

SHOCKING SUICIDE AT RYDE.

**A VOLUNTEER SERGEANT-INSTRUCTOR
SHOOTS HIMSELF**

An inquest was held at the Gem Inn, Hill-street, Ryde, on Thursday afternoon by the Coroner (E.F. BLAKE, Esq.) on the body of **Sergeant-Instructor David Douglas MACKIE**, who had committed suicide by shooting himself in the Volunteer Armoury at the Town Hall on Wednesday morning. – Mr. Edgar JAMES was the foreman of the jury.

The first witness called was Major James FLUX, commanding the Ryde detachment of the Volunteers, who deposed that he had known the deceased for nine or ten years altogether. He had been sergeant-instructor to the Volunteers there for two years and ten months, since the latter part of January, 1890. Prior to that he was sergeant-instructor at Cowes for five years and ten months. Witness last saw deceased on Saturday morning, when he reported that he had made all the arrangements for the prize shooting on Monday. Witness saw nothing peculiar about him at that time. He did not see him again, witness being unable to go to the range. He left a note for the deceased in the Armoury at five o'clock on Tuesday, and he found on Wednesday morning that it had not been touched. On the previous morning at quarter-past ten exactly, a Volunteer named GALLOP and a pensioner named WOLFF, who had assisted the deceased in cleaning the arms, reported to witness that they thought there was something wrong in the Armoury. That was in Lind-street. The front door was locked. Witness went immediately to the side door in the Market. He found he could only open the door very slightly. He managed to squeeze through and struck a wax match. The place was only lighted from the street by two little squares of glass. The street door was some distance from this. He saw that Sergeant MACKIE was lying there in the Armoury on his back. His head was about 10 or 12 inches from the door. A rifle was lying across him. Before doing anything else witness immediately went out, sent GALLOP for the superintendent of police and WOLFF for Surgeon-Captain RICH, who was the medical officer of the Volunteers. He went back at once to have another look. He noticed that Sergeant-MACKIE had taken off his right boot, which was close by the side of his foot. He had taken the flat mohair boot-lace from the boot, made a bow and placed round the trigger guard, and placed his foot inside the noose. The rifle produced (with the boot lace on it) was lying about nine inches from his face. He saw that there was a round wound just under the chin like that which a rifle bullet would make. Mr. WADHAM, partner of Mr. RICH, arrived and P.S. MARTIN, and afterwards the superintendent. They made a thorough examination.

Q. You believe he was dead at that time? - A. He had been dead for hours. He was nearly cold. I should think he had been dead three hours. The bullet had passed through his head. I should imagine from what was on the floor of the Armoury that his head had been completely cleared out. There was nearly a bucketful, roughly speaking, of blood and brains lying about there. It was a terrible sight.

Q. During the last month or few weeks have you seen him on many occasions? - A. I have seen him most days.

Q. Have you seen an alteration in him either of manner, demeanour, or conduct to what he was some considerable time since? - A. No; I have seen nothing. I know he has been most steady for three months until last week. I understand he was more excitable then.

Q. As far as your own knowledge goes you have never seen anything strange in him? - A. No. He would not show it to me if he could possibly help it.

Q. You have never had any occasion to form any opinion in your mind as to his being strange in his manner? - A. No, I have not, quite the contrary; not at all a likely man to commit such a deed. I was very much surprised at this.

Witness said he believed deceased slightly raised his head from the floor and pressed the trigger with his foot. The bullet had gone through the door at the back 12 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches from the ground. He extracted the cartridge case produced. Major FLUX said he believed an impression had got about that the Sergeant-Instructor had appeared before the Colonel. He could say that no better non-commissioned officer was ever attached to a Volunteer corps than Sergt. MACKIE. Far from being reported for any matter, he was to be commended for any duty he had to perform. He had never had the slightest fault to find with him. In anything he did he was energetic and persevering. He considered nothing a trouble if he could save the time

of members, going beyond what was absolutely required of him. He did not believe that he had an enemy in the detachment; he was most popular. As acting adjutant of the regiment, he could say that Colonel CRADOCK could not have had a better opinion of any non-commissioned officer. He personally introduced him to the Duke of CONNAUGHT at Parkhurst during the Whitsuntide manoeuvres, as a smart specimen of what a Volunteer-instructor should be. Witness had an impression that deceased had monetary troubles.

