

**HAYLANDS BURNING FATALITY.
THE INQUEST.**

On Saturday afternoon Mr. W.H.P.F. THIRKELL, Acting Deputy Coroner for the Island, held an Inquest at the Royal Isle of Wight County Hospital, concerning the death of Wilfred George ALLEN, aged 5½ years, who died at that Institution on Thursday week as the result of burns.

Elsie Jane ALLEN, wife of Arthur Frank ALLEN, a staff sergeant in the A.S.C., serving in France, of Burleigh Cottage, Salters Road, said on Wednesday she was in the house alone with the children. About 11.15 she left the house to go to a neighbour's for water as her tap was frozen. That would be about 50 or 60 yards away. She had not been gone more than five minutes when, as she was in the act of drawing the water, she thought she heard a cry and followed her neighbour outside. She then saw her little boy and noticed that he had been burnt, but her neighbour who first got to him had extinguished the fire. She had left both boys in bed as the elder one was suffering from bronchitis, and the other, aged 4 had a slight cold. There was a fire in the bedroom and also one in the kitchen. The deceased had on a flannel shirt and over it a flannelette nightshirt. She picked him up and carried him home. Her neighbour put some oil on him and he was wrapped up in blankets and taken at once to that institution. Before she went to Mrs. WILLIAMS' for the water she called up to the deceased to know if he was all right and he said "Yes, mam." She told him where she was going.

The Foreman (Mr. A.W. NICHOLLS); Were the fires protected at all?

The Deputy Coroner said that was a matter for the police entirely. There was an Act of Parliament passed called the Children's Protection Act, and if the witness answered the question, she might incriminate herself. He therefore did not think it right that the question should be put to her. The police would no doubt investigate the matter and if they thought fit, they would take action.

Replying to further questions, the mother said the back part of deceased's nightshirt was burnt. But the front part was hardly burnt at all. The undershirt was also burnt in the back. But not so badly as the nightshirt.

Harriet WILLIAMS, wife of Edgar WILLIAMS, a gunner in the R.G.A., living at Southsea Cottage, Salters Road, said on Wednesday morning Mrs. ALLEN was drawing water in her scullery when she heard a scream in the street and rushed round to the front door of the house. She there saw the deceased at the gate with his nightshirt in flames. She ran up to him and wrapped him up in her skirt and apron and extinguished the flames almost immediately. Deceased although he appeared conscious did not say anything, and he was quite quiet as his mother carried him home. Witness ran back for some sweet oil which she had at home and this she applied to the burnt parts. He was scorched most under the arms and down to his waist. She noticed that when she went into the bedroom with the deceased that there was a fire there but no fireguard.

The mother recalled said she asked the deceased why he meddled with the fire, and he replied, "I never, mam, I didn't do it."

The Deputy Coroner: Did he suggest to you that someone else did it?

Witness: I think perhaps he meant that his little brother got out of bed and played with the fire.

There was no suggestion that anyone else had been in the room? – No, sir.

Dr. A.B. WADE, house surgeon at the hospital, said the deceased was brought to the hospital by his mother. He was quite conscious and suffering from severe burns. He died on Thursday afternoon at 2.40. Death was due to shock from burns. The fact that the child was suffering from bronchitis did not improve his chance of recovery. But anyhow it was a very bad case as the burns were extensive.

The Deputy Coroner in summing up said he was sure they could not help feeling great sympathy for the mother. She had only left the house for a few minutes when this dreadful accident happened. The neighbour acted with great promptitude in extinguishing the flames and did all she could to save the child's life. He thought their verdict should be that the deceased died as the result of burns from misadventure. There was no evidence whatever as to how the child got on fire, and the absence of a guard was for the police to take notice of if they thought they ought to, but it did not concern them in arriving at their verdict.

The Jury returned a verdict in accordance with the Deputy Coroner's suggestion, and expressed sympathy with the mother, and also endorsed what had been said as the promptitude of Mrs. WILLIAMS in rendering assistance.

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