

Fanny Rachael Leonard

Isle of Wight Observer - 18 March 1899

NEWPORT

SAD FATALITY. – A shocking burning fatality occurred at Hunnyhill, on Wednesday morning, the victim being Fanny Rachel Leonard, wife of a prison warder, living at 11, Booth Terrace. It appears that deceased, who has been mentally afflicted for some time, was sleeping with her daughter on Tuesday night, and that about 4 o'clock next morning she left the room and went downstairs. No notice was taken of her absence until screams were heard, and it was then found that she was enveloped in flames. The poor woman was fearfully burnt, and died from shock shortly after 8 o'clock on Wednesday night. Medical aid was at once summoned both Dr. Waterworth and Dr. Thompson attending the deceased. The poor woman was never conscious after the occurrence, consequently there is no explanation forthcoming as to how the accident happened.

Isle of Wight Observer - 25 March 1899

NEWPORT

SUICIDE BY BURNING

On Friday the Acting Coroner for the Island held an inquest at the Britannia Inn, Hunny Hill, Newport, relative to the death of Fanny Rachael Leonard, aged 46 years, wife of a Parkhurst prison warder, living at 11, Booth Terrace, Hunny Hill, who died on Wednesday evening from the effects of severe burns, brought about, it was surmised, by the unfortunate woman's own act.

William Leonard, a son, deposed to hearing faint screams about 3 on Wednesday morning. On going downstairs he found his mother in flames. With assistance she was removed upstairs, and the doctor sent for.

Joseph Leonard, the husband, stated that when in Portsmouth, about seven years ago, he was obliged to have his wife removed to an asylum, but she had been out now some time. She had always suffered more or less from nervous debility, which had increased a great deal of late. Deceased had never threatened to commit suicide, and was passionately devoted to her family. He was attracted by her screams on Wednesday morning, and on going downstairs found her in flames in her nightdress. She never gave any account of how it happened.

Chief Inspector Ayres said a report had got about that deceased set herself on fire after putting oil on her clothes.

The husband, in reply to questions, said the oil was kept in the scullery, and was in its usual place on the morning in question, apparently undisturbed, but he could detect a smell of oil, and fancied deceased saturated something with it and then set light to it.

The coroner having summed up, the jury returned a verdict of "Suicide while of unsound mind."