

Lawrence Northausen

Waranga Chronicle

1 January, 1886

The melancholy news reached us yesterday that Laurence [Lawrence] Northausen had been drowned by the capsizing of a boat at 3 o'clock yesterday morning.

From the news to hand it seems that he, John Shaw, and George Hodge were attempting to cross the Goulburn near A. McMillan's residence, at the hour mentioned, when their boat came in contact with a snag. Hodge stuck to the boat, and reached the bank in safety; Shaw also succeeded in getting out, but deceased was never seen by his companions from the time the boat turned over.

The party, it appears, were out fishing.

The body has not yet been recovered, but it will no doubt be shortly, as preparations are being made for dragging the river.

The deceased was a native of Whroo, we believe, and was highly respected as a quiet, steady, honorable man.

He leaves a wife and two young children to mourn their loss.

Waranga Chronicle

8 January, 1886

THE FATAL BOAT ACCIDENT.

The boat accident, whereby Lawrence Northausen lost his life, and a few particulars regarding which we published in our last issue, is one of most sad it has ever been our painful duty to record.

The deceased, who we might say was born and reared in Whroo, and was well known and respected as an honest and hardworking young man, left Whroo on the Monday after Boxing Day, in company with two other young men—John Shaw and George Hodge—to spend a few days in fishing and shooting on the Goulburn near Murchison.

They brought with them a small, flat-bottomed boat for the purpose of crossing the river and affording themselves the opportunity of fishing either in the lagoons or on the east side. During Monday evening and Tuesday they crossed from one side to the other several times without any mishap, although the river was much swollen owing to the recent rains, and the current was running very strong.

On the Wednesday morning early, a short time before daybreak, after taking up their night lines, the three got into the boat with the intention of crossing to the west or Murchison side of the river, where they had pitched camp, for the purpose having breakfast and then indulging in a few hours shooting before proceeding home.

Unfortunately it was destined that one of their number should never return to his home alive, for after leaving the bank about three or four yards the boat struck against a snag, turning completely over, and precipitating its occupants into the rushing stream without a moment's warning.

When leaving the bank, Hodge cautioned Northausen, who was working the boat, and was said to be able to handle it with great dexterity, against the snag, Northausen replying that he would keep her well away from it. Hodge repeated his warning more than once, but when nearly past the snag, the current caught the nose of the boat, bringing it against it and capsizing it as stated.

All three seized hold of the bottom of the boat for a second or two, Shaw, who says he felt as if he could swim to the bank, being the first to leave it, thinking it would not bear the weight of himself and companions. Shaw considered Northausen, who had repeatedly informed him that he could swim, would be able to get out as well as he, but was afraid if Hodge lost his hold of the boat he would be drowned, he not being able to swim a stroke.

Northausen appears to have left the boat almost at the same time as Shaw, as the latter spoke to him when a short distance from the bank, encouraging him to hold out as he had only a short distance to go to land. The unfortunate young man's courage, however, seems to have deserted him from the time the boat capsized, as he uttered "Oh" loudly and in a moaning way as if in great distress.

Shaw had a quantity of shot in one of his coat pockets, but nevertheless managed to reach the bank in safety, and then turned round to look for Northausen, but he was nowhere to be seen, having evidently gone down while Shaw was making his last few strokes.

The position of Hodge during this time was one of great peril, as he was carried down the stream rapidly, still clinging to the boat, his only ark of safety. Every now and then the current would carry the logs under the boat, which with so much weight on one end of it would whirl round and under the water, causing him to lose his hold for a few seconds.

His courage was fast giving way, and had it not been for Shaw, who in the meantime ran along the bank calling out to him to stick to the boat, although he could not see him, it being quite dark, Hodge, too, would probably have found a watery grave.

Shaw states that while he was calling out to Hodge he heard him say "Oh, I'll drown; I can't stick to it much longer," and shortly afterwards, when he reached the snag, "Thank God, I'm saved." The danger to Hodge, however, was not over when he got hold of the snag, as when he attempted to get on to it he found it would not bear his weight, but went under the water with him.

He then groped his way along it until he reached the western bank, after which he went for help, and it would seem that he had considerable difficulty in obtaining it, one family on which he called, to use his own words, "preferring to lay in bed than to give assistance."

Eventually he called on Mr Sumner, who at once went with him, and Shaw, whose feelings during the whole of this time it may be imagined were miserable enough, was brought safely across. Hodge next came into Murchison, gave information to the police, and then rode back to Whroo with the melancholy tidings of his companion's death.

Search was immediately instituted for the body by the police, assisted by several volunteers, including deceased's brothers and Hodge and Shaw. The efforts made, consisting of dragging, and explosions of quicksilver bottles and gunpowder under the water, were without avail, and it was not until Saturday morning about 9 o'clock that the remains of poor Northausen were discovered by Shaw caught on a snag about half a mile from where the accident occurred.

The body was as soon as possible secured and brought into Murchison, where a magisterial inquiry was held. It is worthy of mention that on Thursday afternoon a young man named Herbert Field, who is an excellent swimmer, dived several times, but without success. To show the strength of the back undercurrent at the spot, it may be stated that when Field dived on one occasion he was under the impression that he was going down the river, but to his surprise when he came to the surface he found that he had been carried several feet further up the stream.

We are informed that there had previously been four in the boat, but, to our mind it does not seem a safe boat for two, it being *very* small, and added to which its flat-bottom renders it very liable to capsize if it comes in contact with any obstruction. The place the young men had chosen as a landing and starting point on the east side, now that the water has gone down and left the snags exposed, looks a very dangerous one, there being a quantity of limbs, &c., close by the bank.

Where Shaw got out the bank is very steep and slippery, but he states that he did not experience much difficulty in getting up it.

The deceased, we believe, on two previous occasions narrowly escaped drowning, his brother William saving his life both times.

A very great amount of sympathy is felt throughout the district for the unfortunate Northausen's relatives, and especially his young wife who is left with two small children to provide for, one only about four months' old.

The funeral took place on Sunday, the remains being interred in the Whroo Cemetery.

Records indicate Mr Northausen was 27 years of age.