

9 William Connor, known as Lorenzo d October 17th 1880: Music Hall artiste



25 March 2013

Where is the grave?

Walk along the main path
past the Crematorium.
Turn right at the last path.
Mr Connor's grave is a few
steps up on the left.



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A music hall artist, known as Lorenzo, died in his lodgings on Sunday October 17th 1880. Originally, the local press suspected foul play, but this proved to be untrue. The headstone names *William Connor, known as Will Lorenzo*, and goes on to record that *This stone was erected by a few Manchester friends*.

The *Barrow Herald* of Tuesday October 19th 1880 reported:

SUSPICIOUS DEATH AT BARROW

About eight o'clock on Sunday morning a professional named Will Lorenzo died at his lodgings in Barrow, under what appear to be very suspicious circumstances. On Saturday evening he was at the Star Music Hall where he was playing his part as a negro delineator¹, and having sung two songs in capital style to a large and enthusiastic audience, appeared for a third time in a trick that he was very clever in, viz. balancing twelve chairs on his chin, and it was noticed that he staggered and let fall the chairs, yet no person suspected anything was wrong. However, he failed in the next attempt and fell before the footlights. He got up, and reeled to the side wings, where he was found lying on his back. On being interrupted as to his state he replied that he had been drugged. Mr. Kinsella, the lessee, had him at once conveyed to his lodgings, and early on Sunday morning, matters appearing serious, a doctor was sent for, but too late to be of service.

The above was repeated in the report of the inquest, which appeared in the *Herald* of Saturday October 23rd.

An inquest was held on the body on Wednesday evening at Mr. Scott's, Cavendish Arms, before Mr. John Poole, Coroner, and a jury, of which Mr. Beck, Dalton-road, was foreman. After the body had been viewed the first witness called was Mr. Kinsella, who said he lived at 15, Lord-street, and was lessee of the Star Music Hall. He knew the deceased Wm. Connor, whose professional name was Lorenzo, and lodged at 25 Crellin-street. He was a low comedian and chair-balancer in his employment. He had been with him for six nights, and he was informed that he was 32 years of age. He was addicted to drink or to spells of intemperance, but in his employ he was very steady. He took ill on Saturday night last whilst performing. He gave two songs very successfully, but before the chair-balancing he was suddenly taken ill. Witness was at the box when word came that Lorenzo was drunk and falling about the stage. He went round to the side, and shouted, 'Billy wake up.' On hearing the remark he winked, as much as to say he was jesting. After watching minutely the impression he felt was that he had taken drink and in consequence of what took place after, deceased left the stage and witness apologised to the audience. He was quite sober on going on. He had complained to Mrs. Kinsella on the Thursday previous about his hands being bloodless and cold. He saw him both before and after his death. The last time he saw him alive was about half-past seven on Sunday morning. He saw him dead about eight o'clock.

- Dr. Settle, surgeon, said that he made a *post mortem* examination on the body of deceased about ten o'clock, and he found the brain diseased and a large clot of blood with the substance of the brain amply sufficient to account for death. The immediate cause for the effusion of blood would be strong exertion, which would have ruptured a vein. Deceased's intemperate habits would predispose towards this. He had found no *post mortem* appearances to show that poison was taken. In fact the deceased died from effusion of blood arising from natural causes.

- After the doctor's evidence the Coroner did not think it necessary to call any further witnesses, nor in fact was it necessary to hold an enquiry, the cause of death being so evident, were it not for the statement made by deceased when taken ill, as to his being drugged. It was quite natural for a man taking drink to imagine such a thing; but from the doctor's evidence it was quite clear that no foul play had taken place.

- The jury recorded a verdict that deceased died from natural causes, arising from effusion on the brain.

- Deceased was a native of Wednesbury, and in the profession was highly respected.

1 impersonator: white in blackface