

## **Transcript of Coronial Inquest *West Australian* 16 Oct 1901, p.4.**

### **THE BUSSELTON TRAGEDY. CONCLUSION OF THE INQUEST. ANDERSON COMMITTED FOR TRIAL.**

Busselton, October 15.

The adjourned inquiry into the circumstances of the death of Thomas Johnson, who was shot last Sunday, was held today, before Dr Hungerford, R.M., acting as Coroner, and a jury of five. George Anderson was present in custody. Anderson is an old soldier, and claims to be a survivor of the Six Hundred who took part in the famous charge of the Light Brigade at Balaclava.

F. Vines deposed that deceased was in his employ at the time of his death. Anderson left of his own accord last Saturday. Witness knew of no ill-feeling between the two men.

Clara Layland [sic] said that she lived in a hut with her husband near Vines. On Saturday night Anderson went to her place, under the influence of liquor. Johnson came some time later, also under the same influence. Johnson had a bottle of rum, and gave Anderson some. Johnson told Anderson to fry him some meat, and he did so. Johnson said it was not frying fast enough and quarrelled. Johnson punched Anderson's head. Anderson said, "He is a better man than me," and pulled the rifle from under the table, loaded it, and said that if Johnson said another word he would shoot him. Johnson then went to sleep before the fire. Anderson shortly did the same. On Sunday morning the men quarrelled and fought. After they had breakfasted they were reconciled. After breakfast, Johnson left for his camp, half a mile distant, and took his bag. Anderson followed for a short distance, and then returned, and asked for his coat and rifle. Witness's husband took the cartridge from the rifle and gave it to him. Anderson said he was going to shoot Johnson. They expostulated, and then said, "Only frighten him. If Johnson shows fight hit him over the head with the stock." He then followed in the direction of Johnson. She left her hut to attend to the opossum traps. About an hour after she returned, Anderson fell asleep on her bed. On Monday morning she went to look for an opossum trap she had lent Johnson, and found Anderson's rifle under a log near Johnson's camp.

Nutty Layland [sic] gave corroborative evidence.

W. Cross said that about half-past 9 on Sunday morning he left Layland's [sic] hut with Nutty, going kangaroo shooting. They met Anderson coming from the direction of Johnson's camp, who told them that he had shot Johnson. They went to Johnson's camp, and found the body.

P.c's. Tonkin and Shiel gave evidence of arresting Anderson, who denied all knowledge of the crime, and said some ---- "thing" stole his swag and rifle. Whoever stole the rifle must have shot Johnson.

The Coroner gave a description of the wound which caused death, and summed up.

The jury retired for ten minutes, and returned a verdict of "wilful murder" against George Anderson, who was committed [sic] for trial at the next Criminal Sessions at Perth.