

The Fatality at Newlyn

CHILD FALLS OVER THE CLIFF

A sad accident occurred at Newlyn on Friday evening. Richard Maddern Cotton, the six-year-old child of Mr John Cotton, Trewarveth-street, was playing with a top on the norra'd slip corner where the cliff, descending 30 or 40 feet, is protected with a single rail. The youngster's top fell over the cliff and rebounded into the sea. His elder brother Kingsley (15), crying to him that he would get it, went for a punt, but during his absence the boy leaned too far over and fell to the rocks below. Kingsley, regardless of risk, scrambled over the rocks to where his brother lay and, picking the little fellow up, carried him to the slip. Dr, Symons was sent for, but death had apparently been instantaneous. The sincerest sympathy is extended to the bereaved relatives.

An inquest is being held this afternoon, which will be reported in our second edition to-night.

THE INQUEST

Mr. Edward Boase, county coroner, held an inquest, with a jury of which Mr. P. K. Deacon was chosen foreman, at the Primitive Methodist vestry, Newlyn, this (Saturday) afternoon.

John Kingsley Cotton (15), brother of deceased, and a carpenter's apprentice, son of John Cotton, fish packer, stated that the deceased child was aged six. At 6.15 on Friday evening he saw his brother at the top of the cliff at the end of Trewarveth Road. He was playing tops and there were a good many other boys there. Witness was looking on and his brother's top fell under the railing, over the cliff, and into the sea. Witness went down the cliff and on to the beach and, taking some pieces of net, he tried to pull the top in. Then he was returning over the top of the cliff with the intention of getting a punt when, just as he reached Mr. Paul's shop, someone told him his brother had fallen over. Witness returned to the beach and found his brother on the rocks, dead. He took up the body and with Frank Hallo's assistance carried it home. The head was cut and bleeding. The deceased had played at the spot referred to before but not often. Sidney Hitchens it was who told him his brother had fallen over.

The Coroner : It does not strike one as a safe place for children to play.

A Juryman : No; it is not safe anywhere along there.

Replying to a juryman, witness said there was no water where deceased fell, only rocks. The top had rebounded from there into the sea.

Sidney Vivyan Hitchens (13), son of Philip Hitchens, a Newlyn fisherman, said he knew Richard Cotton and was on the cliff on Friday

evening. Kingsley Cotton spun his brother's top, which went over the cliff. He saw deceased sitting on the rails with his back towards the harbour. A boy named Thomas Vingoe caught deceased by his jersey and the latter fell over. Witness grabbed out to save him but just touched him with his nails. Vingoe and deceased were laughing together before the latter fell over, and Vingoe, who was deceased's age, did not lay his hands on his companion to prevent him falling.

Kingsley Cotton, recalled, said he did not spin his brother's top at all, but was spinning his own.

Frank Allard, hairdresser, Fore-street, said when he heard deceased had fallen over he went down to the beach and took the body from Kingsley Cotton. Witness afterwards fetched Dr. Symons.—This completed the evidence.

The Coroner, summing up, said it was a very sad accident, and the jury would join with him in expressing sympathy with the child's parents in his unfortunate death. From the evidence he took it they were satisfied that the death of the child was due to as accident. The circumstances certainly emphasised the fact, of which everyone who visited the place must be conscious, that the cliff was not a safe place for children to play about. The questions arose (1) as to whether anything could be done to prevent such small children playing there at all, and (2) whether the jury were satisfied with the present arrangements for protection on the cliff. As to that there were always difficulties in fencing. A high wall would be objected to because, for instance, there was no system of home refuse removal and the stuff had to be thrown over the cliff. He did not remember any child falling over the cliff before. The fall there was a sheer 30ft. or 40ft., with nothing to save anyone. It seemed the most practical way of dealing with the matter would be to try and devise some means to prevent young children playing around there. That might take the form of a suggestion to the police, though it was doubtful if they had sufficient authority. The Urban Council was the recognised authority, and as representing the whole body the jury, if necessary, could make a recommendation, and no doubt the Council would do what they could.

The jury retired and agreed upon a verdict of accidental death, adding a rider calling the attention of the Paul Urban District Council to the unsafe condition of the cliffs with a view to an improvement in that respect. The jury also expressed the sincerest sympathy with the parents.

Transcribed from newspaper cuttings by D & I Flaxman