

ISLE OF WIGHT TIMES Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> September 1875

HORRIBLE CASE OF SUICIDE  
*THROUGH DRINK*

Quite a sensation was caused in Ryde on Monday morning, by the sad and distressing intelligence that a man, named **Henry YEATES**, a carpenter, living at 39 Prince-street, had committed suicide, by cutting his throat. On enquiry we found that the rumour was too true, the unfortunate man had put an end to his existence in the most determined manner, the head being nearly severed from the body, so severe were the gashes inflicted. The deceased was a widower, and about 47 years of age, his family with one exception, being all grown up and married, or otherwise provided for. The principal cause to which the suicide may be attributed, was drink, for YEATES was a man who frequently took to drinking, and spent the chief part of his earnings in the numerous public houses of the borough. For the last few months he had been drinking heavily, and being behind with his rent, a distress to the amount of £6 5s. was levied on his goods on Saturday last, at the suit of the landlord, Mr. DASHWOOD, fishmonger and beer-house keeper, Prince-street. this seems to have preyed a little upon his mind, which of course greatly weakened by his drunken habits, and the poor fellow put an untimely end to his existence. The body was discovered in the back-kitchen of his house, on Monday morning, by his youngest daughter, who was the only person living with him in the house. The body was lying in a pool of blood, near it being a razor smothered in blood, with which he committed the act. His hands were smothered in blood, and no doubt existed as to the deed being accomplished by himself. From the evidence given at the inquest, and enquiries made, it appears that the act was premeditated for some time. He told a man several weeks since that his children would drive him to something, and on Sunday broke a pipe which he had smoked, saying that it would be the last he should ever use. Then we are informed that before the committal of the crime he sharpened his razor, and while affecting his purpose, stood up before a looking glass to see where to inflict the horrible gash. Death must have been almost instantaneous, and it is supposed that the deceased fell headlong on the floor, where he was afterwards discovered. The poor man was an excellent workman of considerable skill, and but for his unfortunate addiction to drink, might have held a most respectable position.

THE INQUEST

An inquest was held on Tuesday morning, at nine o'clock, at the Bedford Hotel, St. John's-road, before Mr. E.F. BLAKE, the deputy coroner for the Isle of Wight, and a jury, of whom Mr. Isaac BARTON was foreman. After the viewing of the body, the following evidence was taken:-

William GRIFFIN, letter carrier, of Oakfield, deposed that after delivering letters on Monday morning, he was passing Mr. GARRETT'S bake-house, in Prince-street, about half-past eight o'clock. He was going along the street in the direction of the deceased's house. He noticed Mrs. DUNFORD and Lucy YEATES, the deceased's daughters, running along the street, crying. They were running towards the house, and calling out to him. They said their father had cut his throat or something, and was lying in a pool of blood. They asked him to go into the house, and he did so.

He found the deceased lying down, face downwards, in the wash-house, behind the door, which was partly open. He was lying in a pool of blood. He turned the deceased over a little in order to see if there was any life in him, but he was quite dead. The body was not stiff, and did not seem to be cold, he could see the deceased's throat was cut. A razor was lying down in the congealed blood, on the left-hand side of deceased, close to the body. Witness requested someone to go and fetch a doctor and a policeman. Dr. WOODFORD was sent for, and he being from home, Dr. BARROW. Dr. WOODFORD, however, soon afterwards came, and examined the body, which he pronounced to be quite dead. Dr. WOODWARD said he had been dead for several hours. He knew the deceased well, and had done so for several years. He last saw him alive on the Esplanade on Saturday night last. He did not notice anything strange in his conduct or manner. Had often had conversation with the deceased, but never notice anything in his manner which would lead anyone to suppose him to be a man likely to commit suicide. When he saw the deceased on Saturday on the Esplanade he was sitting down on the wall, with his head resting on his arm. In answer, to Mr. Harvey PHELPS, a juryman, the witness said the deceased had relatives, but could not say whether any of them had ever shown any symptoms of insanity.

Examination continued : Deceased was a carpenter by trade, and had for the last few weeks been about drinking, instead of going to work. He had only worked irregularly. He had been drinking a great deal. He did not think deceased drank so much during the past week, as previously, he had been about a good deal. About a fortnight ago, he saw the deceased drunk.-

By Mr. PHELPS : He considered the deceased to be possessed of moderate self control and perfectly sound mind.

