**The Nantmawr Inquisition**

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Having recently moved to Nantmawr, I resolved to find out as much as I could about the village and its former inhabitants. Nantmawr was once a thriving village with a working quarry and railway, a chapel and primary school, a post office, shops and a regular bus service. Now these have all gone except for a bus on school days only. I was therefore surprised to discover that an Inquest (or Inquisition as it states on the Report) had been held in the local pub!

The Inquest came to light when I ran a search  for “Nantmawr” on the Shropshire Quarter Sessions database published by Shropshire Family History Society. Two results came up. The first (Ref 1) was a reference to an Inquest held in Nantmawr in 1880 and the second (Ref 2) was a record of expenses paid for the Inquest. As both documents are held in Shropshire Archives in Shrewsbury I was able to obtain copies.

The Inquest was held at “The Carvers Arms Inn, Nantmawer” , on Saturday (!) January 3rd 1880 into the death of one Thomas Evans who was found dead in his Nantmawr cottage on Jan 1st.  The Inquest was conducted by the Deputy Coroner Arthur Barrow Allen and there were 12 jurors present. These were Thomas Judson (foreman), Thomas Bailey, Jacob Jones, Rich Williams, Benjamin Lloyd, James Owen, Thomas Oliver, David Morris, Richard Bates, John Hughes, Robert Probert and Joseph Ellis (landlord of The Carvers Arms).

Of these jurors, only six signed the Inquest document, the others made their mark (‘X’). The verdict was that Evans ‘probably died from old age’.

However on checking the back copies of The Oswestry Advertizer (Ref 3) in Oswestry Library a slightly different story emerged. Evans, aged about 86, lived alone and his grandson William Hugh Evans was in the habit of taking him food. The previous evening, New Year’s Eve 1879, William said his grandfather appeared well when he took him food. But the following morning he could get no reply when he called. Subsequently, a local man John Carsley broke in and Evans was found dead on the kitchen floor dressed in only a shirt. The rail on the staircase was broken so perhaps this had caused Evans to fall on his way downstairs. The jury however decided that death had been from natural causes.

The other document relating to the inquest is a record of expenses paid as a result of the Inquest. This states:

*“We the undersigned do hereby acknowledge to have received from Mr Coroner Blackburne the sum set opposite to our respective names  being the sum allowed for our attendence and loss of time on the following Inquest:”*

*To Police Constable Arthur Calcott for fetching the Coroner 14 miles : Nil (!)*
(Presumably it was part of PC Calcott’s job to ferry Coroners about the county hence he received no expenses. But how did he do it – by horseback, pony and trap?)

*To Joseph Ellis, the Landlord of ‘The Carvers Arms Inn’ for use of Room to hold Inquest : 5s*
(Did Ellis also have to provide beer and sandwiches for the jury?)

*To John Carsley : 1s*
(Carsley was not a juror so perhaps this was recompence for breaking into Evans’ cottage and discovering the body.)

*To William Hugh Williams : 1s*
(What was this for? Williams was not a juror. Did he help Carsley or perhaps he helped with storage or transport of Evans’ body. The Inquest report implies that the body was viewed at the Inquest.)

Although this Inquest Report does not reveal much family history information, apart from Evans’ relation to William his grandson, it does indicate that the jurors involved were probably living in or around Nantmawr at the time which is always useful information for researchers. Census reports would of course help to confirm this.

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Note:

The Carvers Arms was an inn or beerhouse from the 1860’s to about 1883.  I have verified this by reference to indentures held by the current owner.

References:

1. Shropshire Archives QR/544/198.

2. Shropshire Archives QR/544/199

3. Oswestry and Border Counties Advertizer 7 January 1880. Page 7 col 1.

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