

**RYDE WOMAN'S
ACCIDENTAL DEATH**

FOUND IN GAS-FILLED ROOM

The Coroner (Mr. J.V. BULLIN) recorded a verdict of accidental death at an inquest at Ryde Town Hall, on Thursday, on Mrs. **Kate JAMES**, of 13 Victoria Street, Ryde. Mrs. JAMES, a 73-years-old widow, was found dead in her bed in a gas-filled room on Tuesday.

Edgar Frank Webb JAMES, musician, of 653 Greenford Road, Greenford, Middlesex, said his mother had lived alone since 1951. She visited him regularly and he last spoke to her on the telephone on Monday evening, when she was very cheerful and arranging to go to his home for Christmas. During the last two or three years she had suffered from nerves and was easily upset, but never threatened to take her life.

Bertha Eleanor BRADING, widow, of 22 Victoria Street, Ryde, said she had been a friend of Mrs. JAMES for over 20 years and saw her almost every day. On Monday evening they watched television together and she was quite cheerful and looking forward to Christmas. She was inclined to be forgetful.

Eric Douglas PAYNE, of 15 Victoria Street, Ryde, said that he had known Mrs. JAMES for about three days. She was his sub-tenant and rented two rooms. About 6.50 a.m. on Tuesday he went downstairs to a room which had doors into both houses and smelt gas coming from Mrs. JAMES's room. He called his daughter but they were unable to obtain any response. The gas meter was in his side of the house and he turned it off while his daughter telephoned for the police. The bedroom door was locked.

P.C. G.R. RICHARDS said that when he arrived there was a strong smell of gas coming from the bedroom. Mrs. JAMES was lying dead in bed. A gas ring was standing in an upturned tin lid with a small quantity of milk in it and there was a mug by the bed with the remainder of the milk drink. There was also some food in the room, indicating that meals were cooked and eaten there. It appeared that something had caused the gas to go out and Mrs. JAMES had forgotten to turn it off and had got into bed with her drink.

Colin John MATTHEWS, a gas fitter employed by the Southern Gas Board, of 2 Duncroft Gardens, Shanklin, said the gas tap was on when he arrived. It was a reasonably modern drop key type and the rest of the installation was sound.

Dr. P.G. SWINSTEAD (pathologist) said that death was caused by carbon monoxide poisoning.

The Coroner said he was satisfied that it was an accident. Whatever Mrs. JAMES had put on the gas must have boiled over and extinguished the flame without her noticing it. He hoped people would be very careful of any appliance in any room in which they slept.
