

VERDICT IN THE MOUSEHOLE DROWNING CASE.

FOUND DROWNED.

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PATHETIC STORY AT THE INQUEST

The details connected with the disappearance of Percy Ladner, 34, of Vivian Terrace, Mousehole, and the subsequent recovery of his dead body in the sea near Penlee Point, were investigated at Mousehole on Saturday morning, by Mr. Edward Boase, county coroner.

Dr. J. Symons, Penzance, said he had known deceased for many years, but had not attended him previous to Monday, March 29th, when he consulted him at witness's surgery. He was then depressed on account of his being unable to cope with his present work as a labourer at the G.W.R. extension work at Chyandour. He attributed his inability to insomnia and nerve weakness. Witness thought it was a case of mental depression. The doctor had made a superficial examination that morning, and had no doubt death was due to asphyxia, the result of drowning. Richard Ernest Ladner, meat purveyor, Brook Street, Mousehole, said he was deceased's brother. By trade deceased was a journeyman stone-cutter, but he had not pursued that employment for the past twelve years. Up to the time of joining the Patrol service in Nov., 1914, he was on the Cable staff of the G.P.O., as assistant foreman. He was demobilised in May, 1919. On demobilisation he expected to be reappointed to his former job on the Cable staff, and he was told that as soon as sufficient work was in hand he would be called upon. About six months ago he obtained employment on the G.W.R. Chyandour extension work as ganger's labourer. Some six or seven weeks ago he tried to do stone-cutter's work at Chyandour, but despite the fact that he gave satisfaction, he seemed to displease himself, and told the foreman he would rather return to his former work. He had recently complained to witness that he was suffering from sleeplessness, and loss of appetite.

"He really felt it," declared witness, "having to go back from a mechanic's job to a more or less menial position."

Witness last saw him alive on Sunday, when he seemed in his usual health. On the following Tuesday night he said he did not have a wink of sleep. He left his home a few minutes to 6 a.m. About 1.30 p.m. witness was informed that deceased's coat had been found on the hedge near the Lifeboat Station.

“I then telephoned to Penzance Railway Station,” witness proceeded, “and ascertained that deceased had not reported for duty. I then went to Penzance, and interviewed the foreman, who told me that deceased had told him of his depression, and of his visit to the doctor’s. Deceased’s body was found on the Thursday morning at about ten o’clock.”

In reply to the coroner, Witness said he knew of no communications being left by deceased to account for his disappearance.

The next witness was Charles Garfield Beare, of 3, Abbey Place, Mousehole, a platelayer on the G.W.R. He had been acquainted with deceased for about six months. Deceased and himself had been in the habit of going to their work together. On Wednesday both of them left Mousehole about 6 a.m. Deceased made no complaint.

“When near the Penlee Lifeboat Station,” continued witness, “he went into an adjoining field, saying to me, ‘You go on; I’ll overtake you.’ I continued my journey, but deceased did not overtake me.”

Edward Charles Downing, Gurnick Street, Mousehole, had known deceased for years. The alarm, he said, was raised on Wednesday afternoon, and before he went to bed he assisted in the search. He continued the search next day, and found the body with grappling irons about 11 a.m., lying in about 12 or 15 feet of water off Penlee Point. The body was fully dressed, with the exception of a coat.

Witness agreed with the coroner that there was a potato field next to the lifeboat station, adjoining the road on the Mousehole side. Below the field was a path leading to the rocks, although there was no sheer fall, witness knew it was a rather “ticklish” part to scale at night.

P.C. Penrose, Mousehole, deposed that deceased’s overcoat was found on the hedge adjoining the highway. His under coat and hat were found on the edge of the rocks. If deceased had gone through the potato field, and over the path to fulfil his purpose, witness did not think it was possible for him to have slipped into the water. He might have fallen on to the rocks. If it was possible for a person to slip from the path into the water, it would only be of shallow depth.

The Coroner described it as a case difficult of solution. The medical evidence, and the fact that he had been depressed would suggest to many that what happened might have been caused intentionally. On the other hand he might have gone down to exercise a natural function, and slipped into the water. The evidence was not conclusive in any way, and the verdict would be “Found drowned.”

Transcribed from the Cornish Telegraph.