



CORONERS INQUESTS



James Gowenlock – Suicide of a Volunteer

On Monday, an inquest was held by Mr. Whitmarsh on the body of James Gowenlock, a sergeant in the eleventh Wilts Rifles, and by trade a fitter and turner, aged 57 years, who had shot himself through the breast with his rifle. A son of the deceased stated that he had been living with his father, who on account of illness had not been able to work at the factory since Easter. He was out the greater part of Saturday, and went upstairs to his bedroom a little before eleven o'clock. Soon afterwards witness heard the crack of a rifle, when he got up, and on entering his father's room, he found him lying on a bed, covered with blood from a gunshot wound in the chest. The place was full of smoke. His mother died last September, and deceased felt the loss so keenly that it affected his mind.

Henry Smith, landlord of the volunteer, deposed that deceased came to his house last Saturday evening a little before nine o'clock, and drank a glass of beer during the half-hour he was there. He told witness he was not well, and that he had not been out for two weeks until that day. Witness had seen him depressed for some time, and more than once was afraid he would make away with himself through the loss of his wife.

Superintendent Haynes, of the Wiltshire constabulary, stated that immediately after the melancholy event, he examined the bedroom where the deceased was lying dead. He found that a rifle ball had passed through the left breast and come out at the back; it made a large hole in the wall about five feet from the floor, thence two holes in the door, and having struck the corner of a wall opposite the door, it became spent in a back room. Witness produced four pieces of the ball. One portion was embedded in the bedroom wall, and another was on the floor, another portion was outside the landing, and the fourth was at the extreme end of a back bedroom.

Mr. Swinhoe, surgeon, stated that he had attended deceased for some months with dyspepsia, accompanied with extremely low spirits.

The jury, after a lengthened inquiry, returned a verdict of "Suicide whilst under temporary derangement."

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