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Address: 35 West-street, Ryde, IW.

**John H. BURT. Head. Widr. 35. Superintendent of Police. Tooting, Surrey.**

Elizabeth BURT. Dau. 11. Scholar. Islington, London.

John H. BURT. Son. 4. Godalming, Surrey.

Martha WINGATE. Aunt. W. 56. Housekeeper. Tooting, Surrey.

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THE ISLE OF WIGHT TIMES Thursday June 24<sup>th</sup> 1880.

Death Notice -

**BURT** .. On the 18<sup>th</sup> inst., at Ryde, Mr. **John Henry BURT**, superintendent of the Ryde borough police, aged 45 years.

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THE ISLE OF WIGHT TIMES Thursday June 24<sup>th</sup> 1880.

### **SUDDEN DEATH OF SUPERINTENDENT BURT.**

On Friday afternoon, a painful sensation was created in the town by the announcement of the death of Mr. **John Henry BURT**, Chief Superintendent of the Borough Police Force. Although Mr. BURT was taken ill on Thursday and a messenger was despatched for Dr. WILKS, the physician to the police force, no apprehension of serious results was entertained. On Thursday afternoon when Dr. WILKS saw him, he found the patient, to use his own expression "seriously, but not dangerously" ill. On Friday morning he was however much worse, he became delirious, and never recovered consciousness until he expired, about 5 o'clock the same day, from acute inflammation of the brain. The sad occurrence came like a sharp, sudden shock on the majority of the inhabitants, who had no knowledge of his sudden and dangerous attack of illness; Mr. BURT indeed was out on duty on Wednesday apparently in usual health. The event cast quite a gloom over the town, and the respect which was felt for the deceased officer was evinced at the funeral on Monday afternoon, by the Mayor and a number of members of the Corporation following the corpse, and a large concourse of sympathising spectators assembling in the Cemetery. Although Dr. WILKS had no hesitation in giving a certificate of the cause of death, it was thought desirable by the authorities on public grounds that an inquest should be held.

The enquiry was held on Saturday evening at the Police Station, and by adjournment at the Town Hall, before Mr. F. BLAKE, Coroner, and a jury, of which Mr. HARRIS (Messrs. HARRIS and BLACKET), High-street, was foreman. Among the members of the Corporation present to watch the proceedings were Ald. HARRINGTON, Ald. DASHWOOD, Mr. DIXON, Mr. ELLERY, Mr. WHITTINGTON, Mr. CAWS, Mr. NEWBALD, Mr. JAMES, Mr. WILTSHIRE, and the Town Clerk.

Alfred WEBB was the first witness called. He deposed: I am a police-constable of the borough of Ryde. Deceased, John Henry BURT, was Superintendent of the Police. I first knew of his being ill at 8 o'clock yesterday morning. I heard from Mrs. BURT. She told me Mr. BURT was much worse and asked me to go for Dr. WILKS. I went at quarter past eight. I did not see him; he was not up. I left a message with the pageboy. I asked him to ask Dr. WILKS as soon as he came down if he would come to the Police station to see Mr. BURT, as he was much worse and gone quite light headed, and Mrs. BURT did not know what to do. I went back to the Police Station and remained there until 10 o'clock, when I left. Dr. WILKS did not come whilst I was there. I had asked the page if it was any use my waiting, and he said he thought not. After 10 o'clock I did not go to the station again until two. I saw Mr. BURT in bed at 2 o'clock. He appeared to be sleeping and groaning very much. He did not speak. I remained with him until ten minutes to 5 o'clock, when he died. He was not conscious during any part of that time. Dr. WILKS did not come whilst I was there. I heard he had been at twelve o'clock, and that he had prescribed medicine for Mr. BURT. I endeavoured to give him some of the medicine but he could not swallow it. I did not see Mr. BURT on Thursday.

By Coroner: When I saw Mrs. BURT yesterday morning I asked if I could do anything for Mr. BURT, and she said no, he was not conscious.

By Foreman: To the best of my belief Mr. BURT was taken ill on Thursday at dinner time.

George HINKS: I am Sergeant of Police. On Wednesday evening Mr. BURT complained to me of having a severe attack of ear-ache. He told me he had some embrocation rubbed in and some wadding put in his ear. He has often complained of ear-ache. I saw him again on Thursday morning. He was up, but he said he was very ill and he could not tell what was the matter with him. He said his head ached very much. Just past two o'clock in the afternoon he sent his daughter into the office to ask me to come in. I went and found him lying on the sofa. He asked me to remain in the office as he expected two or three people to come during the afternoon. He said he felt so ill he was obliged to go to bed and he should not be able to see anyone. He went to bed. I said I would go for Dr. WILKS if he would go to bed and told him Mr. BURT was very ill, and asked if he would come to the station to see him. He came about 4 o'clock. He prescribed for Mr. BURT and I took the prescription to Mr. SMITH, chemist, High-street, who promised to send the medicine up. I did not see the deceased again that evening. I saw him yesterday morning just before 10 o'clock. He was quite unconscious and did not know me or any one else. I called at Dr. WILKS' house about half-past eleven and was told he was out. On my return to the Police Station I found he had been there during my absence. I saw Mr. BURT several times during the afternoon. He continued unconscious all the time. Mrs. BURT told me she had been ordered by the doctor to apply ice to deceased's head and she had done so. Mr. BURT was out on duty on Wednesday afternoon. When I went to the station on Friday morning shortly before 10 o'clock, Mrs. BURT said she had sent for Dr. WILKS about eight o'clock, but as he did not come she had just sent her son John down again.

