# Shotgun Loading Error Led To Farmer's Death

## HAD WARNED HIS SON OF MAKING SAME MISTAKE

A BISHOPSTONE farmer, who was killed on Friday afternoon when his 12-bore shotgun burst, had inadvertently loaded one barrel with a 20-bore cartridge and subsequently inserted a cartridge of the correct calibre—a mistake against which he had warned his son.

This theory was advanced by the police at the inquest at Seaford on Monday concerning the death of Mr. Lionel Harry Willett, aged 67, of Manor Farm, Bishopstone. The Coroner for East Sussex (Dr. A. C. Sommerville) recorded a verdict of Accidental Death.

Mr. Willett's body was found on a farm track near his home, with the shattered remains of the gun nearby.

Superintendent E. Pilbeam, of the Chief Constable's Office, Lewes, told the Coroner that the weapon was a high grade 12-bore double-barrelled shotgun in good condition, but 50 to 60 years old. The right hand barrel had burst, and in it were found the remains of a shotgun cartridge, which had been fired.

If a 20-bore cartridge were inserted, it slipped down the barrel out of sight and it was afterwards possible to load with a 12-bore cartridge, said Superintendent Pilbeam. If the gun was fired with the smaller calibre cartridge obstructing the barrel, great pressure would be set up, even if the smaller cartridge blocking the barrel did not explode. If the obstructing cartridge did explode as it had done in this case, the pressure would, of course, be even greater.

**Superintendent Pilbeam said that normally the pressure on the inside of the barrels on firing would be about 2½ tons per square inch. With the barrel obstructed, this would increase to 4½ to six tons per square inch.**

The gun would have been perfectly safe in the normal way, firing with the correct ammunition.

The evidence showed that Mr. Willett had used a 20-bore shotgun earlier in the day, and in his pockets were found five 12-bore cartridges and one 20-bore cartridge.

The Superintendent went on to advance the theory that Mr. Willett had loaded the right barrel of the gun with a 20-bore cartridge, and this had slipped down the barrel out of sight. Subsequently, forgetting that he had loaded, he inserted a 12-bore cartridge. When he fired, the gun exploded, causing extensive damage to the left side of the skull.

The Coroner: "If he had used a 20-bore gun that morning it is quite likely that he would have had 20-bore cartridges in his pocket?"

Superintendent Pilbeam: "Yes."

"The fact that he had inserted a 20-bore cartridge might have slipped his memory when he put the 12-bore cartridge into the breach?"—"That is my view, sir."

Dr. R. J. C. Sutton said Mr. Willett had been a patient of his for nine years. He had had attacks of giddiness and blackouts, but on January 5, Mr. Willett told him that the blackouts had not recurred.

**Mr. John Willett, of Manor Farm, told the Coroner that his father was always quite cheerful and was looking forward to retirement. He was a keen sportsman, and always walked about the farm with a gun.**

"The 12-bore gun had been in the family for many years," said Mr. Willett. "I believe my grandfather had it." He added that his father had been blinded in the right eye and always fired from the left shoulder.

His father who had been using a 20-bore shotgun earlier in the day in question, had warned him against carrying 20-bore ammunition when using a 12-bore gun, and he had never known his father to do so.

A tractor driver, Mr. Frank Winser, of Summer Cottage, Bishopstone, said that he saw Mr. Willett walking along the New Barn-road at about 4 p.m. carrying a gun. About 20 minutes later he returned to the spot and saw Mr. Willett lying about 30 yards away. He had not heard a shot.

Police Sergeant E. Chapman said Mr. Willett was lying on his back. The stock of the gun and the barrels had parted, and were lying with other pieces of the weapon scattered on the ground.

The Coroner said that the element of human error had crept in when Mr. Willett loaded the gun. He expressed his sympathy with the relatives.

# EXPERT FARMER AND GREAT SPORTSMAN

THE local farming community and sporting circles have suffered a severe loss through the death of Mr. Willett. Widely respected as a painstaking and knowledgeable farmer, Mr. Willett was also held in high regard as a sportsman.

