

“Suicide Of A Mother With Her Child” taken from the Morning Post London 2 March 1871:

Yesterday morning Dr. Diplock resumed the inquiry touching the deaths of Elizabeth Bars 27 & Lionel Bars 2yrs & 10 months, mother & son whose dead bodies were discovered by some workmen in the river Crane at Chase Bridge near Kneller Hall in the parish of Twickenham on the morning of the 21st February. At the commencement of the proceedings the coroner read three letters which had arrived by post directed to the deceased Elizabeth Bars since the last enquiry, the first of which was from Band-Sergeant Murdoch of the 72d Highlanders who was alluded to at the last inquiry. It was dated Queenstown & it explained why the writer had not been to see the deceased previous to leaving England with his regiment for India concluding with an assurance that the first letter he wrote on reaching Umballa should be to deceased. The other letters were from the father of the drowned boy & contained halves of a £5 note. Alfred Long, labourer said I had been to work at Darlington on Mon 20 February & on returning to my home at about half past seven met a young woman who had a child in her arms & had on a similar cloak to the one produced near Chase Bridge. I said Good Evening & she returned the compliment and passed over the bridge & on turning round again I saw her come back & get over a stile leading to Isleworth by the river. I then went back & found her sitting on the stile as I thought suckling the child, I then said, “It’s a dull evening miss & she replied, “Yes it is” & immediately crossed over to the footpath on the other side of the bridge leading to Twickenham Common. By a juror – I know the path leading to Twickenham by the river to be in a dangerous state. The water is from 2ft to 5ft deep there at times. It was rather low that night. Agnes Douglass said she had been in the habit of visiting Mrs Bars for some time past. Had heard the deceased speaking of an old sweetheart belonging to the 72d Highlanders & had been at her house when he visited her there. Recollected about 6 weeks before last Christmas he was there, & after he had gone

observed a small bottle labelled "poison" in large red letters standing on a sideboard in deceased's room, & asked the deceased what she used that for, & she replied, "Oh, I am going to use it for a purpose some day." Knew sergeant Murdock had five days leave of absence about Christmas time, & that he had stopped at deceased's house all that time. Deceased told me she was in the family way by him, & she appeared in great trouble & bewildered at times. I had seen sergeant Murdock with another young woman & had told deceased of it several times, but she never would believe it. Ellen Gibson, sister of the deceased said she saw the deceased the night before she went into service, when she remarked she would as soon poison herself as leave her child & go to service. Other evidence was given showing that the deceased woman meditated suicide & eventually the jury returned a verdict to the effect that she had drowned her son & committed suicide while in an unsound state of mind."