



SOUTH WILTSHIRE CORONER'S INQUESTS



Sutton Veny

Richard BOWER 29th September, 1911

Fox-Bite causes Hydrophobia – Death of a Wiltshire MFH

An extraordinary case of death from hydrophobia, caused by the bite of a fox, was investigated on Friday at a Coroners' inquest upon the body of Mr Richard Bower, of Crockerton, Warminster, the Master of the West and South Wilts Foxhounds. The inquiry was held by Mr F. A. P. Sylvester, the coroner for the district, at Sutton Veny, near Warminster.

From the evidence of a relative it was clear that some months ago, Mr Bower was bitten on the hand through a thick woollen glove by a hunted fox at the end of a run at the close of last season. Mr Bower dismounted from his horse to break up the fox, and as he drove back the hounds and held the fox he was bitten by the animal. A hunt servant who was present at the time stated at the inquest that Mr Bower made no complaint then about the bite. Later, however, Mr Bower mentioned it casually to friends.

Medical evidence was given by Dr Robert Lewis Willcox, who attended during the last illness. Mr Bower, he said, became ill on Monday last, and died on Thursday night at eleven o'clock. Not until Wednesday evening at six o'clock – twenty-eight hours before death – were any signs of hydrophobia manifest. Then, however, the symptoms showed, and the patient suffered from fever and great weakness.

It was almost impossible for him to swallow, and he had great difficulty in breathing. Paralysis of the muscles of the jaw ensued, with paroxysms. The patient suffered terribly. In conjunction with three other medical practitioners, Dr Willcox was convinced, after his clinical examination, that the complaint was hydrophobia.

During the interval between the time he was bitten and his death Mr Bower had been in excellent health. No signs of hydrophobia have been displayed among the hounds, some of which were bitten by the fox, nor is there yet reason to believe that other foxes in the district have been infected.

Mr Bower journeyed from London on the previous Monday to attend a meeting at the Bath Arms Hotel, Warminster, of the Hunt Committee, though he was very ill. In the evening he became so much worse that the services of medical men were requisitioned. He remained in a feverish condition until six o'clock on Wednesday evening, when he suddenly became worse and developed symptoms, which in the course of a few hours clearly manifested themselves as those of hydrophobia. Besides Dr Willcox, who was attending him, were Dr Kempe,

of Salisbury, and Mr Bower's own medical advisor from Suffolk, who arrived in the course of the morning. Mr Bower rapidly sank and died at 7.45 on Thursday evening at Sutton Veny. Mr Bower had, since his residence in Wilts, made himself extremely popular, and his death will be deplored. He came from Newbury.

The funeral took place at Stradishall, near Newmarket, on Monday afternoon, and at the same time a memorial service was held at Sutton Veny church, and was numerously attended by local sportsmen.

Extract published with kind permission from [Salisbury Inquests](#)