A fearless rider, he was one of the best horsemen of his day in the South of England, and was a great supporter of the Southdown Hunt, which he had followed since boyhood, at one time attending as a whipper-in, and later serving on the Hunt Committee.

He hunted with many visiting packs, and often entertained members of the field. He took a good rider and a good horse to

follow him, and although he took several tumbles, his nerve was never shaken. At one time he kept his own small pack of beagles.

**Because of his death, the meet of the Southdown Hunt at the Seven Sisters Hotel, Seaford, on Monday, has been postponed.**

Mr. Willett, who farmed about 800 acres, had a good herd of Sussex cattle and was a great judge of the breed. He was a member of the Sussex Herd Book Society and also served on the committee.

A former chairman of the East Sussex Farmers' Union, he did valuable work during the last war when he took over the machinery side of the East Sussex War Agricultural Executive Committee. His powers of organisation were invaluable.

He took a prominent part in the life of Bishopstone village, being founder president and life president of the Football Club, and a keen follower of the progress of the club. He was also president of the Social Centre, and was a generous supporter of local organisations.

**His grasp of all the complexities of farming was unerring and he spent considerable amount of time on the control of vermin, particularly foxes.**

A big man in every sense of the word—he was 6ft. 4in. tall—he was often to be seen walking over the Downs, covering long distances with his tremendous stride. Of a somewhat retiring disposition, he was happiest when on his farm.

Well known to all keepers, shepherds, stockmen and rabbit-catchers, and the like, he looked upon them all as his friends, and gave the greatest consideration to anything they had to say to him.

Mr. Willett was a member of the Sussex Yeomanry in pre-1914-18 war years. He was mobilised at the outbreak of the first World War and was initially stationed at Canterbury. Later he served in Gallipoli until his evacuation, spent some time in the Western Desert, and later fought up through Gaza, Beersheba to Jerusalem. Subsequently, he was commissioned in the Regular Cavalry.

**A contemporary of his in those days described Mr. Willett as "the bravest man I knew and an inspiration to others."**

In the last war, Mr. Willett was a patrol leader in the special section of the Home Guard at Bishopstone, and was an enthusiastic member of the force for the duration.

His father, the late Mr. Harry Willett, was a great farmer, and Mr. Lionel Willett took over Manor Farm when his father retired.

His death is particularly tragic as he was in the process of handing the farm over to his son, John, who will undoubtedly carry on the fine farming tradition of the family. Mr. Willett leaves a widow and the one son.

War Agricultural Executive Committee.

"But everything he did was distinguished by a certain individuality; he was tough and self-reliant, and he expressed his strong views with good, if pungent, humour. He had a great knowledge and love of Nature.

"In the hunting field he was an almost legendary figure. At the age of 64 friends let me be had practically given up riding, 'except,' as he added characteristically, 'for breaking in the young horses.'

"He was intensely proud of his family and their long connection with their land, and, above all, of his independence.

"Such qualities may be rare today, but few would deny that, by their disappearance, we should be the losers. He will be mourned and missed by all his many friends."

# Many Attend Memorial Service

THERE was a large and representative congregation at a memorial service for Mr. Willett at Bishopstone Parish Church on Wednesday afternoon. It was held at the same time as cremation took place at Brighton.

The family mourners who attended the cremation at Brighton were: Mr. and Mrs. John Willett (son and daughter-in-law), Miss Violet Willett and Dr. Marjorie Willett (sisters), Mr. and Mrs. F. Fewell (brother-in-law and sister), Mr. Arthur Fewell (nephew) and Mr. and Mrs. F. H. R. McIntosh.

The memorial service was conducted by the Vicar (the Rev. F. S. Vaughan), and Miss Laughlin played the organ.