Ald. DASHWOOD: I thought you would not allow Mr. BURT to remain there so ill for two or three hours without going or sending for Dr. WILKS.

Witness: I was informed by Mrs. BURT shortly before 10 o'clock she had just sent her son for Dr. WILKS. I went for him about half-past 11 o'clock, and when I returned I found the doctor had been whilst I was out.

Mr. JAMES: So there were three messengers asked for Dr. WILKS.

The Coroner: Only two messengers, the third would be on his way when Dr. WILKS arrived at the station.

Witness in reply to the Town Clerk said: Mr. BURT was very hot. There was no active treatment; he simply took some medicine. Mrs. BURT told me the doctor had said the best thing she could do was to bathe her husband's head with ice, and she did that.

A Juryman: Did you think Mr. BURT was ill on Friday morning.

Sergeant HINKS: No I did not, I thought it was a bilious attack which he was subject to.

Ald. DASHWOOD: remarked that it was reported to the Watch Committee that Mr. BURT had seemed much better after Mrs. BURT had given him a cup of tea with an egg beaten up in it, but a short time after he became insensible. Mr. BARROW had stated that in his opinion there was nothing in the nature of the disease that would account for the insensibility coming on.

Witness ( in reply to the Coroner ): Mrs. BURT told me that just before 7 o'clock she gave deceased an egg beaten up in tea. He said that suited him better than anything else and he would have another soon. Very soon afterwards he became insensible.

By Ald. HARRINGTON: they gave him a powder in the afternoon.

The Coroner: What time did he take that powder?

Witness: About a quarter after two o'clock. They had trouble to make him take that. He had also a composing draught.

The Coroner: When was the ice ordered to be taken ?

Witness That was this morning: to be put in milk.

The Coroner: Did Dr. WILKS come in the afternoon ? No Sir.

Did he come more than once yesterday ? No, Sir.

Ajuryman: Did Mr. BURT take any medicine on Thursday evening after Dr. WILKS came?

Witness: Yes. He had no difficulty in taking the medicine. He drank a lot of cold water on Thursday night.

Dr. WILKS: You mentioned a composing draught ?

Witness: Well, it was a draught of some kind.

By the Coroner: Mrs. BURT told me Dr. WILKS said she was to give him a powder, and the draught a few hours afterwards, and perhaps he would wake up all right.

Alfred Platt WILKS: I am a Bachelor of Medicine of Cambridge and Master of Surgery of the same University. I am in practice in this town. I am an honorary surgeon of the Police Force. Mr. BURT has been repeatedly under my care and treatment. In January he had three different attacks, and in March and May I have attended him for various ailments. One of them in March was an attack of neuralgia in the face. That was on March 16<sup>th</sup>. I saw Mr. BURT between three and four o'clock on Thursday afternoon. I had a message sent to my house after I came home. In consequence of that I was on my way to the Police Station, when I met either HINKS or COLE ---I think it was Sergeant HINKS. I saw Mr. BURT lying on his bed. He complained of want of sleep for some nights, of pains in the head, especially on the left side. There were symptoms of sickness: I investigated the case and prescribed. I thought him seriously, but not dangerously ill, at that time. On Friday morning I came downstairs at a-quarter past eight. I found a message, among others, on my slate, for me to call at the Police Station. That was about a-quarter to nine o'clock. The message was to call at the Police Station, as Mr. BURT was very ill. It was in my boy's writing. I started on my rounds at 10 o'clock, as usual. I regulate the visits to my patients in order as well as I can. It must have been sometime between eleven and twelve when I got to the Police Station. I did not get a message by a boy, before I left home. When I got to the Police Station I found Mr. BURT perfectly delirious. I told his wife he was suffering from a very serious affection of the brain. I prescribed a calomel powder to be given immediately, and an aperient draught in half-an-hour, a little ice to be applied to the head, and also to be taken internally in small quantities in case of sickness. I considered him to be in danger at that time. I thought the case was very serious. I did not see him again yesterday, I promised to call again in the afternoon, after the Government Enquiry. I met one of the constables at the top of George Street and he told me Mr. BURT was dead.

