**Murder in moonlight**

**By Will O’ Whispers**

Dal Thomas, a well-built and powerful farm labourer, was strangled on the Aberystwyth to Bow Street road one beautiful moonlit night in September 1905.

He had been drinking with a few friends in the Black Lion Inn at Bow Street and was the worse for drink when someone kicked or hit him on the head with a blunt instrument before strangling him.

Mr. Thomas was left in a pool of blood and the body was discovered early next morning.

Who was the murderer? Later that day, one of the drinking companions, an Irishman called Frank Dixon, was arrested on suspicion but was able to prove that after leaving Mr. Thomas at Bow Street the night before, he went to a farm loft and slept there all night.

At the inquest at Aberystwyth, the jury returned a verdict of 'wilful murder by a person or persons unknown.' The murderer was never brought to book.

There was a certain amount of mystery about Mr. Thomas’s own background. He spoke with a North Wales accent and told friends he had served with the Anglesey Royal Engineer Milizia. He was a bachelor without any known relatives, and little else was known of him.

Like some of the other men involved in the case, he was a farm labourer who travelled around the countryside in search of work when and where it turned up. There was a certain amount of regularity about this, for when he was murdered he had just been engaged by the farm Wern Philip in harvesting for the fourth successive year.

Wern Philip is between Bow Street and Commins Coch and owns 400 acres of land.

Philip where neither could be said to be sober. Despite this, the lady of the house gave both Mr. Thomas and Mr. Dixon a few smallings to go out and enjoy themselves.

Down they strode to Bow Street, Mr. Thomas nearly walking into a bicycle ridden by a local builder called Richard Owen. He also stopped to have a chat with someone on a hayrick.

At Bow Street they tried to get some bread and cheese in a shop, but failed. So where else was there to go but the Black Lion, where they met another farm labourer, James Adams and tucked in to bread and cheese and beer.

It was Mr. Adams who confirmed later that Mr. Dixon slept the night in a loft at Bryncastell Farm and that he was there from 11 pm. The murdered man was last seen alive (actually sleeping off the drink) between 11 pm and midnight on the road to Aberystwyth opposite Bow Street Railway Station.

The man who last saw him alive was none other than the cyclist he had nearly walked into that day. The cyclist said he struck a match and saw his face, and there was nothing wrong with him then.

Strangely, however, the police found some blood at this spot and a broken clay pipe, though it was a long way from where Mr. Thomas was subsequently found murdered.

Mr. Dixon’s evidence to the inquest was that he left Mr. Thomas opposite Bow Street Railway Station because Mr. Thomas was going to Wern Philip and he (Dixon) to Bryncastell. He never saw his friend alive again.

Dr. Abraham Thomas and Dr. David Ellis explained how they thought Mr. Thomas had been