The Southdown Hunt were represented by Lord Gage (chairman of the Hunt Committee), the two Joint Masters, Major C. H. James and Mr. Gerald Askew; Mr. T. B. O. Kerr (secretary), and Mr. F. M. Cockrell (huntsman), and Mr. R. M. Cardwell (former Master). The Sussex Cattle Society were represented by Mr. A. G. Holland (secretary), the National Farmers' Union by Mr. F. B. Cornwell (vice-chairman of the East Sussex County branch) and Mr. F. E. Newnham (County secretary); the Laughton Agricultural Society by Mr R. S. Elphick and Mr. W. H. Gribble; the Sussex Yeomanry Old Comrade Association by Mr. Hoad, Mr. C. M. Glenister and Mr. Cuthbert Fowler.

Also present were Mrs. Glenister, Captain and Mrs. Geoffrey Chandler, Mrs. D. F. Chandler (representing Captain A. H. Chandler), Mrs. F. Winser, Mr. H. Ives (Newhaven), Mr. S. Lambert, Mrs. Everest, Lieut.-Gdr. W. G. Mack (Seaford), Mr. Derek Clark, Mr. J. Craig, Mr. J. C. Robinson, Mr. M. Craig, Mr. W. Rolstone, Mr. J. Hicks, Mr. H. S. Phillips, Mr. R. M. Botting, Mr. A. M. P. Greenwood, Mr. H. C. Robinson, Mr. Norton Marchant, Mrs. Gilmour, Miss Baden, Mr. C. W. Hodges, Mr. Guy Janson, Mr. C. W. Hodges, Mr. and Mrs. H. de Villiers, Mr. R. L. Hayes, Mr. A. E. C. Marriott, Mr. T. Grimill, Jones, Mr. J. Wynniatt.

Mrs. W. Hunt (president, Bishopstone Women's Institute), Mrs. W. Mitchell (secretary, Bishopstone Women's Institute), Mrs. W. Laughlin (churchwarden at Bishopstone), Mr. Frank Ede (also representing Mr. Bernard Ede, of Harpcyne, and Ede Ltd., Lewes, and Old Home Guard Association), Mr. and Mrs. Harper, Mr. W. G. Burgess (E. O. Chiverrell, Ltd., Lewes), Mr. O. Long (representing Mr. and Mrs. Roger Hales), Mr. A. M. Beeny of Hailsham (representing Strickland, Ltd., Hailsham), Mr. R. H. Stephens (representing Mr. Patrick Joy), Messrs. T. Lane and K. Worsfold (representing Sussex Tractors, Ltd., Lewes), Mr. E. C. Trotter (representing Sussex Herd Book Society), Mr. S. A. Pope (Leyels (Brighton), Ltd.).

Lady Pollock, Lady Forbes, Mrs. Gerald Askew, Capt. E. G. Hastings, Mrs. B. Swan, Mrs. C. O'Malley, Miss B. E. Simmons, Mr. and Mrs. V. C. Honeywood, Mr. H. M. Blaker, the Misses Blaker, Mr. and Mrs. Bellman, Mr. John Collinson, Mr. G. Westgate, Polegate, also representing Mr. H. Westgate, Berwick; Mrs. and Miss Simpson, Mr. and Mrs. W. R. Darlington, Mrs. Loughlin, Mr. V. C. Kerby (Messrs. McDougall); Mr. T. Rich, Mr. G. Hughes, Mr. M. S. Strickland, Mr. S. G. Pile (Tarring Neville); Mrs. J. Tattersall, Mr. and Mrs. R. Brickell, Mr. A. S. Boniface (Messrs. A. Burtenshaw and Son); Mr. and Mrs. J. Dixon, Mr. C. Botting, Mr. M. E. Walton, Mr. J. M. Mossop, Mr. J. Gosling.

The following employees of the late Mr. Willett also attended: Mr. T. Standen (foreman), also representing Bishopstone Football Clubs), Messrs. H. Cox, T. Burcham, T. Mansbridge, F. White, B. Beard, B. Rook, S. Mepham, C. Tuppen, B. Fulton, D. Westward, L. Everest, W. Everest, F. Pople, L. Suter, W. Funnell, F. Moon, also Mr. A. Hollands (a former employee for 50 years).

