

Who killed Suzy after breakfast?

(A very unpleasant murder)

This is an account of a murder that took place here in Brynmawr in 1870, it will include the evidence given by many people who were either involved or knew the accused and victim. I've called it:

Who killed Suzy after breakfast?

Brynmawr is not a place we normally associate with dreadful murders but sadly on a Friday night in January 1870 the very thing did occur. The person murdered was a lady by the name of Susanna Evans but as was quite common in those days she was often referred to as "Suzy after breakfast". A short time after 11 o'clock at night she had gone to the Black Lion, (today known as The Talisman) and apparently already quite drunk and because of the state she was in the landlord refused to serve her and she left.

At the same time a young man by the name of David Richards also left, David had a wooden leg and he and Suzy were seen together outside The Black Lion a little before midnight, both lying on the ground in a pool of water. David got up and called on another young man to help him get Suzy up on her feet. Later, cries of "murder" were heard which seemed to come from the rear of the Black Lion where the privy was but nobody from inside or outside bothered to go and see what had happened.

It was early Saturday morning when eventually the body of a woman was found. It appeared that she had been brutally murdered; her head was against the wall of the privy and her legs and feet stretched out. It was her head which had been badly bruised by kicks especially around the eyes and one of the wounds looked similar to one caused by the end of a wooden leg.

The injuries that she had were so bad she was hardly recognisable. And suspicion immediately fell on David who had been seen with Suzy earlier and he was arrested by the local constabulary. An inquest would be opened on the following week when more information of the murder would be available along with a post mortem report on the body of the dead woman carried out by Dr. Fitz Henry.

Dr Fitz Henry was of the opinion that the woman had been viciously kicked and knocked about which caused her death. Suzy was a mother of seven children and had been a widow for many years. She was about 50 years old and lived near the Forge in Nant y Glo.

David Richards the suspected man was a mechanical engineer, he drove the engines in the iron works. He was about 28 years of age and rather short in stature. (I wonder if he ever drove the infamous "Cymro" engine owned by Crawshay bailey).

As the privy was close to the Black Lion and also another house, some believe the murder was carried out elsewhere and the body then dragged to the privy to be hidden after the deed was done. Hopefully this will become clear during the inquest.

The Inquest.

The inquiry into the murder of Suzy after breakfast was resumed on Tuesday at the Black Lion pub on Brynmawr Square. The coroner for the district Mr. E. J. C. Davies led the inquiry. Sergeant Davies of the Brecon Constabulary stationed in Brynmawr gave the following evidence.

He received the prisoner, David Richards at four o'clock in the afternoon; he cautioned him and charged him with being the murderer of Susan Evans.

David said that he had gone out of the Black Lion with Susan but she threw him down. Jack the Barber then told him "Go with her again". David said he was sober, he only had three pints of beer.

On the Monday following the murder Sergeant Davies took possession of the Suzy's clothes and on them he found sand similar to that found in the privy closet. He observed a wound on the right eye of the deceased, which appeared to correspond with the wooden leg of the prisoner. On the 12th, by the request of the prisoner, he went to the Barley Sheaf, a public-house in the town, and asked if the prisoner had been there on that night. He found the prisoner had been there at a quarter past twelve o'clock wanting a pint of beer which was refused. The prisoner had said he was in his lodgings at twelve o'clock that night. Dinah Jones, of the Barley Sheaf, Brynmawr, wife of the landlord, Benjamin Jones, gave evidence that the prisoner was at the Barley Sheaf on Friday night, the 7th January, the night of the murder, at a quarter past twelve o'clock. He asked for a pint of beer. He appeared dirty, and "like a spotted leopard," having dirt on his face. She could not swear whether it was dirt or blood that was on his face.

John Price, a puddler, working at Nantyglo, said that he was coming from his work about half-past two o'clock on Saturday morning, the 8th of January, when he met David Richards coming down from Brynmawr and going in the direction of his lodgings. Prisoner appeared to keep as far from him as he could. Witness remarked to his companion that it was late for Dai Cork to be going home. Witness had known him for several years.

Joshua Davies, a resident of Brynmawr, gave evidence to seeing the prisoner on the road to Nantyglo on the morning of the 8th January. He was in company with John Price when they met a man on the road, whom they took to be the prisoner David Richards. Witness could not swear it was him. The night was rough, and they were walking fast. They confirmed each other's evidence. They heard the stamp of the prisoner's wooden leg. There was nobody with the prisoner. Superintendent Evans asked "Don't you know it as a fact that it was

Richards? He replied, No, I do not, I know many men with wooden legs. This man I met that night was short".

