

Father's inquest story of blazing caravan drama

THE dramatic story of his efforts to rescue his three children from a blazing caravan at Briarfield, near Barnaderg, Co. Galway, was told by **Mr. Edward Connors** (23), a horse dealer from Gorey, Co. Wexford, at an inquest in the Bon Secours Hospital, Tuam, yesterday.

Mr. Connors, with his hands in bandages and his face swollen and burned, broke down as he told how he lost his 20 months' old son, James, and five-year-old Myles in the fire. He rescued his three-year-old daughter, Johanna.

Returning a verdict that death was due to shock and asphyxia as a result of an accidental fire, the Coroner for North Galway, **Mr. J. P. Glynn**, solicitor, said this tragedy drew attention to the danger of leaving children exposed to an open fire. No blame was attached to Connors and everyone felt very sorry for him and his wife.

Mr. Connors said that he and two other families, Thomas Connors, a cousin, and Patrick Donovan, had parked their caravans and his wife, Elizabeth, went with their daughter, Bridget, aged six, for groceries. Later he went for water. The children were playing on the caravan floor when he left.

On his way back he saw smoke

and flames from the caravan and ran towards it. John, a twin of Bridget, was safe on the ground, but Johanna was surrounded by flames. He got her out with her hair burning, but when he tried to get in again for the two other children, the flames beat him back. He could not see them and heard no cries.

"There was on a small bit of fire" in the stove when he left the caravan. There were no matches or loose paper around. A spark from the chimney might have set fire to the dry furze on the hedge beside the caravan.

Patrick J. Kenohan, Oaklands, Salthill, Galway, a motorist, said he gave all the assistance he could to Connors who was very excited and distressed. Witness drove to get help and met a Garda patrol car.

COMMENDATION

Garda Michael Geary, patrol car driver, Athenry, said he assisted in putting out the fire and had to move another caravan as flames were spreading along the hedge.

Dr. T. O. Colmain, M.O., Abbevilleknockmoy, stated that the children died from shock and asphyxia.

Mr. Peter Kelly, foreman of the jury, commended the father's heroic action in trying to save his children. **Supt. Michael Gonigle**, Tuam, joined in the expression of sympathy.