



SOUTH WILTSHIRE
CORONER'S INQUESTS
(Dinton extracts)



Edward TAYLOR 5th March, 1915

Sad death of a young soldier

The City Coroner (Mr S Buchanan Smith) held an inquest at Salisbury Infirmary on Monday evening concerning the death of Edward Taylor, a driver in the Army Service Corps, who was accidentally shot at Chicksgrove, near Tisbury, on Saturday.

Frances Shute, wife of Ernest Shute, a groom, residing at East End, Dinton, stated that Edward Taylor was her son by a former marriage. Edward was eighteen years old and lived with her mother at Chicksgrove. On receiving a wire last Saturday she came to Salisbury and saw her son in the Infirmary, and she remained with him until he died at 4.45 a.m. on Sunday morning. He said to her, "Don't worry, mother, it is a pure accident."

Leslie Gauler, a little boy of seven years of age, replying to the Coroner, said he lived at Tisbury. He knew Edward Taylor, who lived at Chicksgrove with his grandmother, where he was also staying. On Saturday after dinner his grandmother went to Tisbury to do some shopping, and he went out with Taylor who was going shooting. They went to Mrs Coombs at the level crossing at Tisbury, and when he got to the door William Coombs came into the scullery with a gun in his hand. He put it on the table and it went off and knocked Taylor down. The gun was simply put on the table, but was pointing towards Taylor.

Bertie Thomas Coombs, a driver in the 2nd 1st Mounted Brigade, ASC, Territorial Force, said he lived with his parents at Upper Chicksgrove. He went to Tisbury every day for drill, and Taylor occasionally went shooting with his cousin, William Coombs. On Saturday he returned from Tisbury between 1p.m. and 1.30 p.m. and sat down to his dinner with his mother and father and cousin. When he was having his dinner Taylor passed the window, knocked at the door and went into the scullery. His cousin got up and took the rifle from the corner of the room. It was a small sporting rifle, "Winchester" pattern. His cousin went into the scullery and he almost instantly heard the report of a gun going off. He went out at once and saw what had happened. His cousin told him he went to put the rifle on the table and immediately it touched the table it went off. Taylor had a wound in the stomach. He reported the matter to Lieutenant Harman, who told him to get a Tisbury doctor. The doctor arrived soon afterwards and dressed the injury and ordered Taylor to be conveyed to Salisbury Infirmary. Mr Young brought him in and witness accompanied him. He did not mention the accident, but said that as soon as he was better he was going to get rid of the rifle.

The Foreman : Did the gun belong to Taylor? We bought it between us.

Witness added that he knew the rifle well, and it had a rather light pull but it was safe enough.

Albert William Thomas Coombs, another driver in the 2nd 1st South Western Mounted Brigade, stationed at Tisbury, said he knew Taylor well, as he was a friend of his. On Saturday he was in his uncle's house at Chicksgrove, where he was billeted, when Taylor came and called for him. He finished his dinner and

then took the rifle from the corner and went out of the room into the scullery, loading the rifle as he went. They had previously arranged to go out shooting. He carried the gun with the butt end in his left hand. He was placing it on the scullery table, and it dropped with a bit of a jar and went off. Taylor was standing about a yard from the table and the muzzle of the gun was pointing towards him. After the gun had gone off Taylor put his hand to his chest and said, "Oh," once. Witness saw he was injured, so he laid him down, undid his tunic and rendered all the assistance he possible could. He sent for a doctor and on his instructions Taylor was brought to the Infirmary.

The Coroner : You know this rifle? Yes, sir.

Did it have a heavy pull or a light pull? A light pull.

How did it jar on the table? I put the butt end on the table and let the other part drop slightly.

Was there any protection on the trigger? Was the trigger touched in the fall? There was nothing to hit the trigger in any way.

The Foreman : Is it usual to load a gun indoors before you go shooting? No, sir.

Then why did you do it? I was loading it ready to go out.

You don't usually load it indoors before you go shooting, especially being a military man? No, sir.

Do you half cock the rifle to load it? No, sir.

It is at full cock? Yes.

Harold Rawlence, house surgeon at the Infirmary, said Taylor arrived at the Infirmary about 5 o'clock on Saturday in a state of profound collapse and restlessness. He had a wound just below the breast bone about the size of a pea. The assistant house surgeon obtained assistance from Dr Henderson and an operation was immediately decided upon as the man was suffering from a haemorrhage and his pulse was increasing. At 6.45 an operation was performed, resulting in the discovery that a bullet had passed straight through the muscles covering the front of the abdomen, and right through the liver, injuring the large blood vessels. Plugs were inserted but Taylor's mother was informed that there was practically no hope of his recovery, as so much had been lost. In spite of every attention he died the next morning at 4.45 a.m. The cause of death was haemorrhage.

The Coroner, addressing the jury, said that there was not the slightest doubt that it was an accident.

A verdict of "accidental death" was returned.

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