



SOUTH WILTSHIRE  
CORONER'S INQUESTS  
(Dinton extracts)



**Frank PLOWMAN      23<sup>rd</sup> December, 1894**

***Dinton – Suicide on the Line***

An inquest was held by Mr R. A. Wilson (Coroner) on Friday morning, on the body of 32 year old Frank Plowman, a carpenter of Barford St Martin. The deceased was found dead on the railway line, having been cut to pieces by an express train on the South Western Railway between Dinton and Wilton Stations.

Alfred John Brazier, a plumber, from Wilton, identified the remains of the deceased as those of his brother-in-law. Plowman had been living at Barford St Martin for about 15 months with his father. He had previously been in the army and during that time served for 3 or 4 years in India. While in India, he had a severe illness and since his return home, witnesses had noticed a strangeness in his manner.

William Blunt, stationmaster, of Dinton, stated that on Wednesday evening he received a telegram from Salisbury at 8.25 pm, to the effect that a man had been knocked down at Barford by the 6pm train from Exeter. He went to the spot, which was 200 yards from the *French Horn Inn* & saw the body lying between the two lines of the rails. There were crossings at about a hundred yards on either side, but none at the place where the mutilated body was found. Mr Blunt was not aware that the deceased & his father were in the habit of walking down the line to their premises at Barford.

William Walsh, engine driver, from Salisbury, stated he was the driver of the 6pm train from Exeter to Salisbury, which did not stop between Templecombe & Salisbury, on that Wednesday. It was not until he saw blood on the engine at Salisbury that he thought a man must have been knocked down. On referring to the guard of the train, he said he remembered something coming up against the windows about a mile & a half on the Salisbury side of Dinton. It was on that account that a telegram was sent to Dinton Stationmaster. Mr Walsh did not usually see people on that part of the line.

Albert Hunt, ostler at the Penruddocke Arms Inn (formerly called the French Horn Inn), stated that on Wednesday he was in the kitchen of the public-house having his tea, at about 6.30pm, when Frank Plowman came in. He sat down there for some time and they had a little whiskey together. During his stay Plowman said to witness, "I cannot say I am well, as my head is sometimes dreadful, and I am not accountable for my actions; I had a good mind to stop the train at Baverstock Lane." Witness asked him if he was on the line at the time he referred to, or at the level crossing, and he replied, "I meant to get in front of it." He also told witness he had had a lot of trouble in money matters, and about a love affair. He added that he would tell him something else, but hesitated, and said, "No, you will hear about it later on." He was not the worst for drink.

John Parker, woodman, of Compton Chamberlayne, said he knew the deceased, whom he saw on Wednesday about 7pm, at the French Horn Inn. Plowman called for a pint of beer, which he paid for. He then called witness aside and told him he was in trouble about paying his way, as he had some men at work. He also said he did not think he should be about those parts long, remarking that he should either do away with himself or go abroad. Witness advised him not to do any such thing. Plowman replied that he had told his mother he should not come home again. Witness then left him at the cross roads close by where the remains were found. He (witness) knew that the deceased had been keeping company with a young man.

Mr Chaloner Clay, surgeon, of Fovant, stated that he knew Plowman and had attended him professionally about three months ago, when he was suffering from depression and insomnia. He had attended him previously for the same cause. Mr Plowman, the deceased had told the doctor he could not get on with his work. He was not suffering from *delirium tremens*; it was melancholia. It was possible that the illness abroad might have affected his head.

The jury returned a verdict of suicide while in an unsound state of mind.

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