

CIGARETTE END THEORY IN SHIELDS FIRE TRAGEDY

A LIGHTED cigarette accidentally thrown on to an armchair instead of into the fireplace is believed to have been the cause of the double fire tragedy at North Shields early on Tuesday morning. This theory was advanced at the inquest at Tynemouth Infirmary yesterday when a verdict of accidental death was recorded by the Coroner, Mr P. M. Dodds.

The victims, both of whom were a-papavated, were Thomas William Brown, aged 19, a leading, content assistant serving with the Royal Navy, who was awarded the George Medal for gallantry two years ago, and his gallant sister Maureen, four years old. Sapper and Mrs T. Brown of 6 Lily Gardens, Ridges Estate.

Summing up after hearing the evidence the Coroner said, "If there is any consolation for the parents they can take it in the knowledge that both of them were not severely burned at all. The little girl had no burns and the boy had only one or two slight burns. I think it safe to assume that both were asphyxiated by the fumes from the flames actually smoke because the bodies and they did not suffer any pain.

"We are all very sorry for Mr and Mrs Brown in the bereavement they have suffered. It is very fortunate indeed that other members of the family were not fatally injured."

CORONER'S TRIBUTES
Continuing Mr Dodds said, "I am sorry that Mr G. Williamson is away from home today. He seems to have rendered very good service in endeavouring to get what he possibly could to help Mrs Brown in her troubles."

FC Crawford and Mr Walton and his men did all they possibly could. There is no doubt that the fire was centred in the kitchen and the part of the furniture which caught fire most seriously was the armchair.

"There was practically no fire in the room and it is quite consistent with the theory that the boy had lain down on the settee to go to sleep. Obviously he had intended to rest there for the night. Probably finishing a cigarette, he haphazardly threw it hoping it would reach the fireplace, but instead it landed on the chair and that was the cause of the fire. There is no suggestion it was otherwise than accidental and there will be a record accordingly."

CRACKLING
Evidence of identification was given by the father, after which the mother, Margaret Jane Brown, described what had occurred. She said the two youngest children including Maureen were sleeping with her, four other girls slept together in one room, two boys were in separate rooms, while Thomas and another son, Albert, had another room.

Thomas used to come home at night. At 6.30 on Monday night he left the house and witness went to bed about 10.30. David was in the kitchen then but followed witness to bed a little later. Thomas

asleep in the bedroom with Albert, but did not do so that night. Witness did not hear him come in and in reply to the Coroner she said he smoked cigarettes.

"As far as I can recollect," said Mrs Brown, "between 1.30 and 2 a.m. there was a crackling in the walls. I jumped up and went into the passage, which was full of smoke. I tried the kitchen door, opened it a little bit and found the place was full of smoke. The fire was very low when I went to bed."

Mr Dodds: When you found the fumes coming out what did you do?—I went into David's room and shouted and then went into the girls' room and shouted for them. I could see Thomas was not in bed. I ran to the neighbour's downstairs and we all went in there, but had to be moved because water was coming in. I saw the youngest one was not out. Maureen was the last to get out as the smoke had got worse. All the neighbours assisted and one went for the fire brigade.

CONSTABLE'S EVIDENCE
Mr Dodds: Was it Mr Williamson who recovered Maureen?—Yes, as far as I know.

Did you see Maureen?—I did not see her any more. I thought she was in bed asleep.

Replying to further questions witness said there was a three piece suite in the kitchen. She could not account for Thomas sleeping on the settee that night.

Mr Dodds: He may have come in, laid on the settee and fallen asleep.—Yes, sir, he may have.

The next witness was P. C. J. Crawford who said his attention was drawn to something being wrong about 2.30 a.m. He had been informed by a neighbour and immediately told Police Headquarters and the N.F.S.

"I went to the house and found the flat was on fire," proceeded the officer. "I was told there were children in the house. I went in and examined all the bedrooms but failed to trace anyone at all. The rooms had been vacated. Mrs Brown told me her son was in the kitchen and I re-entered the house and went towards the kitchen but the heat was terrific and the smoke was very dense. I only got in a few feet and had to withdraw again."

"By this time the N.F.S. had arrived and they were quickly on the scene. They were able



The Chief Constable of South Shields (Mr T. B. Humphrey) receiving cheques for £38 12s, the efforts of members of the South Shields Women's Aid Fund and the R.N.L.I. in aid of Tyneside Blitzed Lifeboat Fund. Included in the picture taken at the New Crown Hotel, South Shields, are Mrs Tully, Mrs Roberts (secretary), Mrs Buffham (president), and Mrs Ferguson (treasurer).

to get the water on and had the fire under control by about 2.55. The smoke had cleared slightly and Thomas was found lying on the settee in a sleeping position. He had all his clothes off except his shirt. His clothes were lying on a chair. There was no fire on them.

The armchair was on fire at one side of the room and the boy was lying at the other side of the room.

ARMCHAIR BURNT OUT
"The armchair was burnt out only the back being left. The cupboard was completely burnt out. The armchair had been in front of the cupboard. The armchair was about eight feet from the settee."

