



SOUTH WILTSHIRE CORONER'S INQUESTS



CODFORD

Charles Hann 5th March, 1915

Story of a Camp Worker's Death

An inquest was held at Yeovil Town Hall by Mr E. Q. Louch, Coroner for SE Somerset, into the death of Charles Hann.

Charles Hann was a 57 year old bricklayer, of Penn Mill, Yeovil and had been working at Corton Camp, Codford for the past five or six weeks. He would return to his home at Yeovil for weekends.

It appears that on Friday, February 19th, he arrived home at nine o'clock in the morning "covered in mud and blood," and said that whilst walking from Codford someone came up behind him, struck him a blow on the side of the head which stunned him, and then robbed him of £2 6s which he had just taken as wages. He also said that several people had been robbed in the same way. A policeman and another person had attended to him, bandaged his head, and he left Westbury for Yeovil, but eventually found himself stranded at Dorchester for the night. He died at his home on the following Monday night, leaving a widow and seven children.

Emma Hann, the widow, stated that when her husband arrived home on the Friday morning he was smothered in blood and mud, and he made a statement that he had been way-laid and had also lost some money. A policeman attended to him, and bandaged his head with his (the policeman's) pocket handkerchief, and this he was still wearing. He went from Westbury to Dorchester by the last train, and not hearing the officials call out passed through Pen Mill Station. He went out on Friday and Saturday, but on Sunday he was seized with cold shivers and sickness, and on Monday Mrs Hann sent for the doctor. Her husband died the same evening. Answering the Coroner, she said that when her husband, the deceased, arrived home he was not drunk, but he said he had had half a pint that morning.

The Coroner: He was not a sober man, was he – he was a heavy drinker at times?

Witness – Mrs Hann: Yes, at times.

The Coroner: Do you believe the story of his being knocked down and robbed?

Witness Reply: I could only believe what he told me; I do not know whether it was right or wrong.

The Coroner read the statement made by the man, and said enquiries had been made by the police in Codford and the neighbourhood by PC J Coombes (Sutton Veny), who, in his report to Supt Scott, of Warminster, said he knew of no constable who had received a complaint of anyone being assaulted and robbed. Statements were also read by Mr Louch from Timekeeper D. Kay at the Camp, and Chas. Cobb, a foreman over Hann. The

first named stated that Hann drew a “sub” of 30s on Saturday, the 13th, on the 16th he drew £1, and on the next day, Wednesday 17th, demanded his pay, and drew £1 3s 10d. During the last part of his working there he was more or less under the influence of alcohol, and as to his statement of being robbed, all he could add that there was no such news there. The foreman (Cobb) reported that he stopped Hann at Corton Camp through his drinking habits, and that he had never heard of his being knocked about and robbed.

Dr Colmer stated that he saw deceased on Monday afternoon, when he was delirious with a high temperature. He died the same evening. In consequence of the information the witness, Dr Colmer, was given, he reported the death to the police. He made a post mortem examination on Wednesday. There was an abrasion on each side of the face, one being covered with a small plaster, and a superficial cut two or three days old in the back of the head, also covered with a plaster. There were bruises on the left arm. All the internal organs were congested, and the base of the right lung was in a state of inflammation. The liver was cirrhotic, which was found in alcoholic cause, and the blood vessels were diseased. The cause of death was pneumonia, due, in his opinion, to exposure.

Answering a juryman, Dr Colmer said the police did not use a handkerchief, but a triangular bandage.

The Coroner, in summing up, pointed out that the man left his work on the Wednesday and did not arrive home until Friday, and it was possible he got into a row somewhere during Thursday.

The jury returned a verdict in accordance with the medical evidence, and gave their fees to the widow.

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