

TERRIBLE FATALITY AT NEWLYN.

CHILD FALLS OVER THE CLIFF.

A terrible fatality occurred at Newlyn Town on Friday evening, resulting in the death of Richard Maddern Cotton, of Trewarveth street. The little fellow was playing with a top on the Norra'd slip corner, just at the end of the street where he lived. The cliff at this spot is between 30 and 40 feet high and is protected with a single rail. His top fell over the cliff into the harbour, the tide being almost full at the time. A reef of rocks with their heads showing just above water ran along at the base of the wall, and his top re-bounded from these into deep water. The little fellow peered over the edge of the cliff to see where his toy was, and just then his brother Kingsley, aged 15, came up the slip and cried to him that he would get it. Finding the top was floating in the water he went to get a punt and while he was away his brother leaned too far over, and fell on to the rocks below. Kingsley, in his grief, when he found what had happened, scrambled over the rocks at the imminent risk of falling into the water, and picking up his younger brother who was terribly injured, carried him up the slip. Mr. Harry Weekes then took the deceased and carried him home to his grief stricken parents.

Dr. Symons was sent for but without any hope of saving the life of the lad, who had apparently been killed instantaneously. Deceased was the youngest of three brothers and one sister, one of his brothers, Edward, being away at Exeter training college.

THE INQUEST

An inquiry into the circumstances attending the death of the lad, was held at the Primitive Methodist vestry, Newlyn, on Saturday afternoon, by the county coroner (Mr. Edward Boare).

Mr. P. K. Deacon was foreman of the jury.

John Kingsley Cotton, 15, brother to the deceased, said he lived at Trewarveth Street. His father, John Cotton, was a fishpacker. His brother was six years of age, and on Friday witness saw Richard at 6.15, playing with his top on the cliff at the foot of the street in which he lived. Several other boys were playing there and while witness was looking on, his brother's top rolled over the cliff into the sea, which was nearly full. Witness went down to the slip and on to the beach to get the top and tried to fish it in with pieces of net. This means failing he went to the old quay for a boat and had just reached the top of the cliff, opposite Mr. Paul's sailmaker's shop, when he was told his brother had fallen over. Witness ran down again and found his brother lying dead under the cliff on the rocks. He picked him up and carried him towards the foot of the cliff, when Frank Allard took him and carried the body up the cliff. Mr. Harry

Weekes then carried the body home. Richard's head was badly injured and his left wrist was broken.

By the Coroner: Richard occasionally played around the cliff.

The Coroner: It does not seem a very safe place for boys to play about.

Deceased's uncle remarked that the cliff was dangerous all along.

By the Coroner: He saw Sidney Hichens and Thomas Vingoe on the cliff, and the former told him that his brother had fallen over.

A Juror: Was there any water under the cliff, or did he fall on the rocks? – He fell on the rocks.

The Foreman: What distance was the water from the rocks? – About two yards.

Sidney Vivyan Hichens, 13 years of age, son of Philip Hichens, a fisherman, living at St. Peter's Square, said he was on the cliff on Friday evening, about six o'clock, where he saw deceased and his brother Kingsley. The latter spun the top, but he did not see it go over the cliff. While deceased's brother went for the top Richard sat on the rail, his feet resting on a spar, with his back towards the harbour. A boy named Thomas Vingoe caught Cotton by the jersey he was wearing, and deceased fell. Witness made an ineffectual attempt to catch him, but his arms were not long enough, his fingers just brushing deceased. Richard struck the ground underneath the rail and then disappeared over the edge. Vingoe and the deceased were laughing together before he saw the former touch deceased.

The Coroner: You do not mean to say he pushed deceased? – He just took hold of him.

He may have caught hold of him to keep him on the rail? – Yes, sir.

He was not slipping before the boy caught hold of him? – No, sir.

How old is Vingoe? – About the same age as Cotton.

Kingsley Cotton recalled, said he was not spinning his brother's top. He spun his own and was doing so when his brother's went over.

Frank Allard, hairdresser, living at Fore Street, Newlyn, said when he heard that a little boy had fallen over the cliff, he went down the slip and took deceased from his brother, whom he found carrying him across the rocks. The boy's skull was fractured. Witness went for Dr. Symons.

Coroner: Do you often see boys playing there? – Yes, there are generally between 20 and 30 boys of deceased's age playing there every night.

Did you know deceased and did you often see him there? – Yes, on the cliff. Boys are always there playing, but I cannot say I have seen this particular boy close to the rails.

The Coroner said it was a very sad case, and the jury would join with him in sympathising with the parents of the little boy on his unfortunate death. From the evidence they were doubtless satisfied that death was

due to an accident but the circumstances opened up the question whether the cliff was safe – it hardly opened up, but emphasised the fact, which he believed was patent to all – that it was not a safe place for children of that age to play on. The question, therefore, arose as to whether or not they were satisfied with the present arrangement for the protection of the cliff, and whether something could be done to prevent such small children from playing there. As to increased protection by way of fencing, there would be difficulties in the way, for he supposed it would be objectionable to the people living near who were accustomed to shooting refuse over it. It might be possible to stop youngsters playing there by suggesting to the police that they should pay special attention to that spot, but perhaps they would feel they had not sufficient authority to do that. Still there was a recognised authority in the district – the Urban Council – and if they had knowledge of the case, and if the jury made a recommendation to them, the Council would no doubt do all they could; and if they had not power to make a bye-law prohibiting children from playing there, they might find some means of stopping it by erecting a notice board. The only alternative to that would be a better system of fencing; but in this case they would probably create greater difficulties than they were endeavouring to remove. He did not remember a previous case of a child falling over, but there was a case some years ago of a man falling over the south pier. The cliff at the spot where the accident happened presented a sheer fall of 30 feet, and there was nothing to save anyone.

A Juror: We have a hard job to keep children off the cliff. Scores of times I have warned them. My brother fell over some years ago, and my son went over six years ago, and it never hurt him.

The jury returned a verdict of accidental death, and asked the coroner to call the attention of the District Council to the present unsafe condition of the cliff, with the suggestion that some improvement be made. They also desired to express their sincere sympathy with the parents of deceased.

Transcribed from The Cornishman by I Flaxman.