Mr Dodds: There was no question of a spark from the fire?—No, sir.

There must have been something to set the fire to the chair other than the fire?—Yes, sir.

Can you account for it?—In my opinion I think he may have been smoking and thrown a cigarette from a reclining position towards the fireplace and it must have gone on to the armchair.

Was the light on at all?—No, it was all in darkness. Did you try the light afterwards?—Yes, sir, but it would not go on then.

Company Officer Lewis Walton, N.F.S., said they received the call at 2.29 a.m. and arrived at the scene at approximately 2.32. The living room was well alight.

Witness made an entry by the staircase and had been informed by the police that there were still persons in the building, but that most of the family had been brought out.

Continuing, he said: "I ascertained the bedroom that Thomas slept in and satisfied myself that he was not in that room. All the members of the family had been removed except Thomas by the time the brigade arrived. It was impossible to enter the living room owing to the intense heat and smoke."

BODY FOUND

"We played upon that and had measures put in hand to have the building ventilated to enable a proper search. Eventually we were able to penetrate into the living room and I found the body of Thomas lying on the settee. That would be about 2.55. The kitchen was the only part of the building burning and the remainder suffered from intense heat. In my opinion I think a light had been dropped into the armchair."

Dr J. E. Stobbs, resident surgeon at Tynemouth Infirmary, said Maureen was brought to the institution about four o'clock and was dead. She had been dead for about twenty minutes or half an hour. She was not burnt at all and death was due to asphyxia caused by the inhalation of fumes from the smoke.

After the Coroner's summing up Lieutenant (S.) H. D. Solomon, R.N.V.R., said: "On behalf of the officers and ship's company of the vessel on which Brown was serving I express deep sympathy with Mr and Mrs Brown on the loss of their children. We knew Brown for a very brave and likeable young man whose death is a sad loss to the service and to our ship."

Shields Women Aid Fund

New Tynemouth Lifeboat Ready By November

South Shields Women's Guild of the Royal National Lifeboat Institution, at a special St. Valentine's Day whist and bridge drive, held in the New Crown Hotel, yesterday afternoon, handed over to Chief Constable T. B. Humphrey, who is hon. secretary of the Tyneside Blitzed Lifeboat Fund, the sum of £38 12s as a donation to the fund.

Three cheques were comprised in the amount which were handed over by Mrs R. Tully. They represented an individual effort by Mrs Tully who raised £16 12s with a cake competition; £7 proceeds of a whist drive given by the Guild, per the hon. treasurer, Mrs J. Ferguson, and £15 another individual effort by the hon. secretary, Mrs J. E. Roberts, being the proceeds of garments made by her.

The Guild has raised the sum of £74 15s for the general fund of the institution during the past year.

In acknowledging the gift, the Chief Constable congratulated the members on their effort. He was able to inform them that they expected to have a new boat and a new bathhouse at Tynemouth in working order by November of this year, which spoke volumes for all those who had made such efforts on behalf of the appeal, and which gave the Institution confidence to go ahead in the knowledge that they would get the £40,000 asked for.

Tynemouth's Oranges Arrive

The allocation of oranges which was due to arrive in North Shields fruit shops this week was received yesterday.

There is a good supply of oranges, but unfortunately a good many of them are not in good condition. They are large in size, sweet, and closely resemble Jaffa oranges.

For the first five days after they have been received in the shops, the oranges are sold to ration book holders only, one pound being allocated to each book. At the end of that period the oranges can be released for sale generally.

Up to this morning no great rush on the oranges had been reported, but local shopkeepers are expecting to be busy when the news of the arrival of the oranges circulates.

BILLINGSQATE FISH
Supplies insufficient for active demand. Sole, 2s 6d; brill and halibut, 2s 6d; plaice and lemon sole, 1s 6d; white fish, 1s 2d; hake, 6s 10d; skate, 6s 10d; pollock and roker, 7s 6d; cod, 7s 6d to 10s 1d; whiting and haddock, 7s 6d; fresh herrings, sprats and mackerel, 5s 2d per stone. Kippers, 8s 6d; bloater, 6s 4d; per bream, 5s; wrasse, 6s; cockles of 2 1/2 lbs. and over, 2s 5d; under 2 1/2 lbs. and hence, 1s 5d per lb. Fresh winkles, 16s to 20s; Scotch, 20s to 24s per cwt. English brown shrimps, 3s to 7s; pink, 6s to 7s; cockles, 6s to 8s per gallon.

Japanese Destruction And Atrocities In Manila

From John Leonard, Reuters' Special Correspondent

Manila, Thursday.—The Japanese, making their last do-or-die stand in Manila, are using up their available reserves of shells. No force could long endure the terrific American artillery and the total Japanese dead is known to be phenomenally high. The Japanese are fighting stubbornly as three U.S. Divisions close round them.

A tour of several hours in Manila has convinced me that the Japanese planned this total destruction at least two years ago. Only the most careful engineering study could have enabled them to place explosives to achieve the maximum destruction in the minimum time.