Capt. Henry SWEETMAN said he had known deceased for several years. He last saw him alive on Tuesday afternoon after 4 o'clock, on the range at Binstead, where the recruits' prize-firing was going on.

Q. Did you see anything strange about him? - A. He was very much depressed indeed. I expected to find him so. I had seen him at the same place on Monday. I first saw him about half-past 9 in the morning. Capt. ELLERY was then in charge of the range, and MACKIE was attending to his duties as usual and had started the shooting. There is not the slightest doubt that the man was greatly depressed. I noticed it at the time. That was an unusual occurrence with him. He was a lively disposition as a rule. I made no comment at the time. He took the names of the men as they came on the range at 200 yards and arranged the cards for them. He shot himself at 200 yards. I wish to emphasise this. He made a score of 23 out of a possible 25 and attended to his duties until the remainder of the men had fired at that range. We then retired to 500 yards. Capt. ELLERY and I, with the assistance of MACKIE, again started the men shooting and arranged the order. Capt. ELLERY left me in charge of the range at about twenty past 11. MACKIE remained another ten minutes and asked leave to retire. It could not have been more than a quarter of an hour or twenty minutes when one of the sergeants came to me and said MACKIE was ill with a bilious attack. I told the sergeant MACKIE might have three or four hours leave if he chose; he could go into the magazine and lie down. He went and remained there for the remainder of the day. I inquired for him in the afternoon, found he was still poorly, and extended his leave. I did not see him again that day. The next day I went on the range expressly to see him. The man was very conscientious about his duties and I knew he would probably feel that he had not been able to carry out his duties as he would have wished on the first day. I wished to relieve his mind of any anxiety. I told him that everything was all right. I had reported the matter to Capt. ELLERY, and if Major FLUX should say anything to him, if he would refer to us, I would explain the whole matter to him; he need not worry about it. He said he then felt better.

Q. Have you at any other time, during your knowledge of him, ever seen anything strange or peculiar in his conduct. - A. Never.

Q. You are not aware, of your own knowledge, of anything that might have over-balanced his mind? - A. Of my own knowledge, no; not from him direct. He was respected by everybody in the Battalion. He was a man who always transacted his duties well.

Q. From what you saw of his depression on Monday and Tuesday, were you altogether surprised at hearing the result? - A. I must say it was a very great shock. I might not have noticed the depression had it not been for the following events.

Major FLUX said he thought deceased would have been very hasty under depression.

Sergeant James William WALLER deposed that on Tuesday last he was at the prize-shooting in the afternoon. When he got there he found deceased standing amongst the men who were firing. He seemed very quiet, sufficiently so for him to notice a difference from his usual habit. He did not ask if there was anything the matter. He should not have considered him an excitable man. He was very much surprised to hear that such a thing had happened. He had never given witness the idea that there was anything upon his mind. He thought deceased would have been a man to keep his troubles to himself. At quarter to five on Tuesday witness sent for a cab, as deceased seemed quite in a state of collapse of mind and body. After Captain SWEETMAN had gone, they went from the range into the Fleming Arms, witness, deceased, and Col.-Sergt. RANDES, to have something to drink. There deceased had two pennyworth of whiskey in nearly half a pint of milk. Witness went into another room to speak to a person he knew there. Meanwhile Col.-Sergt. RANDES went home. In about five minutes witness returned, and the landlord's daughter told witness that deceased had gone into a room opposite. He was seated on a chair with his head on his hands. Witness saw a considerable change in him, and asked what was the matter. He said he felt so queer and giddy, his head was bad, but he thought he would be all right in a minute. Witness waited a quarter of an hour or more, but he did not seem to get any better. He did not seem to know what he was doing. He seemed to want to talk of two or three different things at one time. Witness could understand him, but what he said was disconnected. Witness sent for a cab to go home with him. When they had gone about 200 yards he seemed to get better, and witness left him at the parish church thinking he was well enough to go alone

The Foreman : Do you think his drink had been tampered with in any way? There is a report about that it was so. – A. I don't think so.

Capt. SWEETMAN : I am perfectly certain that it was a moral impossibility on the first day, even if he had been drinking from the time he left me till he was reported ill, that he could have got drunk in the time.

The Coroner said the Foreman asked whether deceased's whiskey had been drugged in any way.