William Powell stated that he was lodging in the same house with the prisoner at the time when he was taken into custody, and for eleven years previously. He opened the door for him on that night. He did not know what time it was. He did not take notice of the time, or of the prisoner. He thought he lay in bed three-quarters of an hour after the prisoner came home. Prisoner did not go to bed during that time. According to William David said, when asked, that the clock was about to strike twelve. William Powell said he got up from bed at five o'clock the next morning and found prisoner's trousers on the guard before the fire in the kitchen. They were wet, but not dirty. They were light trousers, and the same as the prisoner had worn on the day previously. The prisoner was in the habit of stopping out all night occasionally.

James Herbert gave evidence to having fetched the prisoner from his lodgings on the Saturday. David Richards washed his boot in a stream as soon as he came out of the house. The witness asked the prisoner if he had any blood about him and the Prisoner replied, "No, or you can examine me."

Edward Jenkins said he met the prisoner in the Black Lion Inn on the night in question, and the prisoner told him that he expected in a few minutes to be locked up for the murder of Susannah Evans. Superintendent David Evans stated that on Sunday, the 9th instant, he visited the prisoner in the cell about nine o'clock. Prisoner was lying on the bed in the cell. He asked prisoner how he was. Prisoner said, "I am ill. I have got myself into trouble." The superintendent examined the prisoner's shoe, and found it quite clean. He asked him if he had washed it, and prisoner said he had not.

Thomas Thomas, landlord of the Black Lion, after being sworn in, said I remember the deceased (that's Suzy after breakfast) coming into the Black Lion on the night of Friday, the 7th. It was then about 20 minutes to 11 o'clock p.m. She asked for a glass of beer. I refused, because she seemed to be the worse for liquor. I do not mean to say that she was drunk but she was not sober. I did not see her have beer, but was told since that she had some. She was in the kitchen for a couple of minutes. She cursed me. I told her to go home. David Richards is the last man I saw with her there. I went to the door with John Davies. I saw John Davies and David Richards picking the deceased up. There was hardly a minute between my going out the first and second time. I saw Suzy running away from David and I told her to go home. She went in the direction of the back of the house. I went to her and David, and told her to go home. David was within a yard of her and he said, Well, I am going," and she then said, "I will go." I then ran back towards the door, as there were parties endeavouring to go in. I did not allow them to go in. I believe John Davies had gone home. I did not look towards that way. I am certain it was not eleven o'clock then. I was in bed about ten minutes past eleven. I make it a rule of closing my house about ten to eleven o'clock every night. I sleep

over the parlour, and heard no screams. The men who were in the house begged me to allow them to stay, the weather was so boisterous.

Ebenezer Davies asked me to allow him to stay. He lives in Beaufort. I quietly took hold of deceased's arm the second time. The four men all slept in the kitchen that night. There were others in the house besides the strangers. James Herbert left my house early, about half-past nine, and he did not return that night. He came to my house next morning, and was there when the body was found, that was the first night any strangers ever stayed at my house. I believe Ebenezer Davies remained there after Richards was apprehended. It was by the advice of John Davies I sent James Herbert for David Richards some time after the body was found. I told him, "David, do you know that woman who was with you at the corner is dead?" He said "No." I then asked him, "What time did you reach home?" and he said from a quarter to half-past 11 that night. And I said, "All right, my boy," because Howell Thomas heard the cries after that. He asked me for a pint of beer, which he had, and I gave him a piece of bread and cheese with the beer.

George Lewis was sworn in and said I am a tin man. I saw the deceased at the Black Lion on the night in question. I left before her, and went straight home. I saw her the next morning after she was found. I was in the room when Edward Jenkins had conversation with the prisoner, David Richards, but did not hear what they said, as I was sitting on the other side of the room it was no business of mine to listen to what they said.

Dr. Fitzhenry, of Brynmawr had carried out a post- mortem examination upon the body of the deceased and he was of opinion that her person had been violated and that she had been most viciously kicked and knocked about, which undoubtedly had caused her death.

Naturally, the scene of this dreadful murder had been visited by hundreds of people and the curiosity which takes hold of the public on such an occasion as this, to have a glance at the corpse of the deceased woman, seems to be unabated.

