

Nuneaton Advertiser

21 November 1868

NEWBOLD-ON-AVON

INQUEST On Monday last an inquest was held at the Boat Inn at this village, before T Dewes Esq, Coroner, touching the decease of Sarah Reynolds, 7 years of age, daughter of John Reynolds, boatman, who had come to her death by burning. Elizabeth Reynolds said she had five children, the eldest 16 years of age, and they all lived in the cabin of the boat with herself and husband. On Tuesday morning between 11 and 12 o'clock, deceased was putting a piece of coal on a fire which had been made on the canal bank, when her clothes caught fire and she was burnt. Witness sent to the village for some stuff to dress the wounds with, and on Wednesday sent to Rugby for some more dressing ; deceased became worse, and on Thursday Dr Bucknill was sent for, but she died on Friday morning. William College, a labourer who was working near the place when the poor child's clothes caught fire, extinguished the flames. Dr Bucknill said he was sent for on Thursday afternoon, and at once went to the boat, where the child lay ; he found it suffering from burns on the lower part of the back and thighs, but they were not sufficient of themselves to cause death, though the shock to the system would probably do so. It was as much as he could do to get into the cabin where deceased lay, and he told the parents that she must be taken from that confined place to the Union the first thing next morning ; before this could be done she was dead. He thought if he had been sent for sooner, and deceased had been in a different atmosphere, there might have been a chance of her recovering, though she was very much emaciated, almost a skeleton. The Coroner expressed great surprise that seven persons could exist in such a place as the cabin of a boat, and asked the mother of deceased why they did not take a cottage. She said they had intended to take one, but when there was one to let they were away from Newbold, and so missed it. Mr Redley said the father of deceased worked for him, receiving £1 a week wages, and ought to take a cottage ; his eldest girl was 16 years of age, and she – with the other four children and father and mother – all lived in the boat. A gentleman who came with the Coroner said he had known many larger families than this living in the cabins of boats. The question was asked whether there was no supervision of boats, or whether any number of persons could be crammed into the cabin, but no answer was given, except that boats being always travelling about, prevented any inspection. A verdict of Accidental Death was returned by the jury.