

Arthur Abraham John Cant

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NEWPORT SMALLHOLDER'S SAD END.

Hangs Himself in Cart Shed.

A painful sensation was caused in the Newport district, where he was widely known, by the sad end of Mr. Arthur Abraham John Cant, smallholder and dealer, of Spring Gardens, Gunville, who was found dead, hanging in the cart shed on his holding, early on Sunday morning.

Deceased was a familiar figure in Newport market, where for many years he had been one of the assistants of Sir Francis Pittis and Son, auctioneers, marking the pigs purchased by buyers from the mainland and superintending the transport of cattle from the market. He was a member of the Conservative Club and generally esteemed. Much sympathy is felt with his widow and the family in their extremely sad bereavement.

The Inquest.

The Deputy Coroner (Francis A. Joyce, Esq.) conducted the inquiry into the tragedy at the Methodist School-room, Gunville, on Monday morning. P.S. Barber acted as Coroner's officer.

The widow, Millicent Annie Cant, stated that the deceased was 47. He left home on Saturday evening about 7.30, saying he was going to Newport. He then appeared to be in his usual health, and not at all depressed. Although he said that he would not be long he did not return until 11.20 p.m.—The Coroner: was he quite sober?—Witness: Well he had had quite enough to drink, but he knew what he was doing. She made the remark "What a time of the night to come in!" but her husband merely replied that he was going to bed, and did so.

She went to bed about 15 minutes later, and he was then apparently asleep. She did not go to sleep and at about 12.30 a.m. deceased got up and dressed, and said "I am going down into the yard. If I am not back in 10 minutes you will know I am gone".—The Coroner: What did you infer from that, that he meant to commit suicide?—Witness: No, I did not take any notice of it, as he had said the same thing several times before. She did not say anything further to him, or try to dissuade him from going out. Just before he went he remarked "Have you got the insurance paid up, because, if so, it is goodbye. I am going to the cart shed. You can find me there if you want me".

After a time, as he did not return, she became somewhat alarmed and asked her son John, a lad of 16, to go and see if his father was alright. He came back and told her daughter that he was asleep on the straw in the cart shed, and her daughter gave her (witness) the message. At 6.15 the next morning, when she called her son to go to his work, she asked him to see if his father was all right, and just before 7 o'clock he went out and returned to say that his father was hanging in the shed. He immediately went to get P.C. Ward.

In further answer to the Coroner witness said it was not the first time that her husband had slept in the shed. About a year ago he suffered a heavy financial loss through swine fever, and that worried him. He was soon upset and quick tempered. He never kept her short of money, but she knew that he had difficulty in getting in money that was owed him, which also worried him. She was not aware that he was in any special financial difficulty, however. He had not threatened to commit suicide because of any financial trouble. They had no serious quarrel when he came home on Saturday night.

The Coroner and the Son's Ordeal.

The next witness was the deceased's son, Arthur Henry John Cant, a milk roundsman. He deposed that when he went to the cart shed soon after his father had gone out he took an electric torch and saw that his father was then fast asleep on the straw. He could hear him breathing. At 6.50 the next morning, when he went to get his bicycle from a shed near the cart house, he looked in and saw that his father was hanging by a rope from the beam. He informed his sister and then went for P.C. Ward.—The Coroner: There was no one else about to help you?—No.—And you did not like to cut him down yourself?—No.

The Coroner: You should have done so. You are just old enough to have done so, but I won't say a word of reproach to you, as naturally it was a great shock to you to find your father like that. I must, however, point out, as I have done many times, that it is not necessary to wait until a police officer arrives before a man who is hanging is cut down. A few seconds might make the difference, although in this case the evidence is that it would not have saved his life.

A Determined Suicide.

P.C. Ward, stationed at Carisbrooke, described finding the body suspended by a rope from a beam. The deceased's toes were just touching the ground. He had apparently fixed the rope to the beam and round his neck, and then jumped from a heap of straw.—The Coroner: It was evidently a determined act?—Witness: Yes. The constable added that he had known the deceased for six years, and he had never seen him the worse for drink. He lost about £100 as the result of swine fever on his premises in June, 1936, and in conversations with the witness at that time he admitted that he did not feel any too sure of himself, and that he thought it would be best to end it all. Witness pointed out the folly of such thoughts and urged him to pull himself together and see his troubles through. Mrs. Cant did not know anything about that, but he mentioned it to Cant's son. Deceased did not receive any compensation for the loss of about 50 pigs.—The Coroner: Is there no redress under such circumstances?—P.S. Barber: Nothing at all, now, Sir.

Dr. John A. T. Griffiths, locum tenens for Dr. A. A. Heathcote, of Newport, said that death was due to strangulation. In his opinion death had taken place at least six hours before he saw the body at 7.30 a.m. on Sunday morning.

The Verdict.

The Coroner said the facts in that unfortunate case were extremely clear; the deceased evidently committed suicide in a very determined manner. He did not think that drink had very much to do with it; it was far more likely that the financial losses he sustained as the result of swine fever had a depressing effect on his mind, and caused him to yield to a sudden impulse to end his life. His verdict was that deceased committed suicide by hanging whilst temporarily in an unsound state of mind. He deeply sympathised with the widow and the members of the family in their sad bereavement.

The Funeral

Was on Wednesday, a service being held at the Gunville Methodist Church conducted by the Rev. J. Higman. The family mourners included the widow, the Misses M. and W. Cant (daughters), Mr. J. Cant (son), Messrs. C. and R. Cant (brothers), Mesdames T. Glassey and T. Freeman (sisters), Mr. Woodford (father-in-law), Mr. T. Ash (brother-in-law), Messrs. J. Cant and T. Ash (nephews), Miss N. Earley (niece), Mesdames C. and B. Cant, Smith, and Woodford (sister-in-law), Mrs. Reynolds (cousin). Mrs. Cant (mother) and Mesdames Earley and Ash (sisters) were prevented from attending by indisposition.

Among others present were Mr. J. J. Simmonds, T.C., Mr. G. H. Woodmore (Messrs. John Sheath and Company), Messrs. H. Wickens, A. Gates, F. and W. Cass (Ryde), W. B. Ash, L. H. Shutler, H. Hobbs, O. C. Hamilton, J. Sillence, F. P. Abraham, F. Burt, and P. W. Woodford. Mesdames A. Chiverton, Robins, W. Newbery, A. Leayard, A. Hayward, O. White, Whittington, J. Wheeler, and F. Pointer, and Mr. and Mrs. A. James.

The interment was at Carisbrooke Cemetery, where many beautiful wreaths were placed on the grave, including tokens from the Newport Conservative Club and the staff and dealers at Newport Market.

Mrs. Cant desires to express her grateful thanks to the doctor, P.C. Ward, Mrs. F. Gates, and Messrs. A. Gates and F. P. Abraham for their kindness, and to all sending floral tributes. Messrs. O. C. Hamilton and Son made the arrangements.

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