## "Tough And Self-Reliant"

THE following tribute has been received from Lord Gage:—"By the death of Lionel Willett, at the age of 67, as the result of an unhappy accident, the farming community and the Southdown Hunt, and indeed the county, have lost a well-known figure from their midst.

"In a sense, his career was conventional; he was a good farmer who had pioneered in various directions, he had been Chairman of the local branch of the N.F.U. he served in the Sussex Yeomanry as a sergeant in the 1914-1918 war in Egypt and Gallipoli, and afterwards was commissioned. In the last war he was a member of the County

## New Rates For Farm Workers

AT their meeting on Wednesday, the Agricultural Wages Board for England and Wales, after considering objections to their published proposals for increases in minimum rates of wages and board and lodging values, confirmed the proposals and made orders bringing the new rates and values into operation as from January 23. This decision was carried on the votes of the appointed members and employers' side, the workers' side opposing.

The new rates for males aged 20 and over, and for females aged 21 and over, are respectively 135s. 0d. and 102s. 0d. per week of 47 hours, except that in four areas in the Midlands and North where wage rates for females are related to a 44-hour week, their minimum will be 95s. 0d.

In the case of casual and part-time workers the rates are 2s. 11d. an hour for males, and 2s. 2d. an hour for females. Proportionate increases are made in the rates for younger workers.

The new overtime rates are 4s. 4d. an hour for males, and 3s. 3d. an hour for females, with increases also for younger workers.

The values for full board and lodging for a seven-day week are 46s. 0d. for males aged 20 and over, and 41s. 6d. for females aged 21 and over, with proportionately increased values for younger workers, and in the values of board and lodging for a six-day week or lesser period, for board alone, and for individual meals.

The workers' representatives gave notice that they will move for a further increase in minimum wages at the next meeting of the Board, which will be held on February 1.

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Brighton Old Grammarians H 1; East Side Rovers 12, Bentswood United 1; Preston Rovers 2, Pavilion Athletic 3; Moulsecombe 3, Vale Rovers 4; Alien West 2, Cuckfield II 3; Brighton North End II 5, Hove White Rovers III 4.

**Gentry Bowl. — First Round:** Hanover Athletic 2, East Side Rovers II 4; Shoreham United III 2, Motive Power 3, Regal Athletic 1, Rottingdean 7, Denbigh 7, Civil service 6.

**Coronation Cup. — First Round:** Pavilion Athletic II 8, Seaford Athletic 1; H.C.G.S.O.B. 3, Brighton Old Grammarians III 6, Alliance 9, Worthing Old Grammarians II 1; Hanover Athletic 0, Brighton Insurance 6; Marine Athletic 6, West Hove III 3; Old Xaverians 4, Seaford G.C.O.B. 3; Vale Rovers III 3, Old Varndeanians III 3; Bentswood United II 0, Brighton Hanks 8.

**East Sussex League. —** Hastings Rangers II 10, Bohemia United 0; Old Pevensians 4, Ore United 0; Hollington United 10, Burwash 2; Hellingly Hospital 10, Heathfield United 2.

**East Sussex Challenge Cup. — Preliminary Round Replay:** Hastings Civil Service 3, Rye United 11 2.

**Mowatt Cup.—Third round:** Ashurst Wood 3, Worth's End 3; Clayton 1, Crawley III 8; Crawley Ramblers II 4, Hurstpierpoint 2; Haywards Heath III 6, Boxhlorce-Hellermann 2.

