

Ernest Wilfred Melhuish Mason

Isle of Wight Observer – 10 July 1909

THE CARE OF NURSE CHILDREN.

REQUIREMENTS OF THE CHILDREN'S ACT.

On Monday the Deputy Coroner for the Island (F. A. Joyce, Esq.) held an inquest at the Salvation Army Barracks, Lugley-street, Newport, on the body of Ernest Wilfred M. Mason, aged 4 months, described as the illegitimate son of Elsie Mason, formerly of Newport, and now of Birkenhead. – Mr. F. J. Martin was chosen foreman of the jury.

MATILDA APPLETON, wife of William Appleton, labourer, of Lugley-street, said she had had deceased to nurse since it was a month old, and was paid 4s. a week for it. It was not very strong, but it had not been really ill until Friday morning, when she consulted the deceased's grandmother as to its condition, and then went for a doctor. The doctor she went for was not in. On her way back she saw the borough nurse (Miss Robertson), who, at her request, went at once to her house and gave the deceased a warm bath and well rubbed it. Deceased was then in convulsions. It died just before 1 o'clock the same day. The child was out on the previous evening till 6 o'clock and seemed very well and took its milk pretty well, but was a little fretful as usual during the night.

By the Coroner: She had been paid regularly for the keep of the child; there was no trouble about that.

Inspector CASS: Did you report to the proper authority under the Children's Act? – I don't know anything about that. – Q. Have you given notice that you were taking charge of the child? – I did not know I had to do such a thing, or I would have done so.

The CORONER: You mean you did not know anything about the law on the matter? – No, I never heard of it.

The CORONER said it was a highly important law, and it required every person within 48 hours of receiving a child to inform the local authority of that fact. The witness admitted that through ignorance she had not given the notice, and he did not think it was for him or the jury to inquire further into that. He should report the matter to the proper authority, and it would be for the local authority or the police to decide as to whether any proceedings should be taken.

The FOREMAN asked if the fact that the Act was in force had been advertised locally.

Inspector CASS said it had been advertised by bills.

The CORONER said if the case had been reported to the authority in the required way it was quite possible that he should not have considered it necessary to hold that inquest, but he must hold an inquiry where no report had been apparently received by the local authority.

Nurse ROBERTSON said when the last witness met her in the street she was told the child was in a fit, and on arrival she found it in convulsions. She gave the child a hot bath, and it seemed to rally. She did what was necessary and then wrapped it up, and told them to keep it quiet until the doctor arrived. When she went back the child was dead.

By the Foreman: The child was clean and well cared for, although it was weakly, and it had evidently received every attention from the first witness.

Dr. COOMBS said he was called when visiting a house in Holyrood-street, and on going at once he found the child had just died. He was informed that it had died from convulsions. The child was clean and well nourished, though it did not look like a strong child, and was small for its age. He had no hesitation in saying it died from natural causes.

The CORONER said Mrs. Appleton appeared to have looked after the child very well, and she had evidently not neglected it. From the evidence they could safely conclude the child died from natural causes.

The FOREMAN said the jury returned a verdict of "Death from natural causes," and they wished to thank Nurse Robertson for the very prompt manner in which she attended to the case.

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