

Death and Inquest

Transcribed by Diane Johnson
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TRAGEDY AT ADJUNBILLY. DETERMINED SUICIDE OF MR. STAN MARSH

The particulars, as published in the evidence given at the inquest concerning the death of Mr. 'Stanley R Marsh, of Adjunbilly, a returned soldier, a married man and the father of five young children, point to a case of determined suicide.

There is only one deduction to be drawn, and that is removed from all doubt, by the fact that, after the deed had been committed, there was a letter pinned to his breast in which he himself had written in pencil his intention of doing away with himself.

Deceased went through the Great War. He joined up at Tumut and was with Mr. Fred. Johnson, of this town, at the front, from the time they enlisted until after the armistice, and they came back together, so that they were, in the true acceptance of the military term, comrades in arms — and in peace. Mr. Johnson says he was a fine type of soldier in every respect and one to be trusted at all times and any time. And we all know what hell our boys went through in those tense years. It is no wonder then that many of them get upset and desperate as the years roll by, for their war disabilities are many and most of them who were more on real active service returned with the ill-effects of years of nerve-wrack and mental strain.

Deceased was aged 30 years.

The burial took place at Adjunbilly.

THE INQUEST.

An inquest touching the cause of death was held by Mr. R. L. Blakeney, Tumut Coroner, the following evidence being adduced :—

Harry Macintosh Troop, grazier, residing at Adjunbilly, deposed: On night of 24th inst. I was at Bongongo Station when Mrs Webb rang up, a little after 9 o'clock. She said that Marsh (deceased) had signified his intention to her to commit suicide and she asked if I would come over. Did so, accompanied by Mr. Roberts. got Mr. Webb at the store, and the three of us came along to deceased's residence.

Marsh met me outside the house and asked me who I was. Told him and said I had just come to have a yam. He replied 'Just wait a minute,' and walked inside. Heard him walking about in the house. He called out, 'I will be there in a minute.'

He came out on to the verandah and spoke. Think he said 'Good-bye, Mr Troop!' and immediately the gun went off. Was then about 20 yards away. Ran to the fence round the verandah and deceased was lying with his legs hanging off the verandah. Struck a match and could then see that deceased had shot himself through the head.

Left immediately and communicated with the police at Tumut. Later returned with a tarpaulin and, assisted by Mr. Roberts and Mr. Webb, covered the body.

'When I spoke to him last night he appeared to be quite rational'. William John Webb, storekeeper, Adjunbilly, deposed: About 8.30p.m. on 24th inst. Deceased called at the store and asked me had I seen his wife going along. Said 'Yes; she passed here about 10 past 2, walking towards Bongongo. He said, 'She may have gone to her auntie's place,' and he rode away, crossing the bridge to Bongongo.

In about 20 minutes he returned and asked if we could ring Mr. J. Lee, Tumut; but Lee was not on the phone. He then asked me did James's lorry go away? and I said 'Yes.' 'Well,' he replied, 'that is the stone end of it.'

He then asked for a pencil and piece of paper and he wrote on the paper the address of his father and mother-in-law. He did not get off his horse, but handed back the paper, saying 'ring up these people' (meaning the father and mother-in-law) and in a few minutes you will hear a shot and you will find me on the front verandah. Said 'For God's sake don't do it.' -When he was about 60 yards away, he called out, 'Come here, Bill; I want you to give me a cheque for £1/0/6, and say this will pay for expenses. He then galloped away.

Returned to the store and rang up Bongongo to send help; that Marsh intended to commit suicide. Troop and Roberts came to deceased's residence together. Troop said to wait there until he had a yarn with him, and with that went forward and called Marsh.

A few minutes later I heard Troop sing out, 'Oh Stan!' and heard a gun exploded. Ran down and deceased was lying on the verandah. Have known deceased since he was a boy, and have never heard him previous to that night express his intention to commit suicide. He was a man of sober habits, and as far as I know he lived happily with his wife, and I know no reason why his wife should leave him as he was a good husband. Do not know anything of his financial position.

Otto Webber, old-age pensioner, residing at Adjunbilly, deposed: — Yesterday afternoon came to Marsh's residence. : Saw Mrs. Marsh at the place. Was there about an hour, and Mrs Marsh said, 'I'm going away for a while,' and if she did not return before Stanley (deceased) came from his work to tell him there was a letter in his coat pocket. She then went away. I have not seen her since.

Deceased came home about 7 p.m., and asked where was his wife? Told him she had gone away for a while and there was a letter in his coat pocket that she had left for him. He went out for the letter and said his wife had gone to Tumut, and that he would go away and try to get a car and go for her.

He was away about half an-hour. He never spoke to me. Was in the house some time, and about 10 minutes later I heard a shot fired.

Have known both deceased and his wife for many years. Lately they have not been very happy together. Constable T. J. Fitzgerald, stationed at Tumut, deposed:— At about 10 p.m. on 24th inst - received a telephone message from Mr. Troop at Adjunbilly to the effect that Stanley Radford Marsh had shot himself.

At about 10.30 this morning, in company with Dr. Mason, Government Medical Officer, and the Coroner, went to the residence of deceased and saw the body lying on the front verandah with the head towards the wall and feet protruding over the edge of the verandah. Lying beside it near the left hand was a 12-gauge automatic shotgun, and about 2ft. from the feet on the ground was an empty 12-gauge cartridge case.

Examined the gun and it appeared to have been recently shot out of. The top of deceased's head was blown off, and noticed a burnt powder stain on the forehead immediately below the wound.

There was a large quantity of blood on the verandah where the body lay. Pinned on his breast, fastened with a safety-pin, found a letter addressed to his wife, in which he stated his intention to commit suicide.

Searched the body and in the coat pocket found an unopened bottle of strychnine. Examined the body. There were no other marks of violence on it other than the wound referred to.

On the table found, a letter addressed to deceased, purporting to have been written by his wife, in which she stated her intention of leaving him as she was sick and tired of Adjunbilly and the people living there as they were always talking about her.

Dr. John Wharton Mason deposed: Proceeded to Adjunbilly where I viewed the body of a man lying half-on and half-off a verandah of a small cottage. Close by the side of the body was a single-barrel repeating 12-bore shot-gun, with a discharged cartridge lying nearby. The vault of the man's head was completely blown off. Powder-stains were clearly visible on the forehead. Death was due to haemorrhage and loss of brain substance.

There were no other marks of injury on the body. The wound could have been self-inflicted. The Coroner's finding was that death was due to haemorrhage from a gun-shot wound in the head, wilfully inflicted by deceased himself.