By the Coroner: Deceased had a distress levied on his goods for rent on Friday last. On Saturday the bailiffs put some of the goods into the front room and locked them up, taking the key of the room away. Deceased was unable to go into the front room in consequence. The bailiffs were going back to the house that (Thursday) morning. The levy on the good might possibly have led deceased to commit the act. Deceased had been a drinking man for years. He was a hard drinker.

The Foreman : He had neglected his work a great deal through drink.

Mr. J. BUTLER (a juryman): I knew the deceased very well indeed. He has been drinking a great deal for the last six weeks. Witness in reply to Mr. PHELPS, said he did not notice anything peculiar in the deceased's conduct, when he saw him on the Esplanade on Saturday.

Nancy YEATES, daughter of the deceased, 12 years of age, deposed that her father, with two brothers and two sisters, had lived at 34 Prince-street, one brother was 18 and the other 21 years of age. Her sisters were 22 and 23 years old . she was the youngest . she was the only one who lived with her father. One sister was in service at Malta, and the other, a married one, had left last week, when the notice from Mr. DASHWOOD was served, as she did not want her things to be seized. On Monday morning, witness got up at half-past eight o'clock. She went downstairs, and was going into the kitchen, when she saw her father lying down on the floor in a lot of blood. She at once put on her boots and ran round to her married sister's who was staying near. Her sister's mother-in-law came round with her and told the postman, the previous witness, about it. Her father usually got up about 6 o'clock in the morning. She did not hear him get up on Monday. They both went to bed the previous evening about five minutes past ten o'clock. Deceased had no supper that night. He had been at home nearly all day on Sunday. He was quite sober. He sent up for her

sister's two little children to come round, and was nursing them on the Sunday. He did not seem to beat all low spirited. On Saturday a distress warrant was put in the house, and her father was worried about that. He said he did not like to see his things go, and did not know what he should do if they were taken away. The amount of the distress was £6 5s. Deceased was cheerful on Saturday. He did not go to work on Saturday. He had not been to work for a fortnight, during that time he had been out on the drink. The week before last her father came home the worst for liquor. He had work if he had liked to go and do it. He worked for his brother in Belleview-road.

Henry SPRINGER, a little boy, was the next witness called. He deposed that he lived in Prince-street, opposite deceased's house. He saw the deceased come out of his house about 7 o'clock on Monday morning. Deceased went down the street, towards St. John's-road. Witness thought he was going to work. Deceased was by himself, and walking along quietly. Did not notice anything peculiar about him. Did not see him return home. Had not seen very much of deceased lately. Did not see deceased go anywhere on Monday morning. Did not notice if he went up the road towards the Oak.

The Foreman remarked that the deceased was seen out before that. A man named JENKINS saw him at a quarter-past six o'clock in Star-street.

Alan WOODWARD, Esq., M.R.C.S., deposed that he was a surgeon and living in Ryde. On Monday morning, just before nine o'clock, he was sent for to see deceased. He went immediately. He found the deceased lying on the floor in the back kitchen. It was a stone floor. The deceased was lying on his right side, in a pool of blood. The throat was cut right across, very badly, all the principal blood vessels being divided. Deceased was quite dead and cold. He supposed the man to be dead for some time- an hour or so he should say. A body would get cold in that time, with such a loss of blood. A razor was lying on a wooden stool close to the body. The razor and the deceased's hands were smothered in blood. He knew the man quite well. He last saw him alive one day last week. Never noticed anything peculiar in deceased's manner. He knew the deceased was a drinking man. Never saw anything strange about him. Had noticed that the man appeared to be melancholy for some time recently. The wound in his throat was such as he could have inflicted himself. He must have died in a very few seconds.

By the juryman : Did not consider deceased to have been a man of unsound mind, but thought his drinking habits had unsettled his mind. Judging from the development of the head, he should say there was not much the matter with his brain. Deceased had had a great deal of trouble lately, quite enough to bring about this sort of thing. The drink had changed the deceased very much lately.

The Coroner remarked that Mr. WOODWARD had no evidence to go upon which led him to make that statement. Of course he only coupled the man's drinking habits and the trouble he experienced together, as likely to cause the deed.

Mr. WOODWARD : I have only noticed that the deceased had changed very much lately. He should suppose the deceased to have been a man of sound mind and body. He was not an intelligent man.

The Foreman said deceased was a very good workman and must have been intelligent.

Mr. WOODWARD : I meant that he was not possessed more intelligence than any ordinary man.

