

ISLE OF WIGHT TIMES Thursday 6th April 1871

TWO FUNERALS DELAYED BY THE ORDER OF
THE CORONER FOR THE ISLAND
EXTRAORDINARY PROCEEDING

On Friday evening last two inquests were held by F. BLAKE, Esq., coroner for the Isle of Wight, at the house of Mr. TAYLOR, the Victoria Tavern, Monkton-street, touching the circumstances connected with the respective deaths of Mrs. **Ann ELLYETT**, and a lady aged 87 years, who resided at the Oriental House, Monkton-street ; and also her nurse, named **Kesia BENNETT**, aged 63 years, who lived at the same house. It appears that all necessary arrangements had been made for the interment of the bodies, at about two o'clock in the afternoon of that day ; but shortly before that hour it seemed to have been represented to the coroner that some foul play had been indulged in, and accordingly he issued an order to prevent the funerals until a judicial enquiry had been made, although a certificate had been given in both cases by Mr. BROOME PINNIGER, who attended the deceased persons prior to their death. While preparations were being made for summoning a jury forthwith. Dr. DAVEY and Dr. PINNIGER, were instructed to make a *post-mortem* examination of the bodies, which had to be removed from the coffins for that purpose. At six o'clock, they were sworn, and then proceeded to the Oriental House to view the bodies. On returning Mr. BROOME PINNIGER, surgeon in practice, was duly sworn, and deposed that he had known both the deceased persons for several years, Mrs. ELLYETT being a widow lady, and Mrs. BENNETT living in the same house and acting in the capacity of nurse. For the past four years he had attended the former professionally, but he had only attended Mrs. BENNETT from within a few hours of her death. On Saturday the 25th, he was called to see Mrs. ELLYETT who appeared to be suffering from extreme debility from old age. He saw her again on Monday, and thought she was rapidly declining. On going on Tuesday morning, he was in the set of approaching her bed, when he noticed the sheet over the face of the deceased, and concluded she was dead, though he could not say (being rather short-sighted) whether he actually saw the deceased that morning or not. He was told that she had died about five o'clock in the morning, and he had accordingly gave a certificate to the effect that death was the result of old age. On Monday morning, (the day preceding the decease of Mrs. ELLYETT) he was called upon to see Mrs. BENNETT, whom he found sitting in a chair in the down-stair room. She told him she felt ill all over, and particularly complained of pain in her leg. He ordered her to bed, and prescribed for her; but when he saw her on the following day, she was still sitting in the same chair, and had not been in bed all the previous night. She then appeared very sleepy and drowsy, and at the time she was unable to account for such symptoms, though he had his suspicions that they were pulmonary symptoms of apoplexy. He again ordered her removal to bed, whither she was taken, and he visited her the same evening. She was then still more drowsy, and they could not arouse her. This strengthened his suspicions in regard to the disease, but he did consider it arose from something she had taken. On the following day he again went to her bedroom, and she died while he stood at her bedside. He certified the cause of her death to be apoplexy.

That (Friday) afternoon he and Dr. DAVEY had made a *post-mortem* examination of the body of Ann ELLYETT. Externally she represented the usual appearances of a death from natural causes. On examining the interior of the head they found the brain in a healthy condition, though there was a very slight effusion in the ventricles. They found the right lung was healthy, but the posterior part of the left lung was considerably congested. The heart, liver, and kidneys were in a healthy condition, but the intestines were too decomposed to arrive at any conclusion in respect to them. The stomach (with its contents) and a portion of liver were removed and put in a stone jar, which was sealed for analysis. He held that, considering the age of the deceased, the state of her left lung (diseases of that nature called pneumonia) would in itself be sufficient to cause death. They discovered nothing to show that the deceased had taken any irritant poison, and, as far as his own observation went, he had no reason to suspect that any poison whatever had been taken. But in the absence of an analysis of the contents of the stomach, he was unable to speak positively.

They then examined the body of the deceased Kesia BENNETT, whose external appearance was also natural. On removing the skull, they found the vessels of the membrane covering the brain in a highly apoplectic state, and all the vessels of the brain greatly congested throughout, and there was a

considerable effusion in both ventricles. They then examined the chest, and found the lungs in a healthy condition, the heart and liver were large, and the intestines were healthy. They removed the stomach and its contents, and put them in a jar for analysis. The state of the brain in her case was such as he expected to find from the symptoms during life ; but there was nothing whatever to lead him to suspect that any poison had been taken by Mrs. BENNETT, and he had no reason to believe that she died from any other cause than apoplexy.

Dr. Alexander George DAVEY deposed that he was not acquainted with either of the deceased persons during their life time, but he quite concurred in what had been stated by Mr. PINNIGER in regard to the *post-mortem* examination, that one died from apoplexy on the brain, and the other from pneumonia. In answer to the juror, Mr. DAVEY admitted that death from some narcotic poison would, in some instances have a similar effect to the brain as that discovered in respect to Mrs. BENNETT, but if it had not been suggested to his mind that there were suspicions about poison, his examination itself would not have led him to suspect even the possibility of the presence of poison.

The jury were a long time coming to a determination as to whether they should adjourn for further investigation or not, as one or two evidently desired that the contents of the sealed jars should be sent to an analytic chemist. It was urged also by one juror (though the majority wanted to return a verdict of "Death from natural causes" forthwith) that they had been summoned there to investigate the whole matter, and they ought to have every circumstance brought before them before they came to a decision.

In deference to his wishes, Mary NEWBURY, servant of the deceased Mrs. ELLYETT, was called. She said she had been in the service of Mrs. ELLYETT for nearly three years, and Mrs. BENNETT had nursed her about seven years. When the latter became ill, she employed a Mrs. BETTS to wait on her, and that person and herself (witness) attended to her till she died. She never had any reason to suspect that Mrs. BENNETT ever took anything that was injurious. A Mr. WEEKS of the Strand, used to visit Mrs. ELLYETT and Mrs. BENNETT frequently, nearly every morning and afternoon. He was related to Mrs. ELLYETT, and he was the only relative who visited her during her late illness.

The jury discussed the matter for a length of time, and eventually the one or two who held out for further investigation, complied with the evident intention of the jury, and ultimately a verdict to the effect that both the deceased persons died from natural causes were returned.

On the following day (Saturday) both the bodies were duly interred in the Ryde Cemetery, and the funerals were conducted by Messrs. A.J. and W. COOMBES.