Suzy was laid out on a plain table in the long room of the Black Lion Inn. The clothes the poor woman wore when the brutal deed was committed she still had on. The face is very much swollen, and the number of bruises on her head and face has quite distorted her features. The deceased woman was the mother of seven children, and had been a widow for a number of years. She resided near the Forge, Nantyglo. Her age was about 50, and she bore rather a good character, with the exception of her fondness for drink, to which she was very much addicted.

The funeral of the deceased took place on the same day as the inquiry and a large concourse of people followed her remains to their last resting-place.

The inquest was concluded on the Tuesday and the jury, after deliberating for fifteen minutes, delivered the following verdict:

"That the conduct of Thomas Thomas, the landlord, in turning the woman out of the house, and the conduct of both him and John Davies, in endeavouring to send the deceased home in the helpless state she was, under the circumstances, showed great neglect and inhumanity and the refusal of Howell Thomas and his wife to admit the woman to their house, when she said she was perishing, and the conduct of Ebenezer Davies, in not assisting her, was greatly to be blamed.

They brought in a verdict of wilful murder against David Richards who was sent to trial at Brecon.

I was at a loss as to who Howell Thomas and his wife were as they had not been mentioned in the inquest report I had seen. I had to wait until I found the report of the trial which I finally did in the Western Mail of the 31st March 1870.

The Breconshire Lent Assizes, the Court opened at 10 o'clock.

David Richards, an engine-driver, was charged with the wilful murder of Susannah Evans, at Brynmawr, on the 8th January. Mr. Allen and Mr. Coleridge prosecuted with Mr. Bowen defending David Richards.

During the trial some more evidence came to the fore. It appeared that on the night of 7th January, Susannah Evans went into the Black Lion, Brynmawr; she was refused beer by the landlord, but some men who were there gave her some; some high words also took place between the woman and the men, as well as the landlord whom she struck three times. The landlord put her out of the house, and tried to persuade her to go home. On going to the door soon afterwards, the landlord saw the deceased on the ground, apparently in a fit, and David Richards and a man named Davies helping her up. The woman soon recovered herself and Davies persuaded her to go home with Richards. She first of all refused, but at length they went some way together and they were then lost sight of.

Later on, a man named Howell Thomas and his wife, heard screams, and the wife went out and found Suzy on the ground in a yard at the back of the Black Lion and a man apparently on top of her just crawling away. Mrs Thomas spoke to the man, who told her to go home and mind her own business. The deceased and the prisoner afterwards came to their house and the woman wanted to come in and warm herself, but they refused to let her in and told her to go home. Prisoner also asked her to come, and the deceased said she would if he would give her back her shawl. He replied that he would, if she would go home. They then left but they heard screams up till nearly one o'clock.

The prisoner at about half past twelve went to the Barley Sheaf for some beer, and then appeared to be alone. About half-past two he was met alone near Nantyglo, where he lived. The man with whom he lodged let him in late, and after going to bed again he called out to prisoner to know what time it was. Prisoner replied that it was about to strike three. He, however, went to sleep before prisoner came up to bed. In the morning he found the

prisoner's clothes all wet and dirty, and hanging by the fire. There was sand on the coat, but the witness said he let the coat drop on his floor, which he believed was covered with sand. In the morning of the 8th January the body of the poor Susannah Evans was found in the closet near the Black Lion with wounds on her head and face by a man named Ebenezer Davies, who has since gone to America. On the body being found, the prisoner was sent for and asked where he had left the deceased and he replied "At the corner of the Black Lion." When taken into custody he said, "Well, I suppose there's nothing to be done about it." He subsequently stated when in the cell that he left the woman alive, and that he could not have slept from 3 o'clock till 12 if he had known she was dead.

The coroner's report added the following: The medical evidence was to the effect that death had been produced by exposure to the inclemency of the weather acting upon an unhealthy state of the body and that death would probably have been caused by such exposure, independent of any other injuries.

So before you look at the end of the article and I give you the court's decisions, whom do you think killed Suzy after breakfast?

The verdict.

After this evidence, Mr. Allen said he thought it useless to proceed further, and, with his lordship's concurrence, a verdict of not guilty was given by the jury, and the prisoner David Richards was discharged. (There was an attempt at applause but it was immediately suppressed).

My opinion?

This means that no one was charged with the murder of Susanna Evans. The coroner's report stated that she died because of her injuries and the unhealthy state of her body probably because of her fondness for alcohol but someone had brutally kicked her around the eyes and knocked her about; she had been violated and her injuries were so bad that she was unrecognisable. Whoever did was guilty of her murder and her death cannot be blamed on the weather conditions. I wonder what the verdict would be today?