John NASH, chairbottomer, Prince-street, was next examined, he deposed that he had known the deceased about six years. He had seen him every day, going to breakfast and so on. Had noticed him two or three times rather intoxicated. Deceased

had been drinking considerably lately. Last Sunday morning at about twenty past six o'clock, witness was standing on the corner of Prince-street. deceased came up and asked him to give him a pipe of tobacco. Witness did so. They both went up against the field and leant over the gate smoking. After the deceased had finished smoking he knocked out hid pipe against the gate and broke it, and said, "That's the last pipe of bacca I shall ever smoke again." Witness said "How's that Mr. YEATES," Deceased made no reply, but threw the pieces of his pipe away. They were talking together while smoking, and deceased laughed and appeared to be cheerful. They were together about half-a- hour. Witness did not notice anything peculiar in deceased's conduct. Deceased was quite sober \*\*\*nothing peculiar in deceased's manner or conversation. When he broke the pipe witness thought deceased meant to give up smoking\*\*\*\*\*  
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The Coroner replied that in cases of suspicious death, where there had been ill usage, and so on, a coroner would given orders for the body to remain untouched, until after it was seen by the jury. But in the case like the present, where it was clear that the deceased had came by his death by his own hand. A coroner could give permission to be moved and washed. He had done so, in order to save the feelings of the family, who would not like for a body to remain in such a state.

Louisa GAWN, of Prince-street, deposed that she had known the deceased well for years. She saw him on Sunday afternoon leaning against the rails in front of his house, smoking. She last saw him between 9 and 10 o'clock in the evening, when she was returning home from church . he was then standing outside his house. As she passed, he said "Good night miss." She did not notice anything peculiar in his manner. Deceased was a very quiet man. She could not say whether the deceased was smoking on Sunday evening.

This was the whole of the evidence , and the Coroner proceeded to sum up. He observed that there was no doubt as to the unfortunate man having committed the rash act himself. The more awkward question was to the state of mind the man was in at the time. NASH, who had conversed with deceased on Sunday morning, said he noticed nothing peculiar in his conversation, the only thing being the smashing of the pipe, and the remark that it was the last one he should smoke. A man who had been drinking heavily for some time like deceased, was more likely to get his mind impaired, than a sober, temperate person. From the evidence there did not appear to have been any delusions. The distress was a thing likely to prey upon a man's mind, but it did not appear to have done so in this case. It seemed to him that the deceased had contemplated the act for some time. The fact of his having sent for the children on Sunday evening, and his caressing them, tended to show.-

Mr. J. BUTLER ; No sir , I did not think that. I think he sent for them as a customary thing.

The Coroner said that jury would have to return one of three verdicts. If they found the deceased to have been of unsound mind, it would be their duty to return the verdict accordingly : but if he was found perfectly sane at the time, they must bring it in *felo de se*. if they thought that there was not sufficient evidence to show the state of the deceased's mind, they could return an open verdict. The reporters and witnesses were then excluded, while the jury proceeded to consider their verdict. During their deliberation, however, another witness came forward and volunteered which was taken.

Henry STOCKS, head waiter at the Victoria Yacht Club, deposed that he had known deceased for 15 years. He had saw him alive last on the Thursday morning in Surrey-street. deceased had been drinking, and had been a little worse for liquor then. About three weeks ago witness had some conversation with deceased. Deceased said he did not know what he should do, he had had such a lot of trouble with his family. Witness told deceased to leave off drinking and turn round, and do the best that he could, and then he would be a friend to him again, having already helped him. He had since paid the deceased's rent for him. Deceased said that his children had not behaved to him as they ought. Deceased seemed to be labouring under a great deal of trouble, and was depressed about his children. Witness had an impression that deceased would do something to himself someday. He considered the deceased to be in an unsound state of mind. Deceased did not say that he should do anything but he said that his children would drive him to do something for himself. His son and daughter had given him a lot of trouble. Witness did not think that deceased knew he was doing for the last week or so. Deceased and his daughter had no food on Sunday, with the exception of a dinner sent down to them.

The jury again having deliberated for a short time, returned a verdict to the effect that the deceased committed suicide while in an unsound state of mind brought on by excessive drinking.

One of the jurymen expressed his disapproval of the manner of which the inquest had been got up by the Police. Several witnesses had to be fetched from their homes, and the jury and coroner kept waiting for a considerable time.

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*NB: The part above which shows stars \*\*\*\*\* could not be read, as the film was completely black.*

Researched & typed by  
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