



Coroner's Inquest Report



Barton Bridge

Inquest Report on Norman William Hill

Boy's Fatal Grab to Save His Hat

Falls into Avon and Drowns in Sight of Playmates

"I suppose there is no way of keeping children away from this bridge," said Mr. A. L. Forrester, coroner for Wiltshire, at an inquest at Bradford on Tuesday on a small boy who the previous day fell into the River Avon at Barton Bridge and was drowned.

The boy was Norman William Hill, aged 5, son of Mr. George Hill, a stoke, who lives at 5, Wine Street Terrace, Bradford-on-Avon. He was the third child who had fallen into the Avon at this spot within the last fortnight, although this is the first time for many years that a fatality has occurred there.

The boy's father said the last time he saw Norman alive was at tea-time on Monday, after which he ran off by himself. Barton Bridge was about half-a-mile from his house.

Eric Cole, aged 13 of 7, Tory Place, said at about 7 p.m. he was on Barton Bridge when he saw Norman Hill leaning on the middle iron rail of the bridge. Witness saw Hill's hat fall off. Hill grabbed at it and fell over into the river.

Witness said he was too frightened to give the alarm, and was not near enough to try and catch hold of Hill. Hill somersaulted in the air and went under the water. He came up once and went down again and that was the last witness saw of him.

Dr. Janet Burnett said she saw the body of the deceased that day at the boathouse. She knew Hill quite well by sight. There were no marks of violence on the boy's body, and there were all the indications of drowning, which in her opinion was the cause of death.

Inspector Coleman said he was notified of the accident at about 7.15 the same evening. When he arrived at the scene of the accident dragging operations were in progress, and a number of men were diving in in an endeavour to find the body. He again visited Barton

Bridge on Tuesday morning, and shortly after his arrival the body was recovered. The body was placed in the boathouse. That was the first fatality he had known at that spot. Two children had fallen in the river at the same spot the previous week, but were rescued.

The Coroner, in returning a verdict of accidental death, remarked "I suppose there is no way of keeping children way from the spot."

Wiltshire Times, 27 August 1932