

John Rawlings

Portsmouth Evening News - 11 November 1903

Parkhurst Convict's Suicide.

On Tuesday afternoon the Deputy Coroner for the Isle of Wight (Mr. F. A. Joyce) held an inquest at Parkhurst Prison on the body of John Rawlings, aged 43, a convict undergoing a term of 20 years' penal servitude, who hung himself in the hospital cell on the previous Sunday. Deceased was convicted at Birmingham in March last for wounding with intent to murder his wife, and was received at Parkhurst on April 24th, when he was admitted to hospital.

Nurse Hunt, engaged at the hospital, said he last saw deceased alive 11.20 on Sunday morning, when he handed prisoner's dinner into the cell. Prisoner then complained of slight pain in the head. Witness returned to deceased's cell at 11.45 a.m., and on unlocking the door saw prisoner hanging from the cell ventilator by means of his towel, which was tied round his neck, and his handkerchief was fastened to the towel and ventilator.

Dr. Treadwell, chief medical officer the prison, said deceased was re-admitted to hospital on November 7th, the day before his death, because of his excited condition and complaining of headache. Prisoner was classed as weak-minded. Deceased attempted suicide by cutting his throat at the time he attacked his wife, before conviction, and he then injured the larynx, which accounted for the fact that he occasionally suffered from laryngeal spasms, making a little difficult to breathe, and thus to him death from strangulation was an easier matter than it otherwise would have been.

The Coroner said that some years had elapsed since a suicide had taken place there, and this showed that due care was exercised by the officials.

The Jury returned a verdict that deceased committed suicide whilst temporarily insane, and the prison officials were free from blame.

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