

Joseph Henry Read

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NEWPORT LABOURER'S SUICIDE

Died After Drinking Disinfectant

A verdict that he took his life by drinking "San Izal" disinfectant while the balance of his mind was disturbed was recorded by the Coroner (Mr. R. E. A. Webster) at an inquest at Newport Police Station on Thursday on Joseph Henry Read, a labourer, aged 62, of 2 Dyers Court, Orchard Street, Newport.

Mrs. Amy Doris McMasters, of 6 Highfield Road, Newport, said that Read was her only surviving brother, one of a family of 15, who had worked as a labourer all his life. Recently he had been unemployed. He was a bachelor and lived by himself. She had not seen him very often, and the last time she spoke to him was some months ago, when he was cheerful and well. When she saw him as she passed in a bus about a week ago he looked pale and unwell.

Walter Bertram Ash, an auctioneer's porter, of 1 Dyer's Court, Orchard Street, said that he saw Read at 9:45 a.m. on Saturday standing on his doorstep. He seemed worried and looked haggard. Witness asked him how he felt, and he replied "It's me poor old tabs", meaning his feet. He had suffered a lot with his feet. Witness continued: "At about half-past three I made some tea and went into his house to see if he would like a cup. As I went in I saw a chair turned over, and then found him lying half in the hearth with his head in the fire-place. I guessed he was dead". Read had often complained about his feet, and witness thought that he had some worry. He had never threatened to destroy himself.

P. C. Floyd said that he found Read lying as described. He was dead, and around his mouth were marks of a brown substance, smelling of disinfectant, and in the fire-place was a pool of the same liquid. The bottle produced still contained about two ounces, and he found it sealed on the table.

Ash interposed that he had found the bottle on the table with the cap off, and he had replaced the cap. He was sorry if he had done anything wrong.

The Coroner: There is nothing to worry about, and nothing with which to reproach yourself.

P. C. Floyd said that inside Read's mouth were some small blisters which might have been caused by drinking the disinfectant.

The Coroner read the inscription on the bottle and remarked "This is stronger than carbolic acid. He was probably killed immediately".

P. C. Floyd said that in the bedroom some attempt had been made at cleaning. The house was rather dirty and poorly furnished. There was plenty of food.

Dr. John Cedric Jones said that when he arrived, Read had been dead at least an hour. He had not made a detailed examination, as he had simply been asked to confirm that the man was dead. He had not understood that he would be required to give an opinion as to the cause of death.

The Coroner said that there was not much doubt as to what had happened.

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