

INQUEST ON THE LATE JOHN CHRISTIE, J.P., OF NARRAMINE.

An inquest was held on the 21st instant, in the dwelling house of the late John Christie, known as Narramine, near Dubbo, before Walter H. Tibbels, coroner of the district, on view of the body of John Christie, then and there lying dead. The deceased gentleman was largely engaged in squatting pursuits, in partnership with Mr. W. C. Wentworth, the firm being known as Christie and Wentworth, and owning some of the most valuable pastoral properties in the north-western districts of New South Wales.

Constable Charles Cooper, stationed at Dubbo, deposed that he received information this morning (21st November) that Mr. John Christie, of Narramine had been found drowned in the Macquarie River; that he went and saw the body floating in the river, back upwards; that the body was brought out by a black tracker and others; and that he then recognised it as that of John Christie, J.P., of the Dubbo bench.

By the Coroner: A portion of the bank of the river, appeared to have been broken away. The place was steep and full of weeds. Saw green herbage near pressed, as if a heavy body had fallen upon it. Saw snags in the river. The black tracker assisted in the search. The bank of the river is very high just behind deceased's house. A body would fall a distance of ten feet, and roll about seven feet more before arriving at the water.

George Cox, overseer in Mr. Christie's employ, deposed that he last saw deceased alive at 6 o'clock p.m. yesterday (20th November). He was then in bed in his own bedroom, which place he had occupied for the last three or four days. He appeared to be suffering from some mental derangement. He was very convivial all day yesterday. On Tuesday he came home from Haddon Riggs, a station on the Marthygy, in good health and spirits. Saw him afterwards every day during the week. Soon after 6 p.m. yesterday, witness went into deceased's room with the letters; thought deceased was asleep, and stopped in the room a minute or two reading the paper, and then left. Deceased was then in bed. Previously to this deceased told me not to mind the letters, as he did not care to see them. About 7 o'clock the same evening, 20th November, witness went to the bedroom again, and struck a match. There was no candle in the room, so witness went and procured one. On looking at the bed he found it empty; deceased had gone. Witness looked about the house, and then thought deceased was in the closet. Waited a while, then went and knocked, but received no answer. No one was inside. Witness then called Mr. Chapman, the storekeeper, and Mrs. Withers, the servant, and they all searched. Mrs. Withers said she saw deceased coming out of the room, and he said, "Is that you George," meaning witness; but Mrs. Withers replied "No." Deceased went out. They all searched in the house and round about until midnight, but could find no trace of deceased. Witness remained up all night, and sent out to Mr. Todhunter, a friend of deceased's, and Mr. Chapman. This morning (21st November) witness heard some one scream, and with others went in the direction the scream came from, and answered the scream, which proceeded from a black gin who on discovering the body floating in the river began to scream, and then relate in an excited manner that Mr. Christie was dead. Witness took off his clothes and swam half the way towards the body and got on a log, and remained there until Messrs. Todhunter and Chapman arrived. They told witness not to touch the body, which was quite dead. Afterwards searched the river's bank for a track spoken of by the black gin, but saw no marks of any struggle. The body was dressed. Yesterday deceased ordered witness not to leave him. He told witness that Mr. Kirby had been the ruin of him, and that he should never be the same man again in this world. Witness considered Mr. Christie to be a very worthy man.

never be the same man again in this world. Witness considered Mr. Christie to be a very worthy man, perfectly sensible to the time of his death, and capable of managing his own affairs. He objected to Mr. Todhunter being sent for yesterday—he declined seeing a doctor. Deceased's house is not many yards from the river bank, which is steep and the water deep. Deceased was a very heavy man, and anything but active. Believed he could not swim.

By the Coroner: It was from what deceased told me yesterday about Mr. Kirby that I thought he was suffering from mental derangement. He said Mr. Kirby had ruined him; it seemed to worry him very much. Deceased told me it was not so much the amount that was of consequence. I also attribute the disturbing of his mind to some English letters he had recently received. Those letters caused him much lowness of spirits. I always considered deceased a strong-minded gentleman, not usually given to lowness of spirits, but cheerful. He told me on Tuesday he was bad in the head, and that his brother was subject to the same thing. Never heard him say anything that would lead one to think he would attempt to take his life. He would only take soup. Yesterday he took several glasses of spirits. If Mr. Christie had fallen from the top of the bank, he must have become insensible before reaching the water.

Harriet Withers saw deceased leave the house just before dinner (about 6.30 p.m.). Did not particularly notice him. Heard the black gin scream next morning and afterwards saw the dead body of her master floating in the river.

Francis Todhunter, after examination in chief, replied to the coroner's questions as follows: I noticed one or two scratches about the face, and also saw a mark behind the letter, which Mr. Christie received from England affected his mind very much. I never saw him so cut up and worried in mind before. He talked of nothing else. It was principally concerning the death of young Mr. Foster. "If I could see Mr. Wentworth (his partner) for only half an hour," he would say, "I would convince him of the cause of Foster's death." I told him if he did not leave off talking about this he would kill himself. His reply was—"Yes soon." Every time I visited him since he received these letters, I found him worse and worse; and I am certain it led him to drink as much as he did the day before his death. He was 57 years of age.

George Chapman added no fresh particulars in his evidence.

The following verdict was returned:—"We are convinced that the body found in the river Macquarie this morning, 21st November, 1868, at Narramine, is that of the late John Christie, and that death was caused by suffocation, having been drowned, and that the act was committed by himself whilst labouring under a fit of temporary insanity."