

Thomas Hallett

Hampshire Advertiser – 21 September 1867

NEWPORT

SHOCKING CASE OF DELIBERATE SUICIDE BY HANGING. On Saturday morning, about 10 o'clock, the dead body of Thomas Hallett, aged 49, was found hanging by the neck in the loft of a store in the occupation of Robert Cross, basket maker, in Upper St. James's-street. Deceased, a man of dissipated habits, whose father some years ago came to a like dismal end when occupying Claybrooks Farm, in the parish of Whippingham, was a coach wheelwright, and had a small income from some property. He had been tippling very freely for many weeks, and on Friday, whilst calmly smoking a pipe, he procured a piece of rope, saying he wanted it for cording a box. The same night he went to the loft, saying he was going to lie down there for the night, and at that time he was drunk and looked wild. The next morning he was found hanging by the rope which had been given to him. On the evening of Saturday Mr. F. Blake, coroner, held an inquest at the Grapes Inn, on view of the body.

--Robert Cross, of St. James's-street, basket maker, deposed to finding the body hanging with the head thrown forward and the knees barely touching a heap of witheys. Deceased well knew the premises, as he was in the habit of coming to the store and chatting with a workman there. Witness kept a beershop, which deceased frequented, and deceased was there from 7 o'clock till just past 10 o'clock on Friday night. Thought he drank only two pints of beer that evening. There was nothing unusual in deceased's appearance or manner that day, and when he left that night he was sober. At times, when visiting the house, deceased had appeared low in spirits, and talked about his family affairs. Did not give deceased permission to sleep in the loft on Friday night. Had once refused him, telling him to go to his lodgings in New-street.

--Mary Farley, who lived near the store, and kept the key, said deceased came to her house for the key just past 10 o'clock on Friday night, saying he wanted to lie down in the loft. He was not sober, and he looked in a very wild state. She tried in vain to persuade him to go to his lodgings, as it was not very late. About five minutes after he left her house with the key she went to the store with a man to see a rabbit there, and deceased was in the store groping for a cushion he was in the habit of using. He ascended the loft stairs by her light, and she saw no more of him. In the morning, thinking of the wild look of deceased, she got Cross to go and see if he was all right.

--William Hodge, a workman at the store, gave evidence that at deceased's request on Friday, about 3 p.m., he gave him about 7 feet of cord, which deceased, who was smoking, said was to cord a box which was to be sent to a little boy away at Manchester. Deceased was found hanging by this piece of cord.

--Hannah Cartwright said deceased lodged at her house in New-street. He slept there, except during the present week, but he had taken no meals there for several weeks. Deceased's son, about 19 years of age, also lodged at her house. She knew nothing of deceased having to send a box away to Manchester or elsewhere. Deceased could always gain admission at his lodgings at night.

--Dr. H. Castle gave evidence as to the position of the body when hanging, which showed that deceased had thrown himself forward and bent his knees for the purpose of strangling himself. His opinion was that the body had been hanging from ten to fourteen hours.

--The coroner, in summing up, pointed out the clearness of the evidence as to the act being deliberate, the method in which it was carried out, and the apparent sanity of the deceased up to the time when he was last seen alive, which evidence taken together with the medical evidence as to the time the body had been hanging pointed to a verdict of *felo de se*.

--The jury, however, returned for their verdict--"That the deceased died from hanging himself, but the evidence is insufficient to show the state of mind."

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