

SUICIDE AT STANPIT.

C.T. August 30, 1902

On Wednesday evening an inquest was held at the Ship in Distress inn, touching the death of Mr William Langdon, late of the R.A., the landlord of that public house, who committed suicide by taking poison on the previous day. Mr. Arthur Macklin was chosen foreman of the jury, and the circumstances of the case will be found in the following evidence:

Fanny Brown of Haven, stated that she came to the house on Tuesdays and Fridays to help Mrs. Langdon. When she came at half-past seven on Tuesday morning, Mr. Langdon came down and let her in. She started work, and just before eight she saw Mr. Langdon in the garden with Mr. Stout. She did not see him again until 10.40 when he came back. He served someone in the tap, and then came into the little sitting room and said to his wife: "You don't want me, and I don't want you, so I will take my last drink." She did not know whether he drank anything or not. She and Mrs. Langdon went upstairs. In about ten or fifteen minutes Mr. Stout called witness down. When she came down she saw Mr. Langdon lying on the tap room floor, and helped to carry him into the little room and left him there. He did not speak. Witness had worked there on Tuesdays and Fridays for twelve months, and she had heard disagreements between them, but she had never heard him threaten his life before. He was in his usual health. She noticed no difference in him on Tuesday. Mrs. Langdon did not speak to him. Witness was shown a bottle, and in reply to a question said she had never seen it till Dr. Hartford showed it to her yesterday. Witness did not know whether he was in trouble or not. He was landlord of the Ship in Distress. He was 56 in April last.

Henry Stout of Stanpit Brewery said that he saw deceased at his house on Tuesday morning at eight o'clock. He called upon him and helped him put up some potatoes for the Barracks. He took witness's pony and said he should not be gone more than an hour. He asked witness to have a drink, and they each had a brandy and lemon. About an hour after witness met deceased at Tom Mudford's house—the Stag, Purewell. They went back to where the tramway is starting and five of them had two quarts at the Red Lion. They then came back to the Stag, had a glass, and at the Rising Sun they drank again with Southgate and his wife. They then came back to the Ship in Distress. Mr. Langdon left the tap and brought in something. He tapped the table and said "Good-luck all, especially you, Harry. The best of luck." With that he drank the contents of the glass, and put the empty glass upon the table. He began to sink and witness and Southgate caught him and let him down. Witness saw nothing of the bottle produced till the doctor came. Witness said "He has done something wrong," Mudford went for the doctor. Witness called the last witness, and she, witness and Southgate carried him into the parlour. He seemed happy enough all the time witness was with him. He had heard they had rows but he did not know it.

George Mudford, landlord of the Stag, Purewell, said that deceased and the last witness called at his place yesterday morning, and asked witness to go with them. They each had a glass of beer before starting. They all went to the Red Lion, and had two quarts between five of them. They came back straight to his place and had some more, and then to the Sun and had some more. They then came on to that house and had some more. Mr. Langdon went out and got something. He came in again, wished them all good luck and drank what he had in the glass. Witness went for a doctor. When deceased returned he did not seem any the worse for drink.

Mr. A. H. B. Hartford, a doctor practising at Christchurch, said that Mudford came to him at 11 a.m. on Tuesday and asked him to come and see Mr. Langdon at the Ship in Distress who

had been taken suddenly ill. He found deceased lying on the sofa. He was pale, unconscious, and breathing heavily. His aspect was not that of a drunken man. Witness asked if he had taken anything unusual that morning. He was told that he had taken some brandy. He was shown a bottle labelled "Cyanide of potassium—poison." He sent Mudford for a stomach pump, antidotes and other appliances. Deceased gradually grew worse and expired about a quarter of an hour after he (the doctor) arrived. Witness asked what glasses he had used, but no one knew. Mrs. Langdon showed him the bottle. Witness made a post mortem examination that morning. The body was very muscular and well nourished. Rigor mortis had passed off. The body was very pale except the lower parts. The venous system was disgorged, the blood bright purple; the lungs congested towards the base, and signs of old pleurisy were apparent. The heart was hypertrophied and dilated, the right side of it being gorged with blood, the mitral valve leaky of old standing. There was cirrhosis of the liver and kidneys; the spleen was enlarged. The stomach and intestines were full of fluid material; the other organs were normal. He did not consider it necessary to examine the brain. He made an analysis of the contents of the stomach and bowels and found four ozs. reddish matter, in which he detected partly digested food, blood and free prussic acid. Death was due to the ingestion of a large quantity of cyanide of potassium.

Fanny Brown, recalled, said that when Mr. Langdon came into the room where his wife was, he spoke first and made the remark she had mentioned. The wife made no reply. Mrs. Langdon was occasionally the worse for drink.

The Coroner asked the jury whether they wished to hear the evidence of the wife. P.S. White said Mrs. Langdon was in an hysterical condition, and would not be able to make a statement. The Coroner thought it would be of little use, and she was not called.

A verdict of Suicide while temporarily insane was recorded.