

The following transcript gives a good insight on the condition of some of the people who would have used the Guildford Union Workhouse. For those of you who are new to the area, The Foresters was the pub that stood on the corner of Cline Road and Cooper Road (see [The Foresters Beerhouse](#)), the Sanford Arms stood on the corner of Epsom Road and Harvey Road and is currently (2017) known as R Bar and the workhouse was situated in what is now St Luke's Square.

GUILDFORD

A MAN FOUND DEAD ON THE HIGHWAY. INQUEST ON THE BODY.

At an early hour on Wednesday morning, the body of a man was found lying dead on the road running from the Forester Inn, Charlotteville by the Union House. The body had evidently been lying there all night. The name of the man was ascertained to be George Smith. He was aged 32, and for some little time he had been an inmate of the Union House. On Thursday afternoon, an inquest on the body was held before Dr J. R. Steadman, the Borough Coroner, and a respectable jury, of which Mr H.B. Drewett was chosen foreman, at the Town Hall. The jury having viewed the body, which lay at the Sanford Arms Inn, and presented an emaciated appearance, the following witnesses, were called:-

Mr Richard Davies deposed: I am master of the Guildford Union Workhouse. The deceased came into the house on the 7th of November last. He discharged himself on Monday. During the whole time he was in the house he remained in the infirmary. I saw nothing more of him until Wednesday morning last shortly after seven o'clock, when from information received from a policeman. I went into the high road adjoining the Union House, where I saw the deceased lying dead. When he went out of the house I told him that he was not in a fit state to go and that I wished there was a law to prevent him. When he left the house he had 3s in his possession. I have since heard from the relieving officer that he gave the deceased an order to re-enter the house on the Tuesday morning after he left.

By a Juryman: I have no power to detain a man if he gives the requisite few hours' notice to leave. The only power of detention I have is in contagious cases. I cautioned him seriously as to the folly of his leaving the house.

Mr Richard Eager, surgeon of Guildford, deposed: my first knowledge of the deceased was obtained on Monday, November 8th when I saw him in the infirmary of the union. He was in a state of general disease and very emaciated. He had dropsically swellings of the legs and syphilitic nodes on the shins. He had also cicatrises of old sores about his legs. His breathing was short and he had a slight cough. Altogether he was in a very bad condition, so much so that I came to

the conclusion that he could not live long. I told the master I had formed that opinion of him. He remained in the house until last Monday. I saw him every day and prescribed for him. He had every comfort a man in his condition could require. He left the house without my knowledge or sanction. He was not in a fit state to do so. Had I known he meant to have left the house I should have strongly urged the impropriety of his doing so, and had I the power I should have prevented him. On Wednesday Morning, I saw the dead body of the deceased at the Sutured Arms. I have made a post mortem examination of the body today. I found the marks already spoken of also recent abrasions on his knee the result, I presume of falls. The liver was extensively diseased in fact in the state of a drunkard's liver. His aspect showed he had been a great drunkard. In the cavity of the abdomen I found semis extravasation. In the chest some extravasation. The pericardium was somewhat larger than natural and there was considerable deposit of fat about the region of the heart. On washing the membranes I found deposits of organised lymph the result of antecedent disease.

In answer to a juryman, Mr Eager said that he thought a medical man should have discretionary power over these cases. If a patient were not fit to leave the infirmary he should not be allowed to do so.

Mr John Patrick, the landlord of the Forester Inn, Charlotteville, deposed: On Tuesday evening, shortly after ten o'clock, the deceased came into my house and asked the way to the Guildford Union. I directed him to the place, and seeing that he looked ill I advised him to make the best of his way to the Union House. He asked for half a pint of beer and drunk two thirds of it. I watched him for some time and went to door to watch him. He was walking slowly in the direction of the Union House. The man, when in my house, told me that he had left the house two days before but his legs had since swelled so much that he was glad to come back again.

By a Juryman: It was not my impression that the deceased was intoxicated. I thought he was suffering from illness. Had I thought he was not capable of reaching the Union House I should have accompanied him there.

Thomas Stovold of No 2, Cline-road, Charlotteville, deposed: On Wednesday morning, shortly before six o'clock, I was going to my work by the road which skirts the Union House, when I saw a man lying in the middle of the footway. I spoke to him but he returned no answer. I took hold of his hand and found out it was cold. I then saw the man was dead. I went and gave information at the police station. The man was lying on his back. He had no hat on. He was lying near the corner of the union wall and just by a shed. The road is a much unfrequented one.

By a Juryman: Where I saw the deceased was at a distance of fifty yards from the Forester Inn.

P.C. Saunders, of the Guildford Borough Police, deposed: On Wednesday morning, at about twenty minutes past six o'clock the last witness came to the police station and said that a man was lying dead near the Union House. I at once proceeded to the spot, where I found the deceased lying on his back. He was cold and stiff, and had apparently been dead for some time. His hat was off and on moving the body I found it underneath his back. I obtained a stretcher from the Union House and conveyed the body to the Sanford Arms. On searching the deceased I found nothing on him but a short pipe filled with tobacco, and an order for the union signed by J. Portsmouth, the relieving officer, and dated the 29th of November.

By a Juryman: A policeman would, during the night, pass down the road.

Mr Superintendent Law said that a constable passed down the road shortly after 12 o'clock. He had enquired of him but the constable said that he had seen nothing to call for report.

Mr. Davies, re-called, said that the deceased went from Guildford to Woking by train. He had ascertained that he came back to Guildford in the baker's cart.

The worthy Coroner briefly summed up the evidence, and referring to the power which an inmate of the Union House possessed of leaving the place at a short notice, said that it was to be desired that in cases like that of the unfortunate deceased, the master should be invested with detentive powers.

The Jury returned a verdict of "Death from Natural Causes", and added the expression of their great regret that in cases similar to that of the deceased the master of the union had no power to detain a patient.