

Walter James Mons Stroud

Isle of Wight County Press – 13 January 1917

Newport

BURNING FATALITY. – The death occurred at 76 Trafalgar-road, from the effects of burning, of Walter James Mons Stroud, 1 year and 10 months old, son of Sergt. Stroud, Royal Warwickshire Regiment. On the 10th inst. the child was for a few moments alone in the room in which a fire had just been lighted, when a scream was heard, and the mother, returning quickly, found the child's clothing burning, whilst the poker, which had been left in the fire, was on the hearth-rug. Dr. Thompson attended, but the injury and shock were such that the child died on Thursday. An inquest will be held this afternoon.

ISLE OF WIGHT COUNTY PRESS - 20th January 1917

BURNING FATALITY AT NEWPORT

CHILD AND RED-HOT POKER

On Saturday the Deputy Coroner (F.A. Joyce Esq.) held an inquest at the Gospel-hall, Union-street, Newport, on the body of Walter James Mona Stroud, aged one year and 10 months, son of Sergt. Charles Stroud, Royal Warwickshire Regiment, and Mrs. Stroud, living at 76 Trafalgar-road. Mr. A. Orman was foreman of the jury.

Mary Ann Stroud, the mother, said that on the previous Wednesday morning she left deceased playing in the room upstairs where she had lighted a fire. She left the poker in the grate to draw up the fire whilst she ran downstairs to answer the door. She had not been away two minutes before she heard the child scream, and running back found the poker on the mat, which was on fire, and the child running round the table with all his clothes alight. She put the flames out, and after applying oil to the burns wrapped deceased in a blanket and put him in bed. Mrs. Locke fetched Dr. Thompson, who came shortly afterwards, and the nurse. Everything was done for deceased which the doctor ordered. They sat up with the child all Wednesday night, but he died on Thursday morning. There was no fireguard in the room. She thought deceased must have pulled the poker out of the grate and set itself on fire, as there were no coals on the mat. She never left the child long enough alone to need a fire-guard, and her husband had not told her that she ought to have one.

Violet Lock, wife of Arthur Lock, of 76 Trafalgar-road, said she heard the child scream and ran to the mother's assistance. On arriving in the room she found Mrs. Stroud putting the flames out. The poker was on the mat, which was beginning to burn. Witness assisted Mrs. Stroud in attending to deceased. Her opinion was that the poker set the child's clothing alight.

Dr. Thompson said the burns were superficial, but very extensive, the child being burnt mostly over the upper part of the thighs and abdomen, a very dangerous part. Proper dressings were applied, and he saw the child again in the evening, when he seemed quite bright, tried to sit up in bed, and actually told him he did it with the poker. The child gave the appearance of having been very well looked after and thoroughly cared for. Death was due to injuries and shock caused by accidental burning.

The Coroner said he did not think it was a case in which they could suggest that there was any degree of blame attaching to the mother, who had only left the child for a minute or two, and it appeared to have drawn the poker out of the fire and burnt itself. As to the liability of Mrs. Stroud under the Children Act, which provide that where the death of a child under 7 years of age occurred in that manner, and there was no guard on the fire, the parent in charge was liable to a fine. He must confess in that connection the circumstances were not very grave, because the child was only left momentarily, but the fact remained that had the law been obeyed and a guard placed over the fire, the child would probably not have died. He thought they might leave it with the police to determine whether they would consider the case one worth following up. Unfortunately the woman had suffered the loss of her child, and it was for persons who had children to know of the existence of that Act, and that the children ought to receive all the protection that could be afforded them. They could add a rider that the police should be desired to conduct a prosecution, but he did not think they need do so.

The jury returned a verdict that deceased died from injuries and shock, the result of accidental burning.

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