



SOUTH WILTSHIRE
CORONER'S INQUESTS
(Dinton extracts)



Joseph MORRIS 13th November, 1891

Mysterious Death of an Old Man

An inquest was held at the Wyndham Arms Hotel, Dinton, yesterday (Thursday) morning, on the body of Joseph Morris, an old man, aged 78 years, who was found dead on the line near Dinton, early on Wednesday morning.

Harry Morris, a labourer from Barford St Martin, said he had seen the body & identified it as his father, Joseph Morris. Harry had last seen his father on Tuesday between 5pm & 6pm, at Barford when Joseph had come to his son's house. The father had come from Salisbury & did not stay long, only coming to his son's door. He asked the way to Mr Gray's, gave no reason then wished his son goodnight. Harry Morris had not seen much of his father lately. A week prior, he had seen his father & gave him lodging for the night. Joseph Morris had told his son he was going to the workhouse. Harry Morris stated that his father used to bother him a good deal and was an eccentric man. The deceased had told his son he was 78 years of age last October.

David McConnell, signalman, of Dinton, had been on duty in the box all night. At 6.30 am Wednesday morning, in the course of his duties, he found the deceased against a signal – about 20 yards from the platform, crouched against the bank with his head against the post and one leg under the wires. One of his boots was about 7 yards away. He had evidently been struck with great force and one of the bolts of the post was in his forehead. The last train had passed at 3.42 am and it must have happened before that hour. Trains were passing continually before then at intervals of less than half an hour.

Harry Morris, the deceased's son, had heard that his father was in the Green Dragon, Barford on Tuesday evening at about 9 pm. He said that a little drink used to excite his father.

Charles Ray, master of the Wilton Union, said the deceased had stayed at the workhouse on and off again since March. He described the deceased as a very quiet man in the house & they had no trouble with him. Mr Ray had seen the deceased in Salisbury on Tuesday, at about 1.30pm, in the Market Place, where he believed he was singing to get money. It did not appear as if he had been drinking.

The Coroner said he had known the deceased for many years and described him as an extraordinary and eccentric person.

The jury returned a verdict of "Found dead on the line," but there was no evidence to show how he got there or how his death was actually caused.

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