**Mid-Sussex League. — Division I:** Bolney 3, Turners Hill 5; Forest Row 6, Ardingly 3; Hassocks 2, Crawley Town 3; Hopkorn Y.M.C.A. 2, Burgess Hill 1, Horsted Keynes 8, West Hoathly 0; Three Bridges II 5, Lindfield 4. **Division II:** Crowborough II 3, Newick 5; Henfield 5, East Grinstead II 2. **Division III:** Dane Hill 3, St. Francis Hospital 1; Fletching 2, Mayfield 4; Lindfield Rood 8, Hendfield 0. **Division IV:** Balcombe 2, Hassocks II 11; Chailey 5, Horsted Keynes II 2; Sun Wanderers II 3, Hurstpierpoint II 2; Turners Hill II 2, Wivelsfield 8. **Division V:** Burgess Hill II 4, Worthing 3; Lindfield II 5, Forest Row II 3; Newick II 5, Chailey II 0; Shipleford 2, Lindfield Rood II 4; Worth's End II 3, Bolney II 6.

**Tunbridge Wells League. — Division I:** Wadhurst 2, Sandhurst 3, Frant 2, Hockhurst 4; High Brooms O.B. 3, Tunbridge Wells Electricity 1. **Division II:** Y.M.C.A. 4, Sandhurst 2; Cowden 7, Groombridge 1; Blackham and Ashurst 3, Wadhurst II 1; Weald Electricity 2, Hartfield 1. **Division III:** Hawkhurst II 10, Frant II 6; Cranbrook II 2, Sandhurst II 5; Mayfield II 2, Wadhurst Tec II 2; Rusthall Juniors 3, High Brooms II 2; British Railways 6, Y.M.C.A. II 1; Langton Green 5, Pembury II 0.

**Eastbourne League. — Division I:** Argosy 2, Eastbourne Gas 7; Dental Estimates Board 1, Eastbourne Electricity 3; Hampden Park 4, Stone Cross 2; Jevington 1, Eastbourne United III 3; Old Grammarians 0, Pevensey 3; Polecate 2, Drive United 5. **Division II:** Bibbos 1, Eastbourne III 2; Drive United II 8, East Dean 2; Eastbourne Electricity II 13, Hampden Park II 3; Eastbourne Gas II 2, Willingdon 5; Stone Cross 1, St. Mary's 7.

**Hastings League.—Division I:** Little Common 0, Hollington II 6; Westfield 3, Ickleham 17; Observer Athletic 3, Robertsbridge United 8. **Division II:** Rye United III 6, Udimore 0; Robertsbridge United II 3, Hastings Electricity 5; Bexhill III 6, Ekenholme 1, Corbens 0, Beckley 1. **Division III:** Tideland 2, Sedlescombe 1; Robertson Street Y.P.S. 6, Mountfield 2. **Division IV:** Pevensmarsh 3, Brede 0; Guldeford O.B. 2, Bodiam 1.

**Hastings League (Lower Divisions) Cup.—**First round: Ickleham II 4, Battle Rangers III 1; Whatlington 2, Hastings Town 2; Bexhill United II 5, Crowhurst 1; Flimwell B.L. 7, Riverton Rangers 2.

**Hailsham League. — Division I:** Netherfield 2, Hailsham II 2; Ashburnham 0, Hailsham Geobro 0; Herstmonceux 5, Chiddingly 0; Hellbow Down 1, Broom 1; Framfield and Blackboys 5, Hellingly 0; Ratcliffe Green 2, Rose 4. **Division II:** Kingfield 11 5, Ratcliffe Green II 1; Hellingly II 0, Upper Dicker 4.

**Hailsham League Junior Division Cup.—Second round:** Hailsham Geobro II 4, Eastbourne Olympic II 1; Heathfield Rovers II 1, Framfield and Blackboys II 1; Chiddingly II 2, Mayfield Town 3; East Hoathly 7, Herstmonceux II 2.

**Lewes Challenge Cup. — Second Round:** Denton Rovers 2, Cranesford II 3, St. Mary's 10, Piddinghoe 0, Nutley 2, Buxted 1.

**Lewes League.—Division I:** Hamsey 2, Ewhorne 3; Bishopstone 0, Glynde 4. **Division II:** Barcombe II 3, Old Lewesians 4. **Minor Division:** St. Mary's 5, Newhaven B.C. 0.

