

EXTRACT FROM *THE BUCKINGHAM EXPRESS*, Saturday 8 February 1890

**TWYFORD
INQUEST AT TWYFORD**

An inquest, to enquire into the circumstances attending the death of one **Joseph Culley**, a labourer of the village of Twyford, who was found drowned on the previous day, having been missing from the previous Tuesday night, was held at the Seven Stars inn, Three Bridge Mill, on Saturday February 1st before G H De'Ath, Esq., and a jury of which Mr Looker was chosen foreman. The body and the place where the corpse was found having been viewed, the following is a summary of the evidence taken:-

Joseph Hill deposed to living in Twyford, keeping the Red Lion inn, where deceased had also lodged for about two years. He was in the habit of seeing deceased daily; and had seen him since death that was the body of deceased the coroner and jury had just viewed. Witness saw deceased alive on Tuesday morning January 29, they both got up about the same time. Witness left deceased at about half-past five o'clock, and did not see him again until he saw the body in the ditch, where the jury had seen. The body was quite dead when witness saw it. Deceased had not been away from his lodgings all night until this occasion since he had been at the Lion. Witness made a number of enquiries when he found that deceased did not come home, and also went over to deceased's daughter's house at Marsh Gibbon on the Thursday. Witness knew deceased was very fond of a drop of beer, but had never seen him as that he could not get about properly.

Bertha Blencowe deposed to being the wife of the landlord of the Seven Stars, Twyford. She knew Joseph Culley well, as he sometimes went into their house. He went in there on Tuesday January 29 at about twelve o'clock and had half-a-pint of ale, but nothing to eat. He left the house for a short time, and on returning had a pint of ale, which the husband of witness drew and gave deceased, who afterwards had another pint of mild, and later on a pint of best, which was given him by someone whose horse he had gone out to hold. Deceased had nothing more to drink of any kind. He left the house about four o'clock, and was quite sober when he left. Witness, who happened to go out into the back garden in the field, across which there is a footpath to Twyford village noticed he walked quite straight, and without staggering. It was quite light when deceased left their house. Witness had never seen deceased the worse for drink.

Thomas Hall deposed to living at a cottage close by the Seven Stars in Twyford parish, and to knowing deceased quite well for years. Witness saw deceased last alive on the previous Tuesday afternoon, and did not notice anything unusual in his condition. Witness heard after*transcript missing*.....others. Witness went behind the Seven Stars and went up the stream called the back stream, and followed it up until he came to the ditch which runs into the back brook, and found deceased about 100 yards up the ditch, lying on his left side, his feet in the direction of Twyford. The right arm was a little raised, the elbow close to the side, the left arm underneath the body. All parts of the body were covered with water except his shoulder and hand; the head was underneath a piece of wood lying across the ditch. Witness got down into the ditch and raised deceased's head, and found the body was quite dead and cold. Deceased was clothed just as when witness saw him on the previous Tuesday. The reason why witness went to look – where he was successful in finding the body – was because nothing had been heard of deceased at his daughters or elsewhere. There was not so much water in the ditch as witness had

frequently seen, not enough to cover the body entirely. Witness had not been near this ditch for some time previous to the discovery of the body of deceased, nor had he ever heard anything of the deceased being near sighted.

Dr Benson deposed to being a duly qualified medical practitioner, residing at Steeple Claydon. He had never attended deceased professionally. Witness had examined the body superficially, finding a small wound on the right temple, but no fracture of the skull. The wound was such as might have been caused by deceased falling against a tree. There was mud on the face, and the hands were partly clenched, the skin appearing to be sodden. Witness considered death was caused by drowning. Deceased probably fell against the tree which had been mentioned, became partially stunned, and could not recover himself. Witness was of opinion deceased was alive when he fell into the water. The jury having heard the evidence, returned a verdict to the effect that deceased was found drowned; but that how he came into the water there was no evidence to show.

Footnote - Joseph Culley is listed on the 1881 census as lodging in Church End, Twyford. An agricultural labourer born in Twyford and a widower aged 53.

In 1871 he is listed in the census as a widower, railway labourer with four sons – Eli, George, John and James but no address.

In 1861 – Joseph Culley was an agricultural labourer of 34, Married to Thirza who was born in Launton. His three older sons had been born and he also had an 11 year old daughter called Anne (probably the daughter mentioned at the inquest living at Marsh Gibbon).

Joseph does not appear on the 1851 census for Twyford but is listed on the 1841 census aged 14 living with his parents William and Ann Culley.