

DEATH FROM BURNS.- Elizabeth BIGGS, a married woman aged 77, of 33 Prince-street, who was admitted to the County Hospital on March 17th suffering from burns, sustained by accidentally falling on the fire, died in that institution at 3.30 a.m. yesterday (Friday) morning. An inquest will be held.

BURNING FATALITY AT RYDE.

WOMAN DIES FROM BURNS.

The Deputy Coroner (Francis A. JOYCE, Esq.) held an inquest at the Primitive Methodist School room, Ryde, on Tuesday, on the body of Elizabeth BIGGS, aged 77. The deceased, who lived at 33 Prince-street, was admitted to the County Hospital on the 17th March suffering from burns, and died at that institution on the 2nd inst. Mr. Oliver JAMES was foreman of the jury.

George Charles BIGGS, mariner, husband of the deceased, stated that he left home on the 17th March at about 9 a.m. His wife was sitting in a chair by the side of the fire downstairs finishing her breakfast when he went away. There was no guard on the fire. Witness returned home at about 2.30, and on entering the house he smelt a faint odour of burning. He shouted out "Mother, what have you got on the fire?" He received no answer, but heard two knocks on the floor. He then entered the room and found the deceased lying on the hearthrug with her head on the corner of the fender. She complained that her leg was doubled under her.

The Coroner: Was the fire still burning?

Witness: There were no signs of fire anywhere.

The Coroner: What sort of grate was it?

Witness: An open one with the fire low down.

He got the deceased up and put her on the chair. He did not notice that she was burnt, as she had a shawl over her shoulders. He asked her if she were burnt, and she replied "No, not that I know of." He told her he thought she was, and she said perhaps she was a little, but it was only a little. He told her he must go and get some olive oil and did so. When he pulled her shawl off he found she had been "sweating" on the shoulder. He asked her how long she had been on the floor, and she told him about two hours. She was alone in the house. He then went for Mrs. LEAL, who on removing his wife's clothing found that she was burnt extensively.

The Coroner: Until Mrs. LEAL came you did not know that she was burnt at all?

Witness: No sir. The deceased had been in weak health, suffering from rheumatism in the ankles and feet. He thought she had fallen down in the ordinary way. He never dreamt that she was burnt.

The Coroner: Did she give any explanation of what had happened?

Witness: I said to her "You must have been dozing in the chair or something of the sort," and deceased said she had fallen and that if she had not knocked the kettle down she would have gone into the fire.

The Coroner: Has she fallen like that before?

Witness: I understand that she had fallen down once or twice.

Mary Ann LEAL, wife of Thomas LEAL, living at 14 Albert-street, said that on going to the house she saw deceased in a chair. On examining her she found she was very much burnt on the right shoulder and ear, and also her hair. She applied olive oil and in the meantime sent for a doctor. Witness had seen deceased early in the morning at about 10 o'clock, when she was sitting by the fire.

By the Foreman: She had not been in good health for some time, and witness had been going in and out to see her. Deceased was not subject to fits.

Dr. J. W. PRIDMORE said he found the deceased suffering from burns on the right side of the head, shoulder, and chest. He sent for the ambulance and had her conveyed to the Hospital. After dressing the wounds he regarded the burns as serious, especially those on the head. He had attended the deceased for rheumatism.

Dr. A. B. WADE, acting house surgeon at the Hospital said the deceased was received on the 17th March, suffering from burns and shock, and died on the 2nd inst. from exhaustion following the injuries. She did not say how the accident occurred.

The Rev. Viscount MOUNTMORRIS, who attended the inquiry, stated that the deceased made a statement to him, and at the request of the Coroner and the jury he gave evidence. he said that as acting chaplain at the Hospital he saw the deceased several times. She told him that she was sitting by the fire and stooped forward to put some coal on, but overbalanced, struck her head against the kettle, and fell with her back towards the fire. She lay there for about two hours, being unable to help herself.

The Coroner remarked that the deceased seemed more scorched than burnt. He thought the jury would come to the conclusion that death arose from an accident. Perhaps it was immaterial to speculate as to what really happened.

The jury returned a verdict of "Accidental death."

Researched & typed by
Ann Barrett
Kate MacDonell