

Dean Forest Mercury March 26th. 1915.

PLUMP HILL TRAGEDY

Verdict of Suicide

The inquest into the death of George Matthews (42), haulier and quarryman of Plump Hill, whose terribly mutilated body was found in a blacksmith's shop adjoining his house early on Friday morning, March 19th. was held on the afternoon of the same day.

Mr. F. Flooks was foreman of the jury.

Stanley Matthews, a nephew of the deceased, stated that he was working with him on Friday morning. Deceased went to feed the horses about 5.15 am, and seemed to be in his usual condition of health. Deceased then went into the house and had a cup of tea, and on returning went into the blacksmith's shop whilst witness remained in the house. About 6.30 he heard a report like a shot in the quarry. It sounded as if it was very near. Witness went out of the house and immediately saw smoke issuing from the blacksmith's shop. Witness went in and found deceased lying dead on the ground. Witness saw no explosives about.

Leonard Matthews, a brother of the deceased, stated that his brother was 42 years of age and was single. Witness identified the body by the clothes. The lad came and fetched witness about 6.40 am, and he went straight in the blacksmith's shop. Deceased was lying dead. The police were sent for. The deceased had fuses and caps, but the caps were kept in the house. If one of these exploded it might cause terrible injuries, such as happened to the deceased. Witness heard the shot fired. He had been in a very weak condition for three or four years, and talked very little, and was at times peculiar in his manner.

In reply to questions, the witness said he could not say whether this was an accident or not.

Selina Matthews, sister of the deceased, said he lived with her. She was in the house early in the morning with the deceased, and saw him go out about 5.30. She did not see him again alive. Witness heard the report, but did not take any notice. Her nephew shortly afterwards came in and said "Uncle George has killed himself". Deceased's health was very poor, and he was constantly depressed. He had not been well for three or four years, and through being unwell for so long his mind was weak. He had made no threat to take his life.

P.C. Cooper, Mitcheldean, stated that on Friday morning, the 19th. inst., he called at the residence of the deceased, and then went into the blacksmith's shop. Deceased was lying on the ground on his left side. The

top part of his body was torn all to pieces, and his clothing was badly torn. He made a thorough examination of the place, but could not find any gun or cartridge. There was very strong smell of explosive. Witness had the body removed to the house.

Answering a question, the constable said he should hardly think it was an accident.

The Coroner, in summing up, said he could hardly see how in the face of the facts the jury could find a verdict of accidental death. The evidence rather pointed to the fact that this unfortunate man had taken his own life. The jury returned a verdict that the deceased committed suicide whilst of unsound mind.