



## **Thomas Cooper – Attempted Suicide**

### **“Charge of attempted suicide at Salisbury”**

#### **Wiltshire Farm Labourer cuts his throat**

An elderly farm labourer named Thomas Cooper, of Coldharbour Lane, Amesbury, was brought up in custody at Salisbury Police Court on Wednesday, charged with attempting to commit suicide at 127, Love Lane, Salisbury, on September 23rd, by cutting his throat with a knife. The old fellow came straight from the Infirmary to the Court, and his neck was still bandaged. He was placed in a chair in front of the dock, and he listened very attentively to the evidence of the several witnesses.

Dr. Fison stated that he was called to 127, Love Lane on September 23rd, and there saw prisoner with a deep wound in his neck, and the front of his clothes and his hands were covered with blood. Witness applied some antiseptic dressings, and the man was taken to the Infirmary in a cab. He knew nothing about Cooper, and had never attended him before. The police at this point produced a blood-stained pocket knife.

Dr. Fison said the wound might have been caused by this instrument, although it was rather blunt. The wound could have been self-inflicted.

Mr. Atkinson, senior house surgeon at Salisbury Infirmary, said prisoner was admitted to that institution on September 23rd, and had been there ever since. There was a deep wound in the lower part of his neck, which had opened into the lower part of the pharynx, cutting through the hyoid bone. The patient was somewhat collapsed, but was not bleeding at all profusely. There were also two small wounds in the skin to the left of the large wound. The wound was probably self-inflicted, and might have been caused by the knife already produced. Since the man had been in the Infirmary witness had not noticed any abnormal mental symptoms, but Cooper told one of the nurses that he did not wish to be let alone, because he felt that he might go mad.

Emily Julia Mitchell, a single woman residing with her mother at 127 Love Lane, Salisbury, said the defendant came to her house on a visit on September 16th, and remained there until the 23rd. On the morning of the 23rd the prisoner went for a walk, returning at half past ten, when he went to an outhouse. He remained there so long that witness went to see if he had been taken ill. She just tapped at the door when she heard a gurgling noise, and she called out “Tom, what is the matter?” He replied “It won’t be very long.” She then opened the door and saw blood streaming from his neck down to the floor. She said “Tom, what have you done?” but he did not answer. Witness went at once for a doctor. Dr. Fison was at the house before she returned. During the time Cooper had lodged at her house he had never threatened to commit suicide, and he had been a quiet abstemious man. She had known him for some time.

Caroline Chambers, widow, of 127 Love Lane, also gave evidence. She said the prisoner was “as nice as anything” on the morning of the 23rd, and made no complaint of being ill or depressed. He came back and went to the outhouse, and she did not see him again until he was carried through the house to the cab. He had been in good health during his stay in her house, and had not threatened to do himself any injury.

Harriett Conduit, wife of Thomas Conduit, of 129, Love Lane, gave evidence of a corroborative nature.

P.C. Andrews said he had been in charge of the prisoner at the Infirmary. On September 24th prisoner said to witness “I don’t know what made me do such a thing, but I have had a lot of worry, and I had sunstroke at the beginning of the harvest.”

P.C. Walter Cutler said he brought the defendant from the Infirmary that morning and charged him with attempting to commit suicide. He made no reply.

On being formally charged, the defendant said “I am sorry – very sorry.”

He was committed for trial to the Quarter Sessions at Salisbury today (Friday).“

**Western Gazette, Friday, 8 October 1909**