



CORONERS INQUESTS



The inquest of Edwin Jarvis

The inquest was held on Thursday by Mr. R. M. Wilson, county coroner, at the house which the deceased had inhabited. The body having been viewed, the following evidence was adduced:

Mrs. Jarvis, wife of the deceased stated that she believed that her husband was 41 last March, and he was foreman of the city scavengers. She had been married to him for about 19 years. During that time (we believed that she meant while he was away at work) she heard of him being in an infirmary or hospital for some time, owing to his having received injuries in his head through being thrown from a trap at Bath. This was after her marriage. He was only in the hospital long enough to get three cuts sown up.

George Newman, labourer, working for Mr. Rogers of Harnham, said he knew but little of Edwin Jarvis from his youth, but believed he was a Fovant man. He had been in the habit of seeing him frequently but only by his passing his (witness's) door.

On Wednesday morning at about 30 minutes to 7, he was standing close to the gate of the deceased's house, when his attention was attracted by some frightful screams, and Mrs. Jarvis rushed out of the house, and exclaimed "Jarvis has shot himself". He made as much haste as he could to enter the house and found deceased laying on his back on the floor of the room on the right hand side going in. After he had been there a few minutes, he breathed painfully 2 or 3 times. He was quite insensible. He saw the pistol produced underneath the table, and also saw that he had shot himself in the head. He was bleeding very much from a wound behind his right ear. He should say that he saw some brains lying on the table.

By a juryman; I never noticed anything particular in the appearance of the man, except a down cast look, as if he had something on his mind.

Jeremiah Moore was next called, and stated that he was of no occupation at the present, but was formerly a commercial traveller. He had lived in the house adjoining that in which the deceased had lived for more than 4 years, and Jarvis had lived in his house for about 3 years. He was in his own house on Wednesday morning, when he heard this alarm, and he hurried as fast as he could into deceased's house. Mrs. Jarvis said "Jarvis has shot himself" and a daughter said "Father has shot himself". When he came into the room in which the jury had seen the body, he saw the deceased lying on the floor, by the side of the fender. He did not die for 3 hours after, but he was insensible to everything, and should fancy he suffered no pain. He had a wound on the right side of the head behind the ear. He expired at exactly at a quarter past 10, and he remained with him the whole of the time at the request of Dr. Blackmore. When he first entered the room he saw a pistol on the floor and he lifted it up to see if the other barrel was loaded, but it only had one barrel. He had no doubt that the wound in the head was caused by a pistol shot. He believed that for the last 5 weeks the deceased had been drinking a great deal. He had noticed that whenever the deceased was under the influence of liquor he would brace himself up, probably for the purpose of not letting people know the condition he was in. He never heard him threaten self-destruction, but he had observed a kind of depression in the man, and had often remarked to his wife that something serious would happen to Jarvis one day.

The Coroner: When he didn't drink I believe he was a very good workman, and attentive to his business.

Mrs. Kate Pennell, wife of Solomon Pennell, landlord of the "Pheasant Inn", at Salisbury, stated that she was no relative of the deceased, but was acquainted with him and was friendly with his wife. During the last 4 or 5 weeks she had seen him frequently, and he seemed to be in rather a depressed condition owing to being a great deal in debt, through, she believed, betting and engaging in horse racing and other transactions.

He was in constant work, and had good wages; but she had been in the habit of letting him have money. 3 weeks ago he came to her and stated that he was in debt to some extent, and that £7 would free him, and added that unless she let him have that sum he would destroy himself.

By a juror: She had let him have money on several occasions. Some time ago he told her he had received a County Court summons for £4, and, by his request, she lent him that sum to pay of his debt.

Mrs. Jarvis was at this point of the inquiry recalled, and the Coroner inquired of her "What state was your husband in yesterday morning."

Mrs. Jarvis: Very bad, Sir.

The Coroner: Had he been drinking on Monday and Tuesday?

Mrs. Jarvis: On Monday he went to Woodford to see his brother, but, I believe, he didn't have very much then; and on Tuesday he went to work.

The Coroner: What was his condition on the Tuesday?

Mrs. Jarvis: He was very low; but he was in that condition for the last fortnight. It is a fact that he has been drinking for the last fortnight.

The Coroner: Did he go to bed on Tuesday night?

Mrs. Jarvis: Yes - In answer to further questions she said that whilst in bed he appeared to sleep well. He got up at about a quarter to six, and went downstairs without dressing himself, taking his trousers in his hands. She dressed herself as quickly as she possibly could, and followed him. When she got down he said that he was going to do away with himself, and enjoined her not to touch his trousers, as he had something in the pocket. Afterwards he took the pistol out into his hand. On former occasions he had threatened to commit suicide, but this was when he was in a low condition. The next mornings, however, he always seemed alright, and she never said anymore about it.

Dr. Blackmore deposed that on Wednesday morning, at about 7 o'clock, he was called to see the deceased, and at 10 minutes after he was in attendance on him. He was lying on the floor of the room in which the jury had viewed the body, breathing and bleeding from a gun-shot wound to right side of the head. He noticed there was small portion of the brains lying on the table. From the character of the wound in the head, the pistol must have been fired close to the skull. The pistol was lying under the table by his right hand. Deceased was dressed in his flannel shirt, collar and necktie, the collar and necktie being carefully arranged. He had no shoes and stockings or other garments on. There was soil on the bottom of his feet, which led him to suppose that he had been walking in the garden. There was no doubt in his mind that the wound was self-inflicted and he also believed from the evidence, that his mind was affected. He would not say that he was suffering from delirium tremens, but that he was in that depressed state, that he was glad to get rid of himself in any way, and that being so, he should say that it exhibited an unsound state of mind.

A juror: On Tuesday night I saw him and he said his head was bad. This was about 20 minutes to 6.

The Coroner: Did he seem to have been drinking?

The juror: He had evidently had some drink.

Another juror: He was seen walking up and down the hill in the evening.

The Coroner: If a person drinks incessantly for 2 or 3 weeks, it is very likely that it will have an effect on him.

A third juror remarked that he had passed the deceased in a passage on the same night, and by some means he fell against him. He (the juror) begged his pardon, but he made no answer, and appeared to be entirely lost.

The Coroner: I daresay if we adjourned this inquest we should simply have a corroboration that this unfortunate man has, as we can judge from the evidence of Mrs. Pennell, given way to gambling, and habits of intemperance, which have been too much for him, and he had destroyed himself.

He had been a very good workman and a very respectable man, understood his duties perfectly and had good wages; but it is bad if people give way to gambling and drinking and they cannot stand it. The only question for you to determine are, as to what state of mind was he in, when he did this; and did he know he was doing this? Or was he of unsound mind?

The jury were of the opinion that he was in a state of unsound mind, and returned a verdict accordingly.

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