



CORONERS INQUESTS



Salisbury Parish

Susannah White

“Salisbury,.... Death of an old Woman.- A painful rumour was circulated about mid-day on Sunday that a poor old widow woman named Susannah White, aged 78, had been burnt to death in her room, in Exeter Street, in this city. It appears that her son, who resides at Odstock, had been sitting with her for about an hour and a half on Sunday morning, and left her in her usual health. At about half past 12 o'clock her granddaughter, who lived with her, went upstairs to see her, but could not get into the room for smoke. She therefore, ran downstairs screaming, and Mr and Mrs Parsons, who resided on the premises, immediately went up and opened the window to let out the smoke, and threw some water on the fire. Deceased was discovered lying on the fire, with her clothes burnt, and quite dead. At the inquest held on the body, before Mr R M Wilson, coroner, at the Bell Inn, on Monday, Dr. Humphrey Blackmore deposed that he was sent for at about quarter to 1 on Sunday, and saw deceased lying in the room adjoining that in which she had been found. She was quite dead, but her clothes were still smoking. The parts of the body which were burnt were her arms and the upper part of her chest, her face being only a little scorched. There was no appearance of unequal contraction about the pupils of the eyes. On going into the other room he found two chairs, one on either side of the fireplace, undisturbed. There was but little fire in the grate, and a quantity of cinders underneath. Both the fender and cinders were undisturbed. Taking these circumstances into consideration, he was of opinion that the deceased either fainted or died from a sudden failing of the heart's action, and fell on the fire; in fact, that she must have been dead before she was burnt. Her tongue was not at all burnt, which would not have been the case if she had inhaled any flames. The neighbours living underneath heard no noise, and it was almost impossible to conceive, therefore, that if she fell, and was burnt to death, she would not have screamed. After hearing the whole of the evidence, the jury returned a verdict to the effect that deceased's death was not attributable to the effect of her being burnt, but to the cessation of the action of the heart, and that the burning took place after death.”

Hampshire Advertiser 16 Feb 1870