Considerable looting is carried out at night by brigands. In Intramuros, the remaining Japanese have been almost without water for at least three days. Those Japs still at large in the southern section of the city continue to flay any civilians within gunshot.

"I have been able to find carefully documented instances of this wanton murder. I also have proof that the Japanese have thrown grenades into civilian homes."

"What the Japanese did to Manila in five short days exceeds the damage inflicted on Tokyo in all our super-Fortress raids. The rebuilding will have to begin from the ground level. On the Bataan Peninsula the 11th Corps has advanced 11 miles to the south and captured Abucay while Allied bombers dropped 107 tons on the coastal batteries of Corregidor."

MANILA ATROCITIES
New York, Thursday.—U.S. Army photographers are obtaining documentary evidence of some of the atrocity incidents found in South Manila, said a report from the Philippines capital received here today.

John Adams, C.B.S. commentator, said that the Japanese atrocities would go down in history as a darker chapter than the rape of Nanking. He reported that at one point the

Army found "The bodies of 25 civilians, of which nine were babies, all of whom appeared to have been bayoneted, many with their hands tied behind their backs."

"It is the same story in other parts of the city," said Adams. Another U.S. broadcaster reported that the Japanese fired homes and killed men, women and children as they fled. Others perished in the flames. Some civilians in the city were hacked to death with sabres in wanton mass murder.—Reuter.

Washington, Thursday.—The War Department announced today that Super Forts from the Mariana Islands bombed industrial targets on Honshu, main Japanese home island today. No details were given.—Reuter.

Later, the Japanese communiqué said that the city of Nagoya, home of the Mitsubishi aircraft factory was bombed by 60 Superforts.

NAVAL BOMBARDMENT
The Japanese Navy Agency reported today that Corregidor Island, stronghold at the mouth of Manila Bay where the Americans made their last heroic stand in January, 1942, was bombed on Tuesday by two battleships, four cruisers and five destroyers.

The Japanese despatch added, "The same day 20 enemy minesweepers invaded the narrow strip of water north of Corregidor and there were indications that they were being followed by some enemy transports apparently carrying fresh invasion forces."

The Japanese claim to have sunk a minesweeper. The shelling of Corregidor took place while the island was also being subjected to intense air bombardment, the Agency added.—Reuter.

Chungking, Thursday.—Major-General A. C. Wedemeyer, commanding the American forces in China, declared today that the Japanese position in China is deteriorating. There was strong reason, he said, to feel optimistic over the future of China from the military viewpoint.—Associated Press.

In which they served...



Famille Verte is a Chinese porcelain of the reign of K'ang Hsi (1662-1722) and was introduced to Europe by Portuguese merchants. It gains its name from the green which predominates in the brilliantly coloured decorative motifs. Western reproductions later gained immediate popularity.

HORNIMANS

Dividend* Tea

* Now, as always, people want the best. That's why they drink Hornimans. And there's an extra! Hornimans Dividend Tea sells at 11d. per quarter lb.—and each lb. brings you a cash dividend of 8d. When your dividend card is full, your dealer will exchange it for 10/- in cash. Any dealer will serve you.

Worthy of your best Tea set

W. H. & F. J. Horniman & Co. Ltd.

Attacks EASED TOMORROW

If you are a victim of Wheezing Coughing Asthma attacks—if you feel short of breath and a tightness on the chest—help that you eat—there is hope that you will soon be better if you take the right medicine for your trouble—Mendaco—a medicine that is praised by thousands of people.

ASTHMA ATTACKS EASED

Mendaco works quickly in 3 ways. To relieve your attacks of Asthma and Bronchitis, yet contains no narcotics or habit-forming drugs.

1. Loosens and relaxes thousands of tiny contracted muscles in throat and bronchial tubes so that you can get in and out of lungs easily.

2. Loosens and removes congestion which causes these distressing attacks.

3. Helps purify and build up blood, thus increasing vitality, energy and natural resistance to these troubles.

MENDACO HELPS THOUSANDS.
Thousands of former sufferers from Asthma and Bronchitis are now

enjoying sound, invigorating sleep at night, because in Mendaco they have found the medicine that gives relief to their trouble. Mendaco starts circulating through the blood very quickly, and within a short while you can feel that your stifled tubes are being freed so that you can breathe easily and freely, and that air is getting to your lungs. Most Mendaco users say they sleep soundly and soon feel like a new person. No matter how long you have suffered you owe it to yourself and to your family to give Mendaco a fair and impartial trial.

GRATEFUL FOR MENDACO
"I feel I must write how grateful I am—Mendaco very good and wonderful. I have had asthma for years. It's a lot easier now and happy."
Mrs. M. G., Birmingham

If for any reason you are dissatisfied with Mendaco, return empty package to manufacturer at address below and the purchase price will be refunded in full.

We know how good Mendaco is. The formula is on every package. Consult your doctor about Mendaco.

Mendaco

Mendaco is obtainable from Boots, Timothy Whites and Taylors and all chemists in 2 sizes 2/3 and 5/7 1/2.

Exco Laboratories Ltd., 11, Lamb's Conduit St., London, W.O.1