



CORONERS INQUESTS



Ann Smith, 1866

Woman found Dead on Wexcombe Down.

An inquest was held by Mr. Whitmarsh on Saturday last, at the Nag's Head Inn, Martin, in the parish of Great Bedwin, respecting the death of a woman who had been found dead on Wexcombe Down the previous Thursday. Isaac Luffman, sergeant of the Wiltshire Constabulary, deposed, that on Sunday afternoon the 24th of December last, about two o'clock, he saw a woman at the edge of a plantation in the above parish, with several other tramps, sitting by a fire. On questioning her she told him that her name was Ann Smith, single woman, of St. Alban's, and that she was 50 years of age. Witness had seen her before. She was a hawker of small articles for sale. Having examined the body of deceased he was enabled to prove it was the same person.

Louisa Taylor, a young girl, stated that on Thursday morning last, about eleven o'clock, she, with other children, were picking up worms on Wexcombe down to cure a man's deafness, when they found a woman dead by a tree, lying on her back. Being alarmed, they went back immediately and got assistance.

John Ralph, a bailiff at Wexcombe, stated that on the children's return he went with others to the spot, and saw the deceased lying as described with two bundles by her side, one contained some clothes, &c., and the other a tin can with pieces of bread and scraps of meat. There were thirteen shillings and seven pence in her pocket.

Mr. Palmer, surgeon of Great Bedwyn, stated that he had made an examination on the spot and found no marks of violence either on the clothes or body of the deceased. Her bonnet had been blown off, but was still attached to her neck by a string having been twisted round by the boisterous weather. Her shoes were off her feet, and lying near her. She might have been dead a week or ten days. She died apparently from exposure to the late severe weather.

The jury returned a verdict accordingly.

Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette, 25 January 1866