



SOUTH WILTSHIRE CORONER'S INQUESTS



CODFORD

Austin Vincent 25th June, 1915

Death of a 4 year old by Motor Car at Codford

Mr F. A. P. Sylvester, Coroner for Mid Wiltshire, held an Inquest at Windwhistle Cottages, Codford, on Thursday, into the circumstances regarding the death of a 4 year old boy named Austin Cecil George Vincent, who was knocked down by a motor car and killed.

It appears that Austin Vincent was standing with others, on the footpath opposite the school, in the road leading to the station, about one o'clock on Tuesday. A convoy of four waggons was coming towards the station, and a motor car driven at a moderate speed by Frank Thirkettle, of Salisbury, was coming in the opposite direction.

As the car was passing the fourth waggon the child appears either to have stepped or fallen off the path, and was struck by the wing of the car, causing a scalp wound on the left side of the head. Blood also issued from the right ear, indicating that the base of the skull had been fractured, causing instantaneous death. The driver of the car sounded his horn, and the children heard it.

Evidence at the inquiry bearing out these facts was given by Arthur Gladman, of the ASC, driver of one of the waggons in the convoy; Martin West, who was riding in the car; Frank Thirkettle, the driver of the car, who said he was driving at about eight to ten miles an hour; Dr Lewis, of Codford; and Francis Albert Vincent, who formerly resided in Chapel Street, Warminster, and was the father of the child.

The Coroner, in summing up, said he did not think they could attribute any blame to the driver of the car in that case. At the same time, drivers of cars must anticipate that children would step off the footpath in front of their cars, and they must take steps accordingly. The reference to speed which had been made by the Chairman of the Warminster Bench would be echoed by everybody who had had experience of getting about the roads recently. He did hope that, although nothing had arisen in this case, it was not out of place in suggesting that the police should have more stringent instructions to check furious driving, which he thought was more rife this year than ever he remembered it before. He did not know why it should be. People who were on their own business, and were in no hurry whatever, seemed to have got into the habit recently of tearing about the country, and could be termed nothing more nor less than "speed merchants," and were never more happy than when going at a tremendous pace, to the risk of ordinary users of the roads, who had as much right on the road as vehicles.

The jury returned a verdict in accordance with the medical evidence, and the Foreman remarked that he had been associated with school life many years before he came to Codford, and for sixteen years in

Codford, and he had always understood on the lower road school that if the children took their dinner, one of the teachers remained. He thought that might be a hint that might be useful in this case.

PC Hillier, in reply to a juryman, said the school gate was locked during the dinner hour.

The Foreman said he would like to endorse what the Coroner had said with regard to caution in the future. It did seem to him that some measures should be taken to bring some restrictions into operation. He fancied the law had something to say about speed going through a village or villages, and yet there did not seem to be any notice taken of the law. He wondered that there had not been more accidents than there had. Could the Coroner introduce the matter to the authorities?

The Coroner said he would do this if the jury wished him to, but there was a speed limit provided by law, and was very frequently disregarded.

The Coroner said no doubt the matter would be reported in the Press.

At the request of the jury the Coroner added a rider that "the Jury desire to draw the attention of the authorities to the fact that the speed limit through the village of Codford was frequently disregarded."

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