

Dilwyn Gowan

**Isle of Wight County Press
6 November 1948**

CHILD DROWNED IN MILL STREAM.

**Newport Tragedy
“No One’s Fault.”**

”This little boy died on the day before his second birthday, drowning in two feet of water. I do not think anyone can say it was anybody’s fault” commented the Coroner (Mr. R. E. A. Webster) at the inquest at the Guildhall, Newport, on Tuesday, on Dilwyn Gowan, of 7 Westminster Place, Newport, who was found the previous day in a millstream near his home, on the property of the I.W. Creameries. Mr. J. Baker represented the I.W. Creameries.

Dr. G. L. Peskett said he was summoned urgently at 4 o’clock on Sunday, and was there in a very few minutes. Police Sergt. Eyles was giving artificial respiration, but he formed the impression that the child was dead. Every form of restorative was tried for an hour without result. Death was due to drowning.

Dilwyn Watkin Gowan, the boy’s father, employed by British Railways, of 7 Westminster Place, said Dilwyn was the youngest of a family of six, and was a perfectly healthy, normal boy. He last saw him at 3.10 p.m., playing outside the house with his sister. At about 3.45 p.m., not knowing where he was, they started to look for him, and found him on the bank of the stream receiving attention. The boy played on the road in front of his home because there was nowhere else for children to play. He had not known him go to the stream before, although he knew that children played on the rubbish heap between the road and the water, where there were empty tins which they filled with gravel. Until the summer of 1947 there was a fence across the opening to the Creameries ground, but since machinery was then put in there had been no fence.

Mr. Baker: Do you know if children have been warned off the premises? —Gowan: I know they have been enticed over there by workmen giving them powdered milk.

Christine Wherry, aged 13, said she had taken her stepbrother to the bake-house, and when they came back were playing outside their home. Dilwyn was playing with an empty tin in the road, and she threw it back into the yard. When other children came along she turned and did not see him go.

Mr. Baker: Have you been told not to play by the stream? —Witness: No one has ever told us.

Stanley Robert Bramham, maintenance engineer at the Creameries, of 75a Hunnyhill, said he saw the stepbrother and sister of the deceased walking along the bank, and as it was a dangerous place he walked across to warn them. There was a dam there where the water went over with considerable force. “Looking down from the bridge”, he said, “I saw a little boy dangling his feet in the water, and then what I took to be the head of a doll floating in the stream. Looking closer, I saw it was a child, face downwards in the water. I was confident that the child was dead, so I thought it best to go and get the police. I ran to the phone and back, called the stoker who was on duty, and with his aid got the child out. I started to apply artificial respiration, and continued for 15 minutes until the police arrived.” Witness added that he thought it was a dangerous spot for children because the banks were very slippery.—Replying to Mr. Baker, Bramham said that children had been repeatedly warned and chased off, but if they were

warned off one minute they would be back the next. He had seen Christine Wherry down by the water, but not the little boy.

P.C. A. Drew said there were two gateways through which the child had gone. It was a dangerous spot. A child could wander into the stream without knowing where it was going.

Returning a verdict of accidental death, the Coroner thought it might be a good thing to have both the gateways closed when there was no one about, such as on Sundays and holidays.—There was an interruption by the father while the Coroner was summing up, and after he had rebuked him the Coroner said “I do not think it was anybody’s fault”.

Mr. Baker expressed the firm’s sincere regret, and the Coroner added his sympathy with the parents.

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