



SOUTH WILTSHIRE
CORONER'S
INQUESTS



Larkhill

Charles SARGENTSON **10th November, 1916**

Fatal Skylarking – Soldier's Death after Bayonet Wound

The tragic sequel to some skylarking which took place in a hut at Larkhill Camp between some Australian soldiers, resulting in the death of Private Sargentson, was related to the Coroner for South Wilts (Mr F. H. Trethowan) and a jury at Fargo Military Hospital on Monday.

Second-Lieutenant E. Feiter, of the Australian Imperial Force, said that Private Charles Edward Sargentson was 38 years of age, and his home was in Victoria, Australia. On the previous Thursday he was in hospital suffering from a bayonet wound which he said was caused by a pure accident. He never had any reason to suspect that there was any bad feeling between Sargentson and Private Williams, who, he understood, caused the wound. Lance-Corporal Mackenzie said that on Monday, October 30th, at about six o'clock, there was some skylarking going on with bayonets and rifles in their hut at Larkhill. He heard some one say "You have got one," and on looking round he saw Sargentson drop the scabbard of a bayonet and begin to unbutton his coat. When asked what was the trouble Sargentson showed him a wound in the stomach. He was shortly afterwards taken to the hospital. There was no bad feeling between Williams and Sargentson. They were the best of pals and nothing that he saw or heard led him to believe Williams intended to injure him. The light was bad at the time.

Private H. Matheson corroborated, and said that he saw Williams make a light thrust at Sargentson with a rifle and a bayonet. He saw Sargentson put out his hand, but did not see exactly what happened. Williams came to the "on guard" position and Sargentson came forward one step, not carrying a rifle. He heard Sargentson saying "you have got me," and he saw that the scabbard was off the bayonet. He was quite certain that Williams did not take it off.

Private T. W. Williams said he had known Sargentson about seven months, and they were good friends, and had never had a row. On the occasion of the accident they were all skylarking. Sargentson had put his rifle down and witness made a thrust at him in fun. He put out his hand and must have pulled the scabbard off, but he did not notice it, as it was rather dark. He made another thrust at him and Sargentson said, "You have got me" and threw the scabbard down.

Captain Woodward, of the R.A.M.C., said that Sargentson was admitted to Fargo Hospital between 5 and 6pm on October 30th. He was operated upon and did well for some days, but an obstruction was caused by his injuries which produced inflammation, from which he died on Sunday, November 5th. He told him that the affair was quite accidental.

A verdict of accidental death was returned.

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