

MOTHER AND CHILD DROWNED IN WELL.

Woodhurst Man's Tragic Discovery.

THE INQUEST YESTERDAY.

The village of Woodhurst and the surrounding district was shocked on Wednesday, when it became known that Daisy Smith, aged 25 years, and her seven weeks old son, David, had been found drowned in a well in the early hours of the morning.

At the inquest yesterday, verdicts of "Suicide whilst temporarily insane" in the case of the mother, and "Found drowned" in the case of the child, were returned.

Daisy Smith had lived with a rag and bone collector, Albert Smith, at Brown's Yard, Woodhurst. Smith left home on Tuesday at about 5.30 p.m. to go to Warboys. He returned at about 10.30 p.m., and found the woman was not at home.

He searched, and eventually found her just near a well, which is only a few feet from the house, but although he looked into the well he could see nothing.

Later the well was again examined by a policeman, and the bodies were recovered in the early hours of Wednesday morning.

THE INQUEST.

The Coroner (Major S. G. Cook) held the inquest at Coble House, Woodhurst, the residence of Mrs. Chandler.

The Coroner sat with a jury, of which Mr. Edward Gurry was foreman. Albert Smith wept when he was called into the room, and was encouraged by the Coroner to "pull himself together."

Evidence of identification was given by Albert Smith, rag and bone collector, of Brown's Yard. He stated that Daisy Smith had lived with him as his wife for four years. He met her at Norwich, and last saw her alive at 5.30 on Tuesday, when he left her and the two children (David and William) in the home, whilst he went to Warboys. He returned at 10.30 and went into Mr. Dan Brown's house next door, and remained there for a quarter-of-an-hour.

HUSBAND'S DISCOVERY.

He went to his own house and called upstairs, but there was no answer. He then went on to the stairs, where he could see the bed, which was empty. The boy William was in the cot. He looked in the kitchen, and in the stables in the yard, but no-one was there. He returned, and found a boot lying by the fireplace.

He then went into Mr. Brown's house, then up the road with a light and found Daisy's hat lying against the well. He returned to Mr. Brown's house, told him he had found the hat and said he would go to Tom Bass. As he was coming out with Bass's bicycle he looked in the well, and then went to the policeman at Somersham.

THE BODIES RECOVERED.

The constable returned with him, and the bodies were recovered from the well. Daisy's body was recovered at 1.35 a.m. His wife had been confined in the Public Assistance Institution at Huntingdon. She seemed all right on Tuesday when he left for Warboys. He had never heard her threaten to take her life. They were very happy together, and had not had "half-a-dozen words" all the four years.

Witness, who gave his age as 28, told the Coroner he could not read or write.

The Coroner: Where were you when you were young?
Witness: I was always knocking about in the fens.

NEIGHBOUR'S EVIDENCE.

Daniel Brown, aged 73, of Brown's Yard, living next door to Smith, said he understood Daisy was Albert Smith's wife. She was standing by the door about 6.30 p.m. when he went down to the garden. He saw no-one when he returned. He had

noticed nothing strange about her behaviour since she had been there.

The Coroner: Had she got the baby in her arms when you saw her?
Witness: No, sir; she had nothing in her arms.

"MY WIFE IS MISSING."

John Thomas Bass, farm labourer, of Brown's Yard, said that Albert Smith called about midnight and asked him to get up, stating that his wife was missing.

The Coroner: Did he say anything about having found his wife's hat?
Witness: He said he found it against the well.

Witness added that he lent Smith his bicycle, on which to go to fetch the police. When Smith and the constable returned he went with them to the well and helped them to recover the body of Daisy Smith. Subsequently he helped P.C. Payne to get the baby's body out.

The Coroner: Did it occur to you that the woman might have got into the well?
Witness: No, I did not think anything about it.

SAW BODY IN THE WELL.

P.C. Lumbers, stationed at Somersham, said he was called at 12.40 a.m. on Wednesday by Albert Smith, who told him that Daisy Smith, the woman with whom he lived, and the boy, were missing from home. Witness returned to Woodhurst with Smith and lifted the lid of the well. With the aid of a flash light he saw the woman's body floating on the water, face downwards. He got the body out with a hook.

Witness then obtained a rope with hooks on the bottom and tried to get the baby out, but could not do so. He telephoned to Inspector Hodson, who sent P.C. Payne with the proper drags, and they recovered the baby's body about 3.30 a.m.

The woman was fully clothed, with the exception of the right boot, and the baby was clothed, and had a shawl on. The well was about ten yards from Smith's house. The water was about 12ft. deep, and the surface was 4ft. from the top of the well. The water was not used by the inhabitants. No note or message was found on the body.

NO INDICATION OF STRANGLING.

Replying to questions, witness said the lid of the well would close automatically unless it were pushed right back.

Answering the Coroner witness said there was nothing to indicate that the child had been strangled.

The Coroner asked witness if he could tell the jury how long the body had been in the water.

Witness: At least five hours. It was recovered at 1.30 and he believed it had been in the water since 8 o'clock.

The Coroner: You made every effort to find out the name and place where this woman was born to trace her, but you could not, true or all?

Witness: No, sir.

Did you make any enquiries about her mentality? It is not strictly evidence, but perhaps it will help the jury if you tell them what the result of those enquiries are.

Witness: That she was not normal usually.

THE VERDICT.

After the Coroner had addressed the jury they retired, and upon their return the foreman said:

We have found she drowned the baby and committed suicide whilst temporarily insane.

The Coroner: You find that the baby was drowned by the mother?—Do you find that the mother drowned it intentionally?—Well, we think both went at the same time.

The Coroner: If you can find nothing about the intentions of the mother, no doubt she was temporarily insane. So your verdict amounts to this: The baby was found drowned and apparently went in with the mother?

The foreman of the jury answered in the affirmative.

The jury asked that the well should be closed.