**Hastings Youth League. —** Army Cadets "A" 17, Ickleham Casuals Minors 0.

**Sussex Minor Cup.—Third round:** 225 Squadron A.T.C. 1, Wivelsfield Athletic 9; Avondale 0, Shoreham R.A.F. 3; Eastbourne United 4, St. Thomas's 0; Hailsham 2, St. Mary's (Lewes); Shoreham Y.C. 4, Chichester Rec. 3; Pevensey 9, Wilmington 0.

**Eastbourne Minor Cup. — First round:** Pevensey 4, Central H.C. 1; St. Andrew's 3, Y.M.C.A. 8; Willingdon 2, Hampden Park 9.

**Brighton Minor League.—**Hove Pensions 3, H.I.S.O.N. 5; Southwick 3, Ockwood O.B. 2.

**Rugby. —** Seaford 13, East Sussex Police 0; Lewes 32, Crowborough 0; Greenborough "A" 3, Lewes "A" 6.

**Hockey.—**Hailsham 1, East Grinstead 5; Worthing Ladies 11, Hailsham Ladies 0; Lewes 1, Brighton 1; Brighton II 7, Lewes II 0; Southwick Ladies 2, Lewes Ladies 3; Seaford 4, Brighton Students 3.

**TUESDAY**

**Rugby.—**Sussex Schoolboys 9, Buckinghamshire Schoolboys 6.

**WEDNESDAY**

**Brighton Mid-Week League.—West Sussex Police 4, Brighton P.O. 0; Brighton Police 9, Haywards Heath 1; Motive Power 3, Southwick 9.**

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## Lewes And Newhaven Billiards & Snooker League

**Billiards—Division I**

| | P | W | D | L | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Lewes Const. Club ... | 9 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 14 |
| Lewes Druids Club ... | 5 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 13 |
| Lewes Labour Club ... | 5 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 12 |
| Seaford Const. Club | 4 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 6 |

**Billiards—Division II**

| | P | W | D | L | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Lewes Fire Services ... | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 12 |
| Lewes British L. Club | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 10 |
| Lewes Y.M.C.A. ..... | 3 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 7 |
| Lewes Labour Club ... | 3 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 7 |

**Snooker—Division I**

| | P | W | D | L | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Lewes Const. Club ... | 9 | 5 | 3 | 1 | 24 |
| Lewes Labour Club ... | 9 | 5 | 1 | 3 | 23½ |
| Seaford Const. Club . | 8 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 27 |
| Uckfield ..... | 8 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 23 |
| Lewes Fire Services | 8 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 23½ |
| Lewes Druids Club . | 8 | 3 | 0 | 5 | 19 |
| Phoenix (Lewes) ... | 8 | 1 | 2 | 5 | 17 |

**Snooker—Division II**

| | P | W | D | L | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Lewes Const. C. 'A' | 17 | 14 | 3 | 0 | 73 |
| Lewes B.L. Club 'A' | 16 | 11 | 2 | 3 | 63 |
| Seaford Const. Club | 17 | 10 | 3 | 4 | 62 |
| Lewes Labour Club | 17 | 10 | 4 | 3 | 60½ |
| Lewes Druids C. 'A' | 17 | 10 | 1 | 6 | 59 |
| Phoenix (Lewes) ... | 17 | 8 | 3 | 6 | 57 |
| Lewes Const. C. 'B' | 17 | 7 | 4 | 6 | 49 |
| Lewes Fire Services | 17 | 7 | 3 | 7 | 48½ |
| Lewes Southdown ... | 17 | 6 | 2 | 9 | 48 |
| Lewes Druids C. 'B' | 17 | 5 | 6 | 6 | 40 |
| Lewes B.L. Club 'B' | 17 | 3 | 4 | 10 | 38 |
| Seaford Southdown . | 14 | 4 | 2 | 8 | 38 |
| Lewes Y.M.C.A. ... | 15 | 4 | 1 | 10 | 32 |
| Eastwoods (Lewes) . | 16 | 0 | 4 | 12 | 28 |