. Sybil's body was found the next afternoon a short distance from the ferry, and Elsie's body was found 2 days later on the opposite side of the river at a spot known as Hayter's Hole. The jury at the inquest returned a verdict of death by accidental drowning and expressed appreciation of Griffiths' prompt but unsuccessful action.

The sad affair cast the neighbourhood into a pall of gloom. Their funeral took place on the 30th of January at All Saints Church, West Parley. The Bournemouth Echo reported: "The little ancient church was crowded, and in the graveyard over a thousand spectators assembled to witness the last sad rites in a tragedy, the intense pathos of which has strangely moved the whole neighbourhood."



family photo showing the Green sisters Elsie, far right, and Sybil, second right



the sisters' headstone

At that time, when Parley was just a small village and Ferndown even smaller, such a crowd was immense and showed the depth of emotion roused by this most poignant loss. The graves of the two sisters, united in death as in life, are immediately inside the entrance gate to All Saints. That of their mother Julia, who died 10 years later, is right at the back of the churchyard.

The current Rector of West Parley, the Rev. Charles Booth, held a well attended memorial service for Elsie and Sybil in January 2008, on the hundredth anniversary of their death.

Graham Shortland, now of Hereford, researched all the original material for this sad story. Julia Green was his great grandmother, and the two girls his great aunts. Graham said how pleased he was by the memorial service, and by the current restoration of All Saints Churchyard.