

SHOCKING ACCIDENT NEAR RYDE
MAN AND COPPER BLOWN FOR SOME DISTANCE

A shocking accident occurred at Westridge gardens, near Ryde, on Saturday afternoon, involving the death of Bertie George PECK, aged 50, a single man living with his mother at 1 High Park-terrace, Oakfield. It appears that PECK, a member of a well-known Oakfield family, was engaged in boiling pigs' food when an explosion took place carrying him and an ordinary copper some distance away.

The facts were related to the Acting Deputy Coroner for the Island (W. H. P. F. THIRKELL, esq.) at the inquest in the Congregational school, Elmfield, on Tuesday. Mr. C. F. HISCOCK appeared for Messrs. BALL, deceased's employers, and Inspector A. MORRISON represented the police.

Charles PECK, labourer, of 1 Crofton cottages, Elmfield, a brother of the deceased, said he had always enjoyed good health.

William Charles CASS, carrier of 6 Harding-road, Oakfield, said that on Saturday at about 11 a.m. he went to Westridge House Gardens with a quantity of wash for pigs. He unloaded it a few feet from the copper. At that time there was no fire under the boiler.

William Rant MARSHALL, farmer, of Westridge Cross dairy, said that at about 2.40 p.m. on Saturday he was at work in one of his fields about 150 yards from Westridge House gardens when he heard an explosion like a 9.2 gun going off and saw a quantity of steam going up in front of the pigsties as high as the trees. He immediately went to the spot and on getting no reply to his shouting climbed over the fence and found the body of deceased lying face downwards on the grass path by the side of some bushes quite dead. He telephoned for a doctor and the police. From the position of the copper deceased must have been blown into the air and over the pigsties. Witness found the copper on his side of the fence, which was 6ft. high, not far from where the body lay.

William Oliver BALL said he was engaged with his brother as a haulage contractor at High-street, Oakfield, and resided at Milton Cottage, Oakfield. He purchased the boiler about two years ago, and three months since it was taken from the store and connected with a copper. The whole thing was tested to 100lb. pressure in the yard before it was taken out. The cooker was an ordinary cavity copper which stood on three legs about 6ft. away from the boiler, to which it was connected by a steam pipe, in which was a regulating valve. There was a steam gauge on the boiler and a relief valve on top of the cooker. Witness spent four days in fitting the thing up, testing it, and instructing deceased as to how to use it. It was left in perfect working order, and deceased had been engaged in working it for two months. Before leaving it witness took away the wheel of the relief valve so that it should always be open, and told deceased that on no account should it be closed. After the accident witness found that the valve had been shut.- The Coroner said it appeared to him that it had been closed by using a tool. - Replying to the Coroner witness said the effect of shutting the relief valve would be that it would generate heat more quickly. In that case, with the relief valve closed the pressure from the boiler would be too great, and the consequence would be that it would explode.- By Mr. HISCOCK: Deceased fully understood the working of it, and he gave him definite instructions not to close the valve. It would take 20 minutes to half an hour to boil the copper, and there would be no necessity for deceased to be in a hurry. PECK was a nice fellow and most reliable.

JAMES BALL, of Swaylands, Great Preston-road, brother of the previous witness, said he was the owner of Westridge House gardens, where he kept pigs and chicken. After the accident he found that the steam-pipe valve was full on and the relief valve closed, evidently by use of some tool. He was there the day previous, when everything was working properly and the relief valve was open. He had never known the thing give any trouble, and deceased was quite pleased with its working.

Dr. L. FIRMAN EDWARDS, of Ryde, said he visited the spot shortly after three o'clock and examined the body. Deceased's ribs were broken, his right thigh fractured, there were injuries to his head, and the lower part of the body was scalded. Death must have been instantaneous. Dr. EDWARDS expressed the opinion that the copper must have struck deceased in the chest and carried him with it.

The Coroner said the facts were obvious. For some reason or other deceased closed up the relief valve, and the result was a fatal explosion for which nobody was to blame, as every other precaution seemed to have been taken. He returned a verdict of accidental death and expressed sympathy with the family.- Mr. HISCOCK also tendered sincere sympathy with the mother and other members of the family on behalf of Messrs. BALL.

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