

Ernest Jacob Groves

Isle of Wight County Press – 13 September 1924

GRAVEL DIGGERS DETERMINED SUICIDE.

FOURTH TRAGEDY IN SAME FAMILY.

A remarkable sequence of four tragedies in one family was disclosed last (Friday) evening at the inquest held by the Deputy Coroner (F. A. Joyce, Esq.), at the Town-hall, Newport, on the body of Ernest Jacob Groves, 58, gravel digger, of Shide, who was found drowned in a gravel-pit pond on St. Georges'-down, on Wednesday. Inspector W. Evans attended the inquest.

Charles Edward Courtney, of 6 Robin Hood-street, Newport, in the employ of Mr. T. H. Alexander, at St. Georges'-down, said deceased had been employed by Mr. Alexander for a considerable time. He last saw him alive at 7 o'clock on Tuesday morning, at St. Georges'-down, when he was walking from the pit where he had been working in the direction of the pond, where his body was found. His food was left near the barrows at the pit in which he had been working alone for several days. Deceased had not seemed depressed just lately. When poorly he seemed rather depressed. – George Osborne, 1 Rosemount, Shide, said deceased had been lodging with him for over 14 years. He had been unwell for some time under the doctor, but latterly he had been at work for about a month. He had complained of his work being heavy for him lately but had not threatened suicide. Two of deceased's brothers committed suicide, one [Edward Mark] at the County Asylum several years ago, and the other [Frederick] on St. Georges'-down about 25 years since. Deceased's father [Mark] was accidentally killed in the pit on the down about 14 years ago. – The Coroner: Then this makes the fourth tragedy in the family? - Witness: Yes. When deceased did not return home on Tuesday night they thought he had gone to his brother's at Down-end, and they made inquiries, but could not find anything of his whereabouts.

Henry W. Alexander, Garrets Farm, St. George's-down, employed by his father, said that at about 7 p.m. on Wednesday he was walking across the pits, when some children told him there was some one in the pond. He went there and could just see the top of deceased's head and back in the water, which was about six feet deep. When he touched the body, with a view to getting it out, it sank, and he went for his father, who helped to get the body out. They then saw that it was that of the deceased, fully dressed, excepting for his hat. He had his feet tied together with a piece of rope just above the ankles. There was a sheer drop from the side of the pond into five or six feet of water. Deceased was always of a quiet disposition. – P.C. H. Matthews said he searched deceased's clothing and lodgings but could find no communication from him to explain his death. – Dr. Underhill said the external appearance of the body was consistent with drowning. Deceased was attended by him and his partner from about the last week in June till the second week in August for gastric trouble. He did not then evidence unsoundness of mind. He had no doubt deceased died from drowning. When he first saw the body on Thursday morning death had taken place for at least 24 hours. – Mr. T. H. Alexander, deceased's employer, said he could add nothing to the evidence.

The Coroner said the evidence enabled him to come to the conclusion that deceased committed suicide by drowning. The fact of his ankles being tied together was itself conclusive

proof of his intention to commit suicide, and excluded the possibility of his having met his death by accident. Having regard to the painful tragedies which had occurred in deceased's family, he could not but suppose that there was an hereditary instinct in the deceased towards self-destruction, and he therefore returned a verdict that deceased committed suicide by drowning whilst of unsound mind.

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