

Sidney Arthur Hunt

**Isle of Wight County Press
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**OPEN VERDICT ON
NEWPORT MAN**

**Took Large Dose of Sleeping
Tablets**

The Coroner (Mr. R. E. A. Webster) conducted an inquest at the Town Hall, Ryde, on Monday, on Sidney Arthur Hunt, a widower, aged 72, of 82 Medina Avenue, Newport. The inquiry was opened on Saturday at the Royal I.W. County Hospital, where Mr. Hunt, a retired club steward, died on Thursday week. Evidence of identification was then given by his son, Nelblen Sidney Hunt, licensee of the Row Barge Public-house, Newport.

At the resumed hearing Dr. D. G. McCann said he had attended Mr. Hunt for about two and a half years. He had quite a lot of illness, and had been nursed by his wife. When she died in July he missed her badly, and spoke of his loneliness. He had never slept well, and after his wife's death witness had to prescribe sleep inducing drugs. He thought domestic trouble preyed on his mind. Recently he had prescribed five-grain sodium barbitone tablets, which seemed to do him good.

On December 6th Mr. Hunt came to him for a further supply of tablets. He told him his sleep had improved, but said how much he missed his wife, and how difficult things were without her. Witness tried to reassure him, and gave him 28 five-grain sodium barbitone tablets, to be taken one each night. Mr. Hunt suffered from arthritis in the hip, which was painful and which could have been the cause of some of his sleeplessness. He had been living at the house of Mr. and Mrs. H. J. C. Leal, and one of them gave to witness the empty packet which had contained the tablets, after Mr. Hunt had been taken to hospital. It appeared he had taken 24 tablets straight off, and such a big dose would have been very dangerous.

Dr. G. D. Downes (house surgeon at the hospital) said Mr. Hunt was admitted at about 5.30 p.m. on December 10th, and died at about 5 p.m. on the 13th. On admission he was in a coma, and at 10.30 p.m. that day there was evidence that his lungs were beginning to get filled with moisture. His condition deteriorated, and he never came out of the coma. The cause of death was respiratory failure due to bronchial pneumonia, caused by a large dose of sodium barbitone. When he first saw Mr. Hunt he showed symptoms of barbitone poisoning.—In reply to the Coroner, Dr. Downes said that had it been realised first thing in the morning at Mr. Hunt's house that he had taken those tablets the hospital might have had a better chance, but whether they would have succeeded he did not know, in view of the large dose and Hunt's age.

Mrs. Kathleen Mary Leal, of 32 Medina Avenue, said that at the beginning of the year Mr. and Mrs. Hunt came to live next door, and as neighbours they became friendly. When Mrs. Hunt died rather suddenly her husband was badly upset, and at the end of August came to live with them. He was then grief-stricken and depressed. She knew he was taking sleeping tablets prescribed by the doctor. Mr. Hunt regularly attended church, and he joined the Darby and Joan and Literary Clubs at Newport. She had never heard him suggest he might take his own life, but when he first came to them he said he would never be able to live without his wife. At breakfast on December 9th he said, referring to his wife, "I wish I were with her", and shrugged his shoulders. He went to church as usual, and in the afternoon went to bed. He went out afterwards, and she and her husband had gone to bed when he returned home at 10.30 p.m. They heard him let himself in and retire. The next morning she went to call him as usual at

about 8.45. She knocked on his door, but received no reply. When she entered the room he appeared to be sound asleep. He was snoring deeply, but, she thought, naturally. She made no attempt to rouse him, because he preferred to awake naturally, and sometimes slept until dinner-time. At intervals she called him, and when at 4.30 p.m. he was still apparently asleep she called the doctor. Mr. Hunt was taken to hospital in an ambulance. They found the empty tablets in his room.—In reply to Police Sergt. A. Eyles, witness said Mr. Hunt had fits of depression.

Henry James Charlton Leal, husband of the last witness, said that just after he had come to live with them Mr. Hunt was very depressed one evening, and said he could not go on. Latterly witness thought he was getting over his loss. It was about a month ago when he last said he wished to be with his wife.

Walter Andrew Downer, of 5 Heytesbury Road, Newport, said he met Mr. Hunt for the first time the night after Mrs. Hunt's death. Both he and Mr. Hunt were Old Contemptibles, and had become good friends. On the evening of December 9th Mr. Hunt came to his house, and they went to a licensed house, where Mr. Hunt had two or three light ales. Witness and his wife walked to Medina Avenue with him, and he shook hands with them on leaving, and said "Good-bye Wally; good-bye, Mrs. Downer. I'll see you next Saturday". They had had a very happy evening, and had arranged that he should spend Christmas with them. Mr. Hunt had never threatened to take his life in the presence of witness.

The Coroner recorded a verdict of death from respiratory failure, due to bronchial pneumonia, caused by a large dose of sodium barbitone five-grain tablets, there being no evidence to show the state of deceased's mind when he took the tablets.

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