

TERRIBLE TRAGEDY AT RYDE CHILD SHOT BY BOY SCOUT

A terrible fatality occurred at Ryde on Wednesday evening, when a child named **DAISH** was fatally shot in the street by another boy.

It appears that on Wednesday evening a lad of 14, named **Ernest Edward YOUNG**, living with his parents at 3, Sun Place, went into his father's bedroom shortly before 6 o'clock, and brought away a miniature rifle, of the pattern commonly used by miniature rifle clubs. In the kitchen he found a box of cartridges which did not belong to the rifle, but, unfortunately fitted it. He then loaded the rifle, went into Sun Place, which is a *cul de sac* and kneeling in the road fired in the direction of Hill Street. Exactly why he should have done such a thing is not known, but afterwards he made some statement to the effect that he was firing at a bird. Unfortunately a small boy named **Leonard George DAISH**, aged 4 ½ years, and living with his mother, at 25 Hill Street, was in Hill Street at the bottom of Sun Place at the time, and when the rifle was fired he dropped to the ground with a cry. Mr. R. BATTERSBY, cycle agent, of Hill Street, seeing the boy fall, ran out of his house and picked him up. It was apparent that the child was very badly hurt and he at once took him to his home. From thence the child was taken by his aunt to the Royal I.W. County Hospital, where upon being examined by the House Surgeon it was discovered that he had a bullet wound in his abdomen on the right side. He was operated on as soon as possible, but died just after 7 o'clock the same evening from shock.

P.C. HAYES who was on duty in High Street, heard the boy had been injured and as the result of the enquiries he made he took the lad YOUNG to the Police Station and he was detained for enquiries.

The lad is an enthusiastic member of the Boy Scouts and bears a good character, not only as a member of that organisation but in his school career. He is the son of Mr. George Albert Hamilton YOUNG, who is very well known in this neighbourhood, and is employed in the summertime at the I.W. Gun Club. The remainder of his time he obtains employment chiefly by killing vermin on various farms in this part of the Island.

Owing probably to the fact of YOUNG's employment at the Gun Club grounds the statement was current that the fatality was caused by an ordinary sporting gun, this was not so. The gun, as we have stated, being a miniature rifle of the type known as the converted Martini-Henry. The cartridges was obtained from a partially used Morris-tube cartridges, which did not accurately fit the rifle, but which were unfortunately very effective. There is no doubt that a miniature rifle of this kind is an extremely dangerous weapon, especially when used in a thoroughfare, as it has great penetration and is sighted up to 500 yards. YOUNG was naturally horror stricken at what they had done.

The date of the inquest is not definitely fixed, but it will probably be held on Monday next.

THE RYDE SHOOTING TRAGEDY "ACCIDENTAL DEATH".

The inquiry into the death of **Leonard George DAISH**, who was shot in Hill Street, Ryde, on Wednesday, April 26th, was held at the County Hospital on Monday afternoon, before the Deputy Coroner, Mr. F. A. JOYCE. Mr. B. GAGE was chosen foreman of the jury.

Alice DAISH, single woman, of 26, Hill Street, gave evidence of identification. The child was 4 ½ years of age. She was at the above address on Wednesday, April 26th, when at 6 o'clock in

the evening Mr. BATTERSBY came to the door with the deceased child in his arms. "Don't be frightened; the child has been shot by a slug bullet," he said. The child was unconscious, and she, with her brother, took the child to the Hospital, where it was found he had been shot through the stomach. She had never heard any shots fired in the neighbourhood of Hill Street, but she had heard of complaints of shots being fired.

Robert BATTERSBY, cycle agent, of Hill Street, said he was in his workshop at 6 o'clock on the evening in question. He had heard a shot fired, immediately followed by a scream. He looked out to see what it was, and saw a little boy lying on the ground with a sweeping brush by his side. The child was lying close to the kerb, and nearer to High Street than Hill Street. Witness picked the child up, and saw some blood on its right knee. He immediately carried the child to its home and handed him to the last witness. He did not see anyone carrying a rifle, nor did he know who fired the shot. He had heard a shot fired on one occasion before, but had taken no notice of it. Had there been continual firing he must have heard it. He did not hear any shots fired before on that day. In answer to the foreman, witness said the shot he had heard previous to that on the Wednesday evening was some four or five days previous.

Mr. REYNOLDS, House Surgeon at the Royal I.W. County Hospital, said that the deceased was brought to the Hospital about 6.30 o'clock in the evening. He was suffering from a bullet wound on the right side of the abdomen. There was no exit wound. It had passed through the large intestines and some of the large blood vessels. It was a very dangerous wound. Everything was done that could be done, but the child died about 7 o'clock that evening, from shock and loss of blood. He found the bullet produced, after the child's death, in its right side, against the bone. He thought that the resistance of the bone would alter the shape of the bullet. There were no other marks on the body of the child. It did not recover sufficiently to explain how it all happened. In getting the bullet out of the bone they were obliged to use a pair of grooved forceps and he thought those forceps would alter the shape of the bullet somewhat.

