



CORONERS INQUESTS



Wylye and Codford

Ambrose Moody 1900

Deaths from the Heat

Wylye Man died at Codford

Good Advice by the Coroner: Protect the Back of the Head

Much regret was felt in Wylye and the surrounding district when it became known that one of the oldest and most respected residents, Ambrose Moody, painter and plumber, had died suddenly on Wednesday when pursuing his vocation at Codford.

An inquest was held touching the death at the George Inn, Codford, on Thursday at noon, by Mr. F. T. Sylvester, coroner for Mid Wilts. Mr. Lever was appointed foreman of the jury.

The Coroner, in the course of a few remarks to the jury at the commencement of the inquiry, said that inquests should always be held very quickly after death when the temperature was so high as at present. A great number of deaths had occurred in the fields lately amongst labourers through exposure to heat which we in this climate were not accustomed to, and which was more exhausting than the heat in tropical climates, because it was a moist heat. It behoved everybody working in the fields just now to be careful to protect the head, and more especially the back of the head, where the vital part of the brain was situated, and which should never be exposed to the heat of the sun if possible. In tropical climates the people kept inside for the hottest part of the day - from ten to five - but their houses were specially built with a view to keeping out the heat, while ours were built to keep out the cold.

The first witness called was Mrs. Sarah Toogood, wife of Henry Toogood, labourer, Codford, who said that on Wednesday the deceased man - whose age was given as seventy-one years - came to repair a pump which was in the yard behind her cottage, and was used by several of the families in other cottages adjoining the same yard. She spoke to him shortly after he started work, and he made no complaint to her that he felt in any way out of his usual health. He was not working in the sun. About half-past eleven she noticed deceased, who was kneeling at his work, suddenly fall forward. She went up to him, and in answer to her, he said he felt very ill. He was then raised and removed to a chair, fainting right off as soon as he was placed there. She gave him some brandy and water, which he vomited shortly after, removed him indoors, undid his collar and boots, and bathed his hands and face in cold water. She took him inside because he wished to lie down. He revived somewhat, and told witness that he felt no pain, but felt giddy. He did not want them to send for a doctor, but they did so, as they thought it would be best.

The Coroner: You acted quite right. Many people when ill do not know what is good for them: they have not all their mental capacity about them, and it is for those about them to take action. I think you acted very rightly as far as you could in administering stimulants, giving him plenty of air, and letting him lie down. A man in that condition ought to lie down, not stand up, or sit in a chair.

Further questioned, witness said she had known deceased for forty years, but she did not know his condition of health.

Charles Haskell, painter, Wylye, spoke to seeing deceased when ill, and going for the doctor. Dr. Ward had just left for Chitterne, and witness went to Wylye and got Dr. Penruddocke.

Dr. Penruddocke said he had known deceased for the past twelve years, and attended him last on the 9th of June last. He was then suffering for indigestion and giddiness, due to a weak condition of the heart. He had not made any complaint since. On Tuesday morning he saw deceased as he was going over to Codford to work about a quarter past nine. He was driving in his trap, and looked all right then. Witness had since examined the body, which was well nourished, and in his opinion, and knowing the condition deceased's heart was in, the cause of death was syncope, due to the heat.

P. C. Thomas Carpenter, said he had the body removed from the house of Mr. Walters, where it was lying, to the coach house at the George Inn. On it he found a watch and chain, a sovereign, £1 in silver, with 6½ d in copper. He searched the trap, but did not see any food in it.

Mrs. Toogood (recalled) said she did not see Moody have any food.

P.C. John Cook, Wylve, said he had known deceased for the past six years. There was no one living in his house except himself and housekeeper, the latter of whom was too prostrated by the shock to give evidence. The housekeeper was sixty years of age. Deceased had a sister at Southampton, who had been sent for, but this was his only known relative. He had complained of giddiness for the past two years. On Tuesday morning, witness was informed, deceased had his usual breakfast of tea, bread and butter, and eggs before going to work.

The Coroner, in summing up, said it was evident that the deceased man had died of natural causes, like a great many other old men during the last few week's intense heat. The great heat of the atmosphere had affected him, and caused him to faint, and his heart being weak, most probably at his age from natural causes, death had ensued. A verdict of "Death from natural causes" was returned.

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