

Arthur Perceval Oxford

Isle of Wight County Press – 23 February 1901

DISTRESSING CHILD FATALITY AT NEWPORT

CHOKED WITH NEW BREAD.

On Tuesday afternoon the Coroner for the Island, Edward F. Blake, Esq., held an inquest at the Star Hotel, Newport, on the body of Arthur Perceval Oxford, the 2 ½-year-old child of Miss Alice Oxford, nurse, of Ventnor, who died from choking at the house of its uncle, Mr. Charles Oxford, of 49, Crocker-street, Newport, on the previous evening. Mr. W. Knott was chosen foreman of the jury.

Anne Oxford, wife of Charles Oxford, living at the address given above, said deceased was the illegitimate child of her sister-in-law, Alice Oxford, who lived at Ventnor. She had been keeping the deceased - a strong, healthy child - at her home since July last. She had four little children of her own and they and deceased had been having tea. There was not room for all the children at the small table in the front room and she sat deceased on the hearth rug, where he had his tea. She was undressing the other children prior to putting them to bed, just before half-past 5, when she heard deceased making a funny noise, and on looking down she found him to be choking. She picked him up and tried to get the bread out of his mouth - she thought it must be bread as he had nothing else - and she also smacked his back to try and move it, but could not do so. As she could not get any of the bread out she rushed into the street with deceased in her arms, and Mrs. Knowles, a stranger to her, who happened to be passing, took deceased from her, and witness ran for the doctor. When she returned the child was dead. Deceased usually had some sop, but that evening she gave the children a slice off the top of a new loaf with black currant jam. Deceased was always a child to fill his mouth over-full of food and they had had to check him several times.

Alice Maud Knowles, wife of William Henry Knowles of 6, Scarrotts-lane, Newport, said she was returning up St. James's-street from work about 5.25 on the previous evening when she saw the last witness in the street with the deceased in her arms. She was smacking his back and witness thought at first she was beating the child, and stood looking at her, until she heard her say the little fellow was choking. Witness then went and took the child and told her to run quickly for the nearest doctor. Witness remained, in the street with the child, and forcing his little mouth open she took two large pieces of crust out of his throat. The deceased seemed somewhat relieved as he breathed a little. She asked some one where Mrs. Oxford's home was and took the deceased indoors, gave him a little water, and tried to get the remainder of the bread out of his throat, but was unable to do so. The deceased breathed twice more and then died before the doctor came.

Dr. Coombs said that about 5.30 p.m. on the previous day he was sent for to go to Mrs. Oxford's house, and on going at once he found the child was dead. Death had taken place some few minutes. Mrs. Knowles, who was present with the child in her lap, informed him that she had removed two pieces of crust (produced) from the child's throat, and on examination of the throat with his finger he found there was still more in the throat. He tried with an instrument to

remove it, but it was so firmly wedged in that he only broke pieces off, and as death had taken place he did not do more. Death was without doubt due to suffocation. The bread (produced) did not seem to have been chewed; it was perfectly dry when he saw it.

The Coroner briefly summed up, saying that Mrs. Oxford, who was a stranger to him, was a respectable woman, and the deceased had, it was evident from what they saw, been properly nourished and looked after. There could be no doubt that the child was accidentally suffocated through choking and that no one was to blame.

The Jury unanimously agreed with the Coroner and returned a verdict of “Accidental death from suffocation through choking.”

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