Capt. SWEETMAN : The man himself was so surprised at his feeling as he did that he asked the question, "Could I have been drugged."

Mr. WALLER : He asked me the question on Tuesday.

Mr. JAMES : I have heard it from several.

The Coroner : You are satisfied that he was not?

Witness : Perfectly.

Mrs. Emily MACKIE, deceased's widow, said his age was 44. His general health was very good.

Q. Have you seen anything different in him during the last week? - A. Yes, a lot of difference. Last Thursday I first saw the alteration.

Q. And what did you notice? - A. Well, he had been drinking very hard. He went on worse on Friday and Saturday.

Q. Had he anything to worry him or cause him to go on in this way? - A. No.

Q. You don't know of any trouble? - A. I don't know of anything, nothing whatever. It was a very uncommon occurrence his drinking to extremes. I spoke to him about it many a time. He said company was the reason. He had not been having more company then than at ordinary times. He was better on Sunday. On Monday he went from home between quarter and half-past seven, and did not return till 11 at night.

Q. What state was he in then? - A. Oh dear, sir, he had to be brought home. He could not walk. That was from drink. He was brought upstairs and put to bed. On Tuesday he left for the range about 12. He was not sober. He came home at 6 o'clock.

Q. How did he come home? – A. He came home in an awful bad state then. He said he drove home.

Q. What did you consider the bad state was owing to? – A. Why, with drink, sir. I helped him take his boots off. He went and laid down on the couch till half-past eight, when we went to bed. I gave him a drink of water at quarter to three. He was awful bad then. I had to hold the cup to him he was so bad. He was awake a long time, and then went to sleep again. He got up about 6 and put his trousers on. His jacket and waistcoat were downstairs. He had nothing before he went out. I got up at half-past 7, and when I came down he was gone. He did not tell me where he was going to. On busy days I have known him many times to go down to the Armoury. I never saw him again.

Q. Had he ever threatened to commit suicide? - A. No. I had not seen him so bad before as he had been this time. We have been married ten years on New Year's Day.

Witness repeated that she knew of nothing preying on deceased's mind.

Q. The home had gone on quietly and nicely? - A. Yes. He had not taken drink for four months prior to Thursday. One time he was 15 months without taking any. He had occasional outbreaks.

Witness again said that deceased did not tell her he was going to the Armoury on Wednesday morning.

Capt. SWEETMAN : Mrs. MACKIE stated to me, in Capt. ELLERY's presence, that he did.

Witness emphatically denied this.

The Coroner once more questioned the witness as to any worry, quarrel, or dispute, and she said she knew of none whatever.

Capt. SWEETMAN : Did Mrs. MACKIE refuse to help him upstairs on Monday, and was the door left open all the night till the policeman found it.

Witness said when Sergeant NEWMAN went down-stairs he said he would shut the door after him. They did not know but what he did. Some one did rap at the door and call. Deceased had not been sun-struck.

By a Juror (Mr. F.G. FLUX) : On Tuesday morning he said he wished he could get rid of the pains in his head.

Another Juror (Mr. C. COX) to Sergt. WALLER : How was it he got so fearfully drunk after you left him? - A. I cannot imagine.

The Coroner suggested that the excitement of getting into the carriage might have then died away.

Capt. SWEETMAN said that what Mrs. MACKIE took for drunkenness was really illness. He could not possibly have had any drink between two and six, except two-pennyworth of whiskey.

The Coroner said a drinking bout would have a considerably worse effect on an excitable man than on one of a more even temperament.

Major FLUX : Especially after four months' total abstinence.

The Coroner said he understood that Major FLUX looked on the deceased as a respectable man not at all addicted to what the wife now said. He would not have suggested or believed what they were now told.

Major FLUX : I don't think any one would believe that. I should have thought he was the last person.

Mr. Frank J. WADHAM, surgeon, said he had known deceased about 18 months and had attended him for bronchitis. He deposed to examining the body in the Armoury and finding a small punctured gunshot wound under the chin. The shot had come out at the upper and back part of the skull. Death must have been instantaneous. He had seen deceased continually at home and had always found him quite sober and respectable.

Q. Was he a man, from what you saw of him, likely to commit suicide? - A. Not at all – the last man.

In reply to the Coroner, the witness said that in the hypothetical case of a man who broke out into intemperance, had delirium tremens, and then had his drink cut off or cut it off himself, he might have a fit of depression which would overbalance his mind.