The Coroner: Were you on your way to see him.

Dr. WILKS: I was about calling upon him. That was about 5 o'clock.

The Coroner: You consider that was the proper treatment which you prescribed?

Witness: I have no hesitation in saying I should do the same again. The medicines are made up by a chemist here; I do not make them myself.

The Coroner: But you consider that the proper treatment you prescribed?

Dr. WILKS: I say so unhesitatingly.

The Coroner: You have heard what the last witness said about the taking of the egg in tea and Mr. BURT almost immediately becoming unconscious--can you account for that?

Dr. WILKS: I cannot trace any connexion between the two.

The Coroner: Do you think if you had seen him earlier in the day you could have done anything more for him.

Dr. WILKS: I do not think so; I feel sure of it, delirium having set in.

The Coroner: What do you consider the cause of death.

Dr. WILKS: Meningitis or acute inflammation of the brain. I gave a certificate to that effect. All the symptoms are compatible with that disease. I know of no other that would have run the same course. As to the causes that may have induced the disease in this case I am not able to say. I know the various causes that induce meningitis, but do not know what induced it in this case. It may have been induced by various causes.

The Foreman (Mr. HARRIS):When did you take a serious view of the case?

Witness: On Friday morning. I have expressed myself that on Thursday that Mr. BURT was seriously ill but not dangerously so on Friday morning I thought he was in danger.

The Foreman: You made no special visit to him? No, only on my usual rounds.

Coroner: The same as you visited your other patients? Yes.

Ald. DASHWOOD said he did not quite understand what Dr. WILKS meant by being honorary surgeon to the police.

Dr. WILKS: An honorary office is one for which is received no special pay.

The Coroner: Was that the case here?

Dr. WILKS: That is the case with regard to the police.

Ald. DASHWOOD: directed Dr. WILKS' attention to a minute of the Watch Committee, dated the 19<sup>th</sup> November 1878, asking whether Dr. WILKS was willing to undertake the duties of

surgeon to the police force, in addition to those of Medical Officer of Health on certain conditions. Dr. WILKS asked for a fortnight to consider upon the matter, and at the end of that time he agreed to the conditions.

A Juryman asked whether they were not travelling out of their usual province. Dr. WILKS observed that he considered himself as much bound to attend upon the police as any other patients.

Ald. DASHWOOD said the Watch Committee did not wish to go forth to the town that the Town Council did not make proper provision for medical attendance on the police.

Dr. WILKS, in reply to the Coroner, said he considered it part of his regular duty to attend upon the police when called upon.

In reply to Ald. HARRINGTON: Dr. WILKS said he left home on Friday morning at ten o'clock, at which time Mr. BURT's son had not arrived with a message. He afterwards found that the boy called after he left home.

Ald. HARRINGTON: There is another question, I understand there was a message sent that Mr. BURT was worse, that he was delirious and that Mrs BURT did not know what to do. Would your boy write that down on the slate or only that you were wanted to call at the Police Station as Mr. BURT was worse ?

Dr. WILKS replied that verbal messages were frequently very imperfectly delivered. He tried to do the best he could as regarded getting the messages properly delivered.

By a Juryman : There was no other medical man saw Mr. BURT.

In reply to Mr. JAMES, Dr. WILKS repeated that on Thursday although he considered Mr. BURT seriously ill he did not think him dangerously so, and he wished to see the effect of the medicine he prescribed.

By the Coroner: In the course of twenty years' experience he had never seen a case of bleeding for this disease.

Ald. DASHWOOD said he understood it was a matter of surprise that although Dr. WILKS sat next to Mr. BARROW, himself a medical man and a member of the Watch Committee, at the Government Enquiry, he did not mention a word to him respecting Mr. BURT, although he knew him to be so seriously ill.

Dr. WILKS replied that he did not consider it part of his duty to consult with Mr. BARROW on the subject, he being a surgeon and not a fully qualified medical man.

In reply to the questions from Mr. JAMES, Dr. WILKS said he might of mentioned the matter to Mr. BARROW, as he would have done to any member of the Watch Committee, had his attention not been taken up by the enquiry going on. It did not occur to him to do so. The coroner then summed up the evidence. He said the jury would not find any difficulty in coming to a conclusion as to the cause of death of the deceased. They had no other evidence before them except that he died from meningitis or inflammation of the brain. The only question for the jury, therefore, was as to whether there had been any want of attention on the part of Dr. WILKS. The Coroner then went through the evidence and concluded by saying that the deceased died from Natural Causes by a Sudden Visitation of God. If the jury thought it necessary to say anything to their verdict, of course they could do so--he did not suggest that they should.

The room was then cleared and after a somewhat protracted consultation, they agreed upon a verdict that the deceased died from Natural Causes by the Visitation of God.

The Foreman in reply to the Coroner said he thought it was a very proper case for investigation.