



Coroner's Inquests *Manningford Bruce*

Elizabeth Harding – 1888

ACCIDENTALLY DROWNED IN A WELL AT MANNINGFORD BRUCE

On Saturday last an inquest was held at Manningford Bruce, before Mr. Coroner Sylvester, touching the death of Elizabeth Harding, single woman, aged 47 years, who on the previous Thursday evening was found dead in a well in the garden of her house. Martha Jane Harding, dressmaker, deposed deceased was her sister and had been living with and assisting her in her sewing since August last year, having left domestic service on account of weakness. She occasionally complained of headache, but was otherwise in fair health. She enjoyed good spirits and had met with no disappointment or misfortune. Witness last saw deceased alive on Thursday at 3.20 p.m. She was then employed sewing, and appeared as usual. Witness returned home at 8 p.m. and missed her sister. Seeing the empty kettle standing on the hob with the lid off she went to the well and saw the body of deceased in three or four feet of water, head downwards, the water being two or three feet from the surface. With assistance the body was extricated. It was dead and cold. A pitcher was at the bottom of the water. She had found no writings on the deceased person or about the house.

Annie Newman, school teacher, a neighbour, said she saw deceased on Thursday at 5.30 p.m. sitting in the window sewing. She asked her to tea, which she declined, stating she wished to finish the job she was about. Deceased made no complaint, and appeared as usual.

Charles H. Lawrence, surgeon, Upavon, said he examined the body on Thursday at 10 p.m. It was well nourished, with no marks of violence except some abrasions on the face, probably caused by coming in contact with the side of the well. A quantity of mud was seen in the mouth, eyes, hands and nails. Death arose from asphyxia by immersion. He considered a person falling in the position deceased was found in could not possibly extricate herself. The jury were unanimously of the opinion that deceased in stooping to dip up the water accidentally slipped into the well, and returned a verdict to that effect. They recommended the erection of a pump by the owner of the cottage.

Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette – Thursday, 5 April 1888