



# SOUTH WILTSHIRE CORONER'S INQUESTS



## Durrington

**HOPGOOD (Infant)**

**7<sup>th</sup> November, 1902**

### **A Charred Child – Startling Discovery at Durrington**

The South Wiltshire Coroner (Mr R. A. Wilson) held an inquest on Wednesday, touching the death of the male infant of Louise Hopgood, a single woman of Durrington.

Dr Barcroft, of Amesbury, was the first witness called. He stated that he received a wire from Nurse Turner of Durrington on Tuesday, requesting him to come to Durrington and see Louise Hopgood. He saw her at about one o'clock. She was in bed and witness saw that she had been recently confined. She owned to this, and in answer to some questions he put to her she said she had put the body underneath the stairs. Witness went to the place indicated in company with the woman's mother, and there found the body of an infant child, rolled up in some rags. The body was very much charred, and he gave information to PS Scott. Witness asked the woman no further questions. In accordance with the Coroner's instructions he had made an examination of the body that morning. It was that of a male child apparently fulltimed, very much charred. Both hands and a part of the arms were burnt off, and the whole body was so charred as to render it impossible to find any marks of injuries. On opening the chest, he found it impossible, owing to its charred state, to say whether the child was born alive. He took out a part of the lungs and it sank when put in water. He had seen the mother of the child that day and she was seriously ill and would be quite unfit to be moved for some time.

Jane Hopgood, the mother of Louise Hopgood, said her daughter was a single woman and resided at home with her. Witness was aware that her daughter was in trouble, but did not expect anything to happen for another month. On October 27th, at about 9 o'clock in the morning, she went out to work, leaving her daughter at home alone. She was not feeling well that day, and witness asked her if she should stay at home. She replied that she did not want her to remain at home with her; that she would lie down and hoped she would feel better. Witness came home at about a quarter to two. She found her daughter outside her bed, and in answer to questions she (the daughter) said she had had something, but not a child. Witness asked her what she had done with it, but she would not tell her. Her daughter got up next day, and several days afterwards. Witness could get nothing from her. On Tuesday morning, as her daughter appeared to be very ill, she went for the Parish Nurse, who sent for the doctor. Her daughter told the doctor that she had put the body in the cupboard under the stairs. Witness kept nothing in the cupboard, and had not done so for a long time. She had not been to it for months.

Frances Turner stated that she was the District Nurse. On Tuesday morning she was called to see Louise Hopgood. Witness asked her what was the matter, but she made no reply. Witness found that she was seriously ill, and telegraphed for the doctor. She did not know the woman and had not seen her before.

The jury found a verdict of "Found dead; whether the child was born alive or by what means it came by its death does not appear."

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