Albert Edward WEAVING, of 10, Hill Street, gardener, 15 years of age, said he was outside Mr. BATTERSBY'S workshop, about 15 or 20 yards from Hill Street, at 6 o'clock on the day in question, when he saw Ernest Edward YOUNG, who lived with his father at No.3 Sun Place, come out of a passage at the upper end of Sun Place with a gun and drop on his knee and call out "Hi up Bert," and then fire. Witness heard a cry immediately afterwards, and saw the child on the ground, at the other end of Sun Place in the position indicated by Mr. BATTERSBY. Witness did not hear YOUNG say anything other than "Hi up Bert," YOUNG fired directly he got outside the passage. Witness had spoken to the deceased in Hill Street a few minutes before, when he passed the child. Witness did not think that YOUNG saw the deceased when he fired, for the child had only just come round the corner. YOUNG belonged to the Boy Scouts as also did witness. When YOUNG called out witness jumped out of the way YOUNG had never fired in his direction before, although they had often played games with their staves; before they started drilling. About five or ten minutes after firing the gun, YOUNG came down and asked what was up, and someone informed YOUNG that he had shot a little boy named DAISH. YOUNG then said he had only been firing at birds. Witness had only just arrived when the accident occurred, but he did not think that YOUNG had gone and got the rifle because he (witness) was there. Witness did not look to see if there were any birds about, neither did he see a boy named BEER about there at the time Witness did not know whether YOUNG was having a game with him or not.

By the foreman. witness said he thought YOUNG was only playing, or showing off as they did before drilling, and so he jumped out of the way.

By Mr. PENWARDEN, a juror, witness said he did not think that YOUNG was going to fire the gun.

P.C. HAYES stated that from information received at 7.20 of the evening in question he visited No.3 Sun Place where he saw Ernest Edward YOUNG. Witness cautioned him and YOUNG made a statement in which he said that on the evening in question at 6 o'clock he was in Sun Place, about 50 yards from the bottom of Hill Street. He had with him a rifle. He put a cartridge in and fired in the direction of the bottom of Hill Street, at a bird. He heard somebody cry and then ran

indoors. He came out again afterwards and a boy named BESSANT told him he had shot a little boy. He then went indoors frightened and locked himself in. When his mother came home at 6.30 o'clock he told her what had happened. Witness said he was informed that Sun Place is not taken over by a public authority as a public highway, and that the private owners were responsible for all liabilities. The father, George Albert Hamilton YOUNG, handed witness the rifle produced, in the presence of his son, who said that it was the rifle he had fired. The father also handed him four cartridges produced. The father said in the presence of his son that he kept the rifle (a miniature Martini-Henry) upstairs, in the bedroom, and the cartridges in the sideboard in the front room downstairs. The boy did not attempt to deny any of his father's statement. Witness thought that the father went game keeping in the winter.

In answer to a question by the foreman, Chief Constable GREENSTREET replied that he thought the gun would kill at 100 yards.

Mr. MARKS, a juror, stated that the cartridges produced were only guaranteed to kill at a distance 100 yards, although perhaps they would at 200 yards .

George Albert Hamilton YOUNG, a gardener living at 3, Sun Place, said that his son was 14 years old in February last. The rifle produced was his property, and the four cartridges produced corresponded with those he had in his possession. The rifle was in the front bedroom, alongside the washstand, tied to a No. 12 sporting gun. No one, as far as he knew, had taken the gun out. He had never known his son to touch a gun. Witness had told him never to touch the guns. He had never received complaints of his son firing a gun in the locality. When he came home from work, on speaking to his son about shooting the little boy, he admitted having fired at a sparrow, said he had never seen a child at all. When the constable called witness handed over the rifle produced. When the boy took out the gun he was at home by himself. The cartridges produced witness never used in that gun, although they were the right calibre.

Ernest Edward YOUNG, after being cautioned by the Coroner, said he was the son of the last witness, and was 14 years old in February last. He was at his home at 6 o'clock on the evening in question. He went upstairs and cut the string which tied the guns together. He then looked about for some cartridges and not finding any, went downstairs, where he found some in a small box. He took one , put it in the gun. He went out of the back, door jumped over the next wall and went down the passage at the top of Sun Place. He looked about for some birds, and saw a sparrow nearby opposite Mr. BATTERSBY's workshop in the road. Just as he was going to fire he saw Bert WEAVING come up the road, and he said "Hi up, Bert." WEAVING jumped out of the way, and witness fired at the bird. After he fired he thought he heard someone scream, but he did not take any notice. He ran indoors, as he thought his father would catch him, and he then came out again. When he came out he saw some people at the bottom of Hill Street, and ran down and asked what was the matter. A boy named BESSANT said that he (witness) had shot a little boy. Witness was frightened and ran indoors and locked himself in. he did not see the child before he fired the gun. Witness thought that if he missed the bird the pellet would bury itself in the ground. He had on one previous occasion made a target on the wall with a piece of chalk and fired at it. His father did not know it, and it was when witness had nothing to do.

The Coroner : Satan finds some mischief still I suppose.

Witness said he was not playing with WEAVING.

By the juror : WEAVING was five or six yards from the sparrow.

The Coroner said that he did not propose to address the jury at length, because he thought they should work it out themselves. A lad named BEER had been unable to be present to give evidence, but he did not think that, after the straightforward evidence given his evidence would alter the case. The boy YOUNG had told them his own story, and there was no doubt that the unfortunate boy died as a result of the shot fired by the boy YOUNG. Of course, it was an unlawful act to fire a gun under such circumstances. Therefore, if from such an act death should result the person would be guilty of manslaughter. Had the boy YOUNG been a little older than he was, the Coroner said that he would charge them very strongly on the point that manslaughter had taken place. Under the circumstances he thought it was a case of manslaughter. On the other hand his impression was that,

if the lad was up for trial, the learned judge would read the boy a homily. It was perhaps worth their while that the jury would not add a rider to their verdict that the lad failed to realize that firing in the street was dangerous to other people. Possibly there were members of the jury who thought strong measures should be adopted.

After deliberating in private the jury brought in a verdict of accidental death, and added that the father was to blame for leaving the rifle open to access.

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