



CORONERS INQUESTS



Inquest --- A fatal accident which occurred near the New Inn, Seend, as a result of which a young farm labourer named Walter Henry Wheeler (21) was instantaneously killed. Was inquired into by the Coroner, Mr A L Forrester, on Thursday. It appears that at about 9.30 on Tuesday morning, Wheeler riding a bicycle, was driving a herd of cows along the highway near the New Inn. Hearing a motor lorry coming behind he started clearing the animals over to the left hand side of the road to allow it to pass. Just as the lorry passed him the back wheel of his machine skidded, and he was flung under the back wheel of the lorry and killed on the spot. At the outset the Coroner explained that although the inquest was arranged for the previous morning, he was unable to get from Malmesbury on account of floods. He expressed his regret to the jury, and said that such a thing had never happened to him before; it was what might be termed "an act of God". Dr Douglas Leigh Spence, of Melksham, attributed the cause of death to an extensive fracture of the left side of the skull. There was also a fracture of the right thigh. Death must have been instantaneous. Frank George Cutting, of 6 Bridewell Street, Devizes, a lorry driver in the employ of the Shell-Mex Company Ltd. stated that the lorry was loaded with 200 gallons of petrol. The deceased made an effort to drive the cows to the left hand side of the road, still on his bicycle and using his whip. As he cleared half the herd witness followed him up. Then he saw him ride on to the grass as his cab got to him. He moved on two or three yards, and knew no more till he felt the rear wheel of the lorry drop as if over a stone in the road. The Coroner said that for a man on a bicycle to drive cows was an extremely dangerous practice on main roads. He had often seen it done, and it was very dangerous. The jury, after a very brief deliberation, announced that they were satisfied it was an accident, and a verdict was returned accordingly.

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