

**THE MYSTERY OF A SCHOOLBOY'S DEATH UNSOLVED AT INQUEST**  
*No Evidence That Potholes Caused Fatal Accident Decides Jury*

The mysterious cause of the accident which sent 12 year-old **John Edward LEAL** hurtling from his bicycle in Park Road, Ryde, last Thursday, remained a mystery at the inquest into his death on Tuesday.

The verdict of the jury of eight was "accidental death." The foreman, Mr. J. DARBYSHIRE, added "We all agree that the road (Park Road) is very bad down there, but there is no evidence to show that this boy hit any potholes."

Nor was there any evidence to point to any prior damage to his bicycle contributing to his death, maintained Mr. F. L. COX, appearing for the parents of the deceased boy.

Mr. Edward George LEAL, 43, of 14 Station Street, Ryde, father of the deceased boy and a leading steward in the Royal Navy, told how John had been swimming with other boys in the afternoon of Thursday, May 13, "He came back for tea and afterwards left on his bicycle to visit a friend who, I believe, lives in the region of Monkton Street."

**"Too Late"**

"Earlier that day he changed the rear wheel on his bicycle," said Mr. LEAL. "My son never complained about the condition of the bicycle."

"About 6 p.m. a man came to the door and said that my son had had an accident and was in the Casualty Ward of the Royal I.W. County Hospital. He appeared semi-conscious when I visited him. I thought he would be back with us the next day, he appeared so slightly injured to me.

"I received a call from the hospital at exactly five to 12 that night that John was not so well. My wife and I rushed to the hospital in eight minutes but we were too late."

Dr. Raymond Edgar George HARVEY, house-physician at the hospital, said that John LEAL seemed to be concussed when admitted but an X-ray revealed no fracture. The Island Pathologist, Dr. P. D. SWINSTEAD, told how an autopsy revealed that the boy died from a compression in the skull due to cerebral haemorrhage associated with a small fracture at the base of the skull.

Mr. William Edward TRUCKELL, a carpenter, of 4 Daniel Street, Ryde, said he had been standing talking to a friend opposite Belvedere Street in Park Road just after 6 p.m. "I just caught sight of a boy going down the hill on his bicycle from the corner of my eye.

**Both In Mid-Air**

"My vision was obscured by a parked car but I heard the screech of brakes and looked over the top of it to see the bicycle and the boy in mid-air. Both were off the ground and the boy was described in a somersault."

Mr. TRUCKELL said that he and two girls rushed to the scene to tend to the injured boy. "His bicycle was lying on the ground facing uphill in the opposite direction from which he had been coming. I had the impression that both wheels were buckled."

Witness said there had been no signs of other traffic or animals on the road when the accident occurred.

In reply to a question from Mr. COX, Mr. TRUCKELL said, "I know there are two bad potholes in the road just below Belvedere Street. He fell about 10 to 14 yards below one of these potholes. He would have been travelling just about in the path of one of them."

Stefan Rodney Albert DAY, an 11 year-old schoolboy, of 6 Player Street, Ryde, said he was walking down Park Road, and had just crossed Belvedere Street when "... John LEAL came down the hill on his bicycle behind us. He started pedalling, then he stopped. I heard a sort of grating noise. The bike did some somersaults and John came off. He lay with his head in the gutter."

**"I Saw Him Fall"**

In reply to Mr. COX he said, "He was about level with us when he fell off and I actually saw him fall."

Deceased's 16 year-old brother, David Anthony LEAL, of 14 Station Street, Ryde, said that when he went to collect John's bicycle later that evening from a garden in Park Road "I found both the wheels were jammed."

Both the front and rear mudguards were buckled. "It looked as though a mudguard had caught the wheel and jammed it," he said.

He agreed with Mr.COX that the front mudguard was secured by a nut and that both the twisted handlebars and brakes could have been caused by the accident. He said the bicycle was in sound mechanical condition apart from the mudguards.

At the inquest tribute was paid to the two girls, Miss Rae COX, 19, of "Clovelly," St. John's Wood Road, Ryde, and her friend, Miss Joyce WILLIAMS, 15, of "Paris Cottage," Westhill Road, Ryde, who had rushed to the fallen boy to tend to his injuries.

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ISLE OF WIGHT TIMES Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> May 1954

**FUNERAL OF RYDE SCHOOLBOY  
Had Just Passed Exam**

Funeral services were conducted at Ryde Methodist Church yesterday for John LEAL, aged 11. who died as a result of an accident at Ryde last Thursday. The Methodist Minister, the Rev. T. J. FOINETTE, officiated.

A well-known junior member of Ryde Amateur Boxing Club, John had just passed an examination for entry into East Cowes Building School.

More than 60 floral tributes included those from Ryde Secondary Modern School staff, pupils of the school, his classmates in Class 2c, Ryde Fire Brigade, Ryde A.B.C., Ryde A.B.C Supporters' Club, friends and neighbours at Station Street, Play Street Lane School Staff, and one inscribed "from the gang,- missing their chief." There were representatives of all the foregoing at the funeral service in the Church.

Family mourners were: Mr. and Mrs. E. G. LEAL, father and mother; Mrs. B. BURRIDGE, sister; David LEAL, brother; Misses Jill and Anita LEAL, sisters; Mr. G. LANO and Mr. L. SHINER, uncles; Mrs. E SHINER, grandmother, and Mrs. R. QUIGLEY, aunt.

Messrs. H. V. TAYLOR and Son made the arrangements for the funeral. Interment was at Ryde Cemetery.

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