



CORONERS INQUESTS



Luckington

Inquest on Alfred Melson

A Servant shot by his master in mistake.

An inquest was on Thursday last held at Luckington, in this county, before W. Adye, esq., and a most respectable Jury, on the body of Alfred Melson, who was lying dead in the house of the Rev. Mr Teasdal, curate of that village. From the investigation, which lasted a considerable time, and which excited much interest in the neighbourhood, the following facts were elicited: That at about two o'clock in the morning of the 11th of August, the deceased (who was a servant living at the Rev. Mr Teasdal's, and who slept in the adjoining room to the female servants) knocked at the partition of the room, and called to the female servants to get up; that they replied, "it is too early to get up yet." That the deceased then went down stairs, and within five minutes, they heard the report of fire-arms; that soon afterwards Mrs Teasdal called them up, and desired them to go immediately to Didmarton (about 3 miles distant) for Mr Wickham, the surgeon, to attend Alfred Melson, the man servant, who had been shot in the thigh with a pistol by their master; that Mr Wickham attended, and the additional advice of a surgeon from Bristol was afterwards obtained; that the deceased was doing well until the 12th day, when mortification took place and he died. The ball, it appeared, had not been extracted. Mrs Teasdal deposed, that about two o'clock in the morning of the 11th, she heard a noise in the house, and immediately afterwards some one attempting to open the back door; that she looked out at the window, and saw a man go out; that she screamed, and Mr Teasdal came to the window with loaded pistols in his hand; that he saw the man outside the house, and called to him, but the answer he made she did not recollect; that the man returned within the door, and that at the moment when his right leg and thigh were only visible, Mr T. fired at him, and shot him in the thigh. On discovering that it was his servant, Mr T. rendered him every assistance in his power. A report prevailed in the neighbourhood, that Mr Teasdal had requested the deceased to get up very early in the morning to procure a fast-chain from Petty France; but Mr Teasdal could not recollect whether he had or not. The house of the Rev. gent, it appeared had been previously robbed during the time the whole of the family were attending divine service; and another attempt was subsequently made to rob it. In consequence of these circumstances, and living in a bed neighbourhood, Mr Teasdal concluded, and very naturally, (the early hour in the morning also taken into consideration), that the person he had seen was a robber. When he called to the man, his own dogs, and those of the neighbouring mansion, were barking violently, which prevented him from distinctly hearing the answer his servant made. The Rev. gent. Expressed the deepest regret at the unfortunate mistake, and appeared to be labouring under considerable distress of mind. The Jury, after a most indefatigable enquiry, returned their verdict – "Shot by mistake for a robber;" at the same time unanimously expressing their belief, that they should have acted in a similar manner under similar circumstances."

Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette, 3 September 1835