The Foreman: I don't think he was a man who drank heavily. I have seen him several times lately. I was in his company last Thursday night. I was with him till 10 o'clock. He was no more drunk than I am now.

Mr. WADHAM said he meant a man who drank heavily for weeks, not for three or four days. He would not have depression after going without for a day and then having a good night.

Major FLUX said deceased told him a son he was very fond of had got married without the permission of his commanding officer and was going away to India. He really made himself ill about it. Having heard something about that recently, would that overbalance his mind?

Capt. SWEETMAN said they had heard this woman was being sent home from the regiment disgraced and had landed a day or two ago in Portsmouth. It was the general belief that she had landed.

Mr. WADHAM said his replies were as to a hypothetical case, not Sergt MACKIE's. If a man who had been drinking heavily got over two days he was not likely to suffer depression.

Mr. COX could not believe the evidence of the wife. He thought deceased must have had another collapse when he got home.

Mr. WADHAM told the Coroner it was not possible for a man to absolutely recover from drunkenness for a few minutes and then to relapse into intoxication.

Capt. SWEETMAN mentioned that deceased was locked in the magazine on Monday, and could not have got drunk.

Major FLUX produced the recruits' firing cards filled up on Tuesday by the deceased to show that he could not have been intoxicated when he wrote them.

The jury deliberated in private and returned a verdict of suicide whilst of unsound mind.

Capt. ELLERY was present at the inquiry. Deceased served in the Seaforth Highlanders prior to coming to the Island Volunteers, and was in the Afghan and Egyptian campaigns. He had been twice married and leaves several children. The funeral takes place this (Saturday) afternoon at 2.30, with military honours.

ISLE OF WIGHT COUNTY PRESS Saturday 12th November 1892

FUNERAL OF **SERGT. -INST. MACKIE** - The remains of the late Sergt. -Inst. D. D. MACKIE were interred on Saturday at the Ryde Cemetery with military honours. The coffin, which was covered with the Union Jack as a pall, and had the deceased's sword and helmet upon it, was removed from the mortuary on the shoulders of a number of his comrades. A wreath of lovely flowers, a mark of sincere respect from the officers, non-commissioned officers, and members of the Ryde detachment, was also placed upon the

pall. Sergt.-Major BEADLE (Newport) and Sergt.-Instructors LONGMUIR (Ventnor), EVANS (Sandown), and MCGILL (Cowes) acted as pall-bearers. The firing party was under the command of Sergt. GRIFFIN. Major FLUX, Capt. ELLERY, and Capt. C. SWEETMAN were the officers present. Some 60 other volunteers also followed. Sergt.-Major BARBER, Q.M. Sergt. KEMP, Sergt. TAPLEN, and Troopers FLUX and ROSHER, of the Island Troop of Yeomanry, attended. There were likewise present ex-Sergt.-Major WILLIAMS, ex-Q.M.-Sergt. WATERWORTH, of the Volunteers, ex-Sergt. BRANDISH and Mr. COOMBES, of the Seaforth Highlanders, Q.M.-Sergt. HOWDEN and Col.-Sergt. MORGAN, of the Commissariat Corps, and P.C. McLEAN. The head-quarter companies sent both a floral and a china wreath. Sergt. MACKIE's old comrades at Cowes likewise went a wreath, as did also Sergt.-Inst. LONGMUIR and Mr. and Mrs. ALEXANDER. The band played the "Dead March" from Saul, en route from the mortuary to the Cemetery. The Rev. C.R. SHARPE officiated. The usual three volleys were fired over the grave.

ISLE OF WIGHT COUNTY PRESS Saturday 19th November 1892

THE LATE SERGT.-INSTRUCTOR MACKIE.

To the Editor of the Isle of Wight County Press.

Sir, - At the inquest on Sergt. MACKIE there were some very erroneous remarks made by Mr. FLUX and Mr. SWEETMAN concerning Mr. MACKIE's son and his wife. The young man had the full consent of his officers, and his wife is on the strength of the regiment, with her husband in Bengal, and has no thought of coming home. As the remarks referred to are utterly untrue, I should feel greatly obliged if you would allow me to contradict them in your valuable paper. - Yours truly, H. WILLIAMS

75, St. John's-road, Ryde,
November 16th, 1892
