



CORONERS INQUESTS



Winterbourne Stoke

Mr. Cary Coles

The death took place on Friday, under tragic circumstances, of Mr. Cary Coles, of Manor House, Winterbourne Stoke, a well known agriculturist, and one who took an active part in local and county affairs. Shortly before noon on Friday he was found dead in the gun room at his residence with a gun shot wound in his head, which the coroner's jury were satisfied had been accidentally caused.

Mr. Cary Coles was very well known among agriculturists, not only in his own district and county, but in a much wider area. He was the owner of a famous flock of Hampshire Down sheep which won renown in show yards and fairs all over the country. He took the deepest interest in the perfection of the breed and in 1908 was president of the Hampshire Down Sheep Breeder's association, of which he had been a member since its inception in 1890.

The son of Mr. John Coles, a well-known farmer of the Warminster district, Mr. Cary Coles was brought up on the land, and at the time of his death was one of the largest farmers in South Wilts, his holdings aggregating between 1500 and 1600 acres. The esteem in which he was held by his fellow farmers was shown by his election as chairman of the South Wilts Chamber of Agriculture, and by his appointment to represent that body at the meetings of the Central Chamber in London.

He was a justice of the peace for the county, and as a member of the County Council did useful work, especially on Committees such as the Agricultural Education Committee. For many years he belonged to the Amesbury Board of Guardians and Rural District Council. He was president of the Shrewton Branch of the South Wilts Unionist Association.

The Inquest

The inquest was held on Saturday by the Coroner for South Wilts (Mr. F. H. Trethowan) at Mr. Coles' residence, Mr. G. A. Tillbrook being appointed foreman of the jury.

Allen Dredge Newbery Coles said that his father's name was James William Cary Newbery Coles, and he was 59 years of age. For the last five years witness had been acting as bailiff to him and saw him daily. He had no business worries other than those of an ordinary businessman. Witness last saw him at about 9.15 a.m. on Friday. The gun which was found lying near him when he was dead was one he had shot with for the last five years. About three years ago he had an accident with the same gun. He told witness that when wiping it with a duster the duster caught the trigger and the gun discharged in the ceiling, the mark being there now. Witness was told what happened on Friday morning and came to the house. He afterwards saw P. S. Gray there and in his presence opened the breach of the gun. Before doing so he noticed that the lever of the breach was slightly on one side. When the breach was opened, he found that the right-hand cartridge was exploded and the left-hand cartridge was unexploded.

Replying to the foreman, witness said that the gun was the same one his father had in his trap when the trap was upset about five months ago. On that occasion the gun was thrown out into the road and somewhat damaged. John Barnett, a farm labourer, living at Winterbourne Stoke, said that on Friday morning at about 11 o'clock he met Mr. Coles walking towards his house carrying a gun. Witness asked him to give him a ticket to go to the Infirmary and he said, "If you come back with me now I will write it out." Witness went with him to the office at the farm house where

he wrote the ticket and gave it to him, saying, "That will be alright, Jack." Witness said, "Good morning, sir," and went out leaving him in the room. He seemed quite cheerful and talked very cheerfully all the time witness was with him. John Kellow, a gardener, living in the same village, stated that between 11.10 and 11.20 on Friday morning he heard the report of a gun when he was about ten yards from Mr. Coles' house. Almost directly afterwards someone ran out of the house and called him. He ran into the gun room, and, as he opened the door, he saw Mr. Coles lying on the floor with his head resting on a box in the corner of the room. Witness picked him up, but saw at once that he was dead, so he put the body back in almost the same position. Then he sent for the first witness and for Mr. Thomas Coles.

Dr. March, of Amesbury, said that he arrived at the house at about 1 o'clock on Friday. He saw the body lying in the gun room. A small piece of flannel such as Mr. Coles used for wiping his gun was lying near his left hand. He must have died at least an hour before. A full charge of shot had entered by the left eye, passing backward and slightly upward, and had completely destroyed the brain. P.S. Gray pointed out to witness where the gun had been lying. He felt practically certain in his own mind that the gun had been discharged accidentally. Death was due to laceration of the brain caused by the gun shot wound.

The jury returned a verdict of "Accidental Death."

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