

Shocking Murder in Carmarthenshire

The shocking murder in Carmarthenshire took place on February 2, 1881. John Thomas, an 11-year-old boy from Kidwelly, was killed while delivering boots to a house in Mudlescombe. His body was discovered in the garden of the Masey family, with severe head injuries. Suspicion fell on Mrs. Masey and her two young sons, Benjamin, and David, who were arrested. An inquest returned a verdict of wilful murder against unknown persons.

News article at the time.

On Wednesday morning, John Thomas, the son of Evan Thomas, a shoemaker, was sent to deliver a pair of boots to Mudlescombe-place, about a mile from town. He delivered the boots and received 10 shillings in payment but never returned home.

**SHOCKING MURDER IN
CARMARTHENSHIRE.**

A shocking case of supposed murder was reported at Kidwelly on Friday. On Wednesday morning John Thomas, a boy 11 years of age, the son of Evan Thomas, a shoemaker, was sent with a pair of boots to a house at Mudlescombe-place, distant about a mile from the town. The lad delivered the boots, and received 10s in payment for them. He never returned home, but in the afternoon he was seen playing with two boys named Masey, who live in Stockwell-road, a place about midway between Mudlescombe and Kidwelly. When the lad had been absent from home some time, his parents, becoming anxious, caused a search to be made for him. Mrs. Hughes, the wife of a smith living opposite the Masey's, stated that she had seen the lad go into Masey's house. Mrs. Masey denied the truth of this statement, but Mrs. Hughes persisted in her story. The search for the missing boy was continued on Thursday, but without success. On Thursday night Mrs. Masey paid a visit to the parents of the lad, and from what passed at their interview proved that she had a guilty knowledge of the lad's fate. Early on Friday morning a search party found the boy's body in Masey's garden. It was lying on the surface of the ground, and was covered with some long grass. The head and face had been shockingly mutilated, and the brains knocked out. The wounds appeared to have been inflicted by some instrument having a blunt edge. The body was taken home, and shortly afterwards the two boys Masey, one of whom is eleven and the other nine years of age, were arrested and locked up. The statements they made caused the police subsequently to arrest the woman Masey, who was also confined in prison. The boys also stated that some money had been concealed in the gate-way of a field adjoining their house, and the money was found by the police in the place indicated. This money was, doubtless, part of what the murdered boy had received for the boots. Mrs. Masey, who is described as a large masculine woman, possessing a violent temper, is the wife of a man employed in the forge at Kidwelly. The Maseys do not belong to Kidwelly, but came there some eighteen months ago. No suspicion is attached to the man Masey, inasmuch as he was at work at the time when the crime is believed to have been committed.

An inquest was held on Saturday, when a number of witnesses were examined. By these the circumstances narrated above were deposed to, and a medical man described the injuries inflicted upon the deceased. A policeman who was engaged in the case said he was in Masey's house when the body was found. Mrs. Masey and her two sons appeared to be greatly excited when they heard of it. One of the boys hid himself under the bed, and could only be got out with much difficulty. No further evidence was adduced, and the jury, after deliberating for about a quarter of an hour, returned with a verdict of "Wilful murder against some person or persons unknown."

On Monday, the prisoners, Jane Masey and her two sons, Benjamin and David, were placed before the magistrates, and after the evidence at the inquest had been repeated, the case was adjourned to Friday (this day.)

In the afternoon, John was seen playing with the Masey boys on Stockwell Road, midway between Mudlescombe and Kidwelly. When John did not return home, his parents grew anxious and initiated a search for him. Mrs. Hughes, the wife of a smith living opposite the Masey's, reported seeing John enter their house. Despite Mrs. Masey denying this, Mrs. Hughes stood by her statement.

The search continued through Thursday without success. On Thursday night, Mrs. Masey visited John's parents, and it became evident she had guilty knowledge of the boy's fate. Early on Friday morning, a search party discovered John's body in the Masey's garden. His head and face had been severely mutilated, indicating the wounds were inflicted by a blunt-edged instrument.

John's body was taken home, and shortly afterward, the Masey boys, aged eleven and nine, were arrested. Their statements led the police to arrest Mrs. Masey as well. The boys revealed that money was hidden in a field near their house, which was indeed found by the police. This money was presumably part of the payment John had received for the boots.

Mrs. Masey, described as a large, masculine woman with a violent temper, is married to a man employed at the forge in Kidwelly. The Masey family had moved to Kidwelly about eighteen months prior. No suspicion fell on Mr. Masey, as he was at work during the crime.

An inquest was held on Saturday, where numerous witnesses corroborated the events described. A medical professional detailed the injuries inflicted on John. A policeman involved in the case reported being present in the Masey house when the body was found. The Masey's appeared highly agitated upon hearing the news, with one boy hiding under a bed, requiring considerable effort to retrieve him.

No further evidence was presented, and the jury, after deliberating for about a quarter of an hour, returned a verdict of "Wilful murder against some person or persons unknown. On Monday, the prisoners, Jane Masey and her sons, Benjamin and David, appeared before the magistrates. After the inquest evidence was repeated, the case was adjourned to Friday (this day).

In Memory of John Thomas

John Thomas was born in 1870 in Kidwelly, Carmarthenshire, to parents Evan and Lettice Thomas. Her father was 29 and her mother was 28 at the time of her birth. John spent her entire life in Kidwelly, growing up in the heart of Carmarthenshire amidst a large and loving family.

John lived in Kidwelly for over a decade, from 1870 to 1881, sharing his home with two brothers and five sisters. The Thomas family was a significant part of the Kidwelly community, deeply rooted in the area's history and culture.

Her father, Evan Thomas, was born in 1840 in St. Ishmael, Carmarthenshire a Bootmaker of the Town.

Evan and Lettice Protheroe married in October 1860 in Carmarthen, Carmarthenshire, and together they had eight children over 18 years. Evan was a dedicated family man who lived in Kidwelly for more than ten years, ensuring a stable and nurturing environment for his children.

https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/237819945/evan_thomas

Lettice Protheroe, born in 1841 in St. Ishmael, Carmarthenshire, to John and Mary Protheroe, was a devoted mother and wife. She lived a long and fulfilling life, passing away on March 17, 1917, in Kidwelly at the age of 76.

https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/237819913/lettice_thomas

The Thomas family welcomed their first daughter, Mary, in 1861 in St. Ishmael, followed by Ann in 1863, Eliza in 1865, Margaret J. in 1868,

https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/237904651/margaret_jane_thomas

John in 1869, Lettice in 1874, Peter in 1876, and William in 1879.

https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/208517589/william_thomas

Each child was born in Kidwelly, solidifying the family's deep ties to the community.

John's life, although tragically short, was filled with the warmth and companionship of a large family. He experienced the joys and challenges of growing up in a bustling household, forming bonds that would be cherished long after his passing.

John Thomas's story is a poignant reminder of the fragility of life and the enduring impact one can have on their family and community. Though his time was brief, his memory lives on in the hearts of those who knew and loved him. He is a small but significant chapter in the rich history of Kidwelly, Carmarthenshire, and his legacy continues to resonate through the generations.

https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/237904612/john_thomas