

***William who? ... a harbour mystery yet to be resolved ... and a
double tragedy for Captain James***

Brach 2

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The following reports are sourced from Papers Past, the National Library of New Zealand online record of newspapers.

A quick search under Braund revealed numerous reports of Len Braund the cricketer's exploits, sporting achievements by the NZ Braunds, shipping movements and much more. In amongst the details of everyday life were these reports on the demise of William Braund. Which William this was we don't yet know as he doesn't appear in the BMD reports or the drowning reports. The tragedy was widely reported and appeared in publications throughout New Zealand over the week of the accident.

Daily Southern Cross Newspaper - 15 November 1867

Boat Accident on the Manukau – Two Men Drowned

Intelligence was received in Onehunga yesterday that a fatal accident had occurred at the Manukau Heads on Sunday last, a boat belonging to the schooner 'Albatross' having capsized and two men having been drowned. One of the men was the cousin of Captain [James] Braund, of that vessel whose child was drowned on Tuesday [12th November] last in Auckland. The 'Albatross' sailed from Onehunga on the 4th instant for Nelson with timber, and must have been delayed at the Heads. The following is the letter of Constable Lloyd to Commissioner Naughton, conveying intelligence of the accident:-

"I beg to report for your information that two men belonging to the schooner 'Albatross' were drowned at the Manukau heads on the morning of Sunday [10th November] instant, by the swamping of a boat. One of the men was mate of the vessel, and I have not as yet been able to learn his name. The other was a seaman on board, named William Braund. A search has been made for the bodies, but without success. From the state of the tide at the time of

the accident, and the part of the harbour where it occurred, the bodies have most likely been carried out to sea.”

Nelson Examiner and New Zealand Chronicle - 23 November 1867

Boat Accident in the Manukau – Two Men Drowned

The Herald, on the 15th instant, says:- “Another melancholy accident has occurred, by which two men belonging to the schooner Albatross have lost their lives. The Albatross, was it appears, lying at the Manukau heads on Sunday last, which as our readers will remember, was a very rough day. The mate, named Massingham, and William Braund, the carpenter (the latter a distant connection of the master, Captain Braund), took the vessel’s boat for the purpose of going to the rocks for oysters. When leaving the schooner Captain Braund cautioned them that if they ventured they would probably have to swim for it. They, however, did venture, and the captain having taken his ship’s glass was engaged watching their progress. While doing so his hat blew off, and on recovering it and again looking for the boat, could see neither it nor the men. He at once started the vessel in direction of the spot where he had last seen the boat, but failed to discover any vestige of it. On going on shore afterwards, he conversed with some fishermen living near the spot where the accident occurred, and they informed him that they, too, had been watching the boat and that it had suddenly disappeared. There can be no doubt but that the unfortunate men have been drowned. The bodies have been searched for, but without success; and it is surmised, from the fact that at the time of the occurrence the tide was ebbing, the bodies were drifted out to sea”.

Daily Southern Cross Newspaper - 6 December 1867

Coroner’s Inquest at Onehunga

An inquest was held at Onehunga, on the 14th instant, before Dr. Philson and the following jury on the body of George Crofts Massingham, who was drowned on the 18th November. The following gentlemen were empanelled: - Messrs. Spaulding, Sidney, Mill, Foy, Pocock, Wotherspoon, Williams, Bricker, Elliot, Orm, Homes and Sharps.

The following witnesses were examined:-

William Graham, being sworn, deposed: I am a settler residing at Awhitu. On Thursday the 12th instant, I was sailing in a boat near the Papakura channel, coming into the Waiuku channel when I saw a dead body. I at once let down the sail and pulled towards it, and made fast to it. It was in a great state of decomposition. Took it to the nearest settlement, Oarua, and asked for assistance, which was refused. I then secured it to a stake, and at once sent word to Onehunga by a cutter which was bound there. Upon December 13th Captain Braund, of the schooner 'Albatross,' with his men took charge of it in his boat, and brought it up to Onehunga. The men at panorama refused to give any assistance, as it might bring them trouble.

Captain James Braund, being sworn, said: I am master of the schooner 'Albatross,' belonging to Auckland at present lying in the harbour of Onehunga. I knew the deceased; he was mate on board my vessel, from Onehunga, bound to Nelson. On the morning of the 10th November (Sunday), the vessel was lying at the Huia at anchor. The deceased and William Braund – I did not see them take the boat – took it for the purpose of going for a sail, they being some distance off the vessel when I got on deck. This was about 8 a.m. They sailed in the direction of Poponga; I saw them go round. After about three parts of an hour I saw them coming back again; they were reaching from Poponga to the other side. I then went below and lay down on the sofa. While I was below the steward reported to me that the movements of the boat were out of sight. The wind was very high, and the sea rough. The wind was about W.S.W. The day passed away without the boat returning. About 3 p.m. hove up anchor, and sailed round Poponga, where I anchored, thinking it would be easier for the boat to come there. On Tuesday morning, 12th November, Mr Henry Roe came from his father's saw-mills, and told me that some of his men were out on Sunday fishing on the rocks. They reported to him that they saw a boat sailing, and all at once she disappeared. On Wednesday night I came up to Onehunga and reported the circumstances. I have heard that that boat has been found since, but I have not seen it since. I heard in Auckland that the body was found yesterday about 10 or 11 o'clock. I am not aware that there was any one in search for the bodies. I immediately left town, and went down, and found a body made fast to a stake floating in the water. I immediately identified it as the body of George Croft. I then conveyed it to Onehunga. Mr Graham gave me every assistance in his power. The deceased had been

in my employment for nearly two years. He was quite sober when the accident occurred. He belonged to Westfield, Suffolk, and held a second mate's certificate from the Board of Trade, London dated January 27, 1864. I have not seen or heard anything of the other man [William Braund]. I believe the ballast must have shifted in the boat. The deceased was 24 years of age.

Robert Lloyd deposed: I am a police-constable at Onehunga. On the 14th November I heard that two men had been drowned down the harbour by the upsetting of a boat. On the 13th instant I heard that a body had been found. I went to Auckland and acquainted Captain Braund. I should think the body had been in the water four or five weeks, by the appearance of it.

Verdict : Found drowned in the Manukau, in a state of decomposition.