

Thomas Henry Sheaf

Isle of Wight Observer – 3 January 1885

DEATH FROM SUFFOCATION. — On Monday, before the deputy-coroner (E.F. Blake, Esq.), an inquest was held at the Guildhall, touching the death of Thomas Henry, nine months old, infant son of Aaron Sheaf, fisherman. — Emma Louisa Sheaf, aged 15, deposed that on Friday her mother left her in charge of the children whilst she went to Portsmouth for the purpose of seeing her sister, who was ill. Between 12 and 1 o'clock of the same day she fed the deceased and put him to bed. He was then all right, and again at 3 o'clock she found her brother in the same condition as when she left him. Upon going upstairs, about 6 o'clock, however, she found the deceased lying in the same place, with the exception that he had slightly turned over. His mouth was uncovered. Witness took him up in her arms, and finding he did not wake up when called by name, she called her father, fearing the child was dead. When she found her infant brother at 6 o'clock he had turned over on his face. — Aaron Sheaf, father of the deceased, stated that a little before 6 o'clock on the evening of Boxing Day his daughter called him upstairs to see the child. He instantly went, and taking up the child found it was cold, though not stiff. Witness sent for medical aid. — Dr. Foster, practising at Newport, stated that at 6 o'clock on Friday evening he was summoned to Sheaf's house, at Coppin's-bridge, where he found the child in his father's arms quite dead. Should think life had been extinct two hours. Witness noticed marks of compression on the side of the face, whilst the nose was quite flattened, caused, he doubted not, by the natural pressure of the head upon the pillow. He had no hesitation in saying that death was caused by suffocation. He might say, however, that in his opinion the whole of the child's head must have been covered by the pillow. — The jury returned a verdict of "Accidental suffocation," it being understood that blame was not attached to any individual.

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