

Two Boys Die In Caravan Blaze

TWO itinerant boys died in their blazing caravan at Brierfield, Barnaderg, near Tuam, on Monday evening.

They were 5-years-old Myles and 22-months-old James Connors, sons of Edward Connors, an Enniscorthy horse dealer. A third child, Joahna (3), was rescued by her father and two others jumped clear. The family had just arrived in the area a few days ago.

The father had gone to a farm house for a kettle of water, and his wife, Elizabeth, was in a shop a short distance away buying food at the time of the tragedy.

The caravan was parked on the roadside about an hour before the fire.

Mr. Connors saw the caravan in flames as he was returning with the water and ran to save his children. He pulled out the three-year-old girl, whose hair was singed, but he could not get back the second time because of the flames and heat.

He was burned on the face

and hands and was taken to the Bon Secours Hospital, Tuam, after being attended by Dr. M. G. Mellott and Dr. T. Coleman.

A passing motorist, Mr. P. K. Kenahan, of Salthill, Galway, notified the Gardai.

Two other caravans parked at the same place were pulled away before the flames could reach them. They were owned by Patrick Donovan and Thomas Connors, a cousin of Edward Connors.

THE INQUEST

The father's heroic action in jumping into the blazing caravan was commended by Mr. Peter Kelly, foreman of the jury, at the inquest held by Mr. James P. Glynn, Solr., Coroner, in the Bon Secours Hospital, on Tuesday.

Supt. M. Gonigle, Tuam, represented the Gardai.

Dr. T. Coleman, M.O., Abbeyknockmoy, said both bodies were extensively burned.

Patk. J. Kenahan, Glen Ora, Oaklands, Salthill, Galway, said he arrived at the scene at 5 p.m. There were three caravans parked on the side of the road on the grass margin. One caravan was a blazing inferno. He saw Edward Connors, the father of the children, on the road in a very excited and distressed condition. The caravan appeared to be of timber structure and he gave what assistance he could to put out the fire. He later saw a body of a child on the ground where the caravan had been parked and he saw a second body in the burned out framework of the caravan.

Guard Ml. Geary, Athenry, said Connors' caravan was first with the other two parked behind it. He got the second caravan removed as the fire was spreading along the furze on the roadside. He assisted in putting out the fire and when the fire was out he saw one body falling through the bottom of the caravan. The other body was in the back of the caravan.

Edward Connors, whose hands were heavily bandaged, said he was a horse dealer of no fixed address and was married with five children. He usually travelled around the country in a horse drawn caravan. He left Mount Bellew on Monday evening for Brierfield and he was not long there when the accident occurred. He arrived at 4.30 p.m. and two other families travelled with him. The eldest of his family were twins—John and Bridget, aged six years. Next was Myles, the deceased, aged five years, and Joanna was next aged three years. Then there was James, the deceased, aged twenty months. When they arrived his wife went to the local shop for groceries and brought Bridget with her. Witness was then in the caravan. There was a small stove at the front of the caravan but there was no paraffin. There was a tilley lamp at the back of the caravan but it was in a position that the children could not reach. Some time after his wife left for the shop he got two cans to go for water. He left the children in the caravan—they were playing. He had a couple of hundred yards to go for water and on his return at a point 174 yards from his caravan he saw smoke and flames rising. He dropped the vessels and ran to the caravan. When he arrived John was outside on the ground. Joanna, aged three years, was in the middle of the flames inside the caravan but he could not see Myles or James. He leapt into the fire and picked up Joanna and took her to safety. The top of her hair was burned and he got severe burning in rescuing the child. He could not re-enter the caravan because of the fire. He heard no cry from the other children. There was no loose paper or matches in the caravan. The caravan was parked close to the furze bushes and it was possible that a spark set fire to the dry furze bushes. He parked close to the bushes for shelter.

Remarking that the fire was accidental the Coroner and jury returned a verdict that the cause of death was shock and asphyxia due to extensive burns. Tendering sympathy to the relatives Mr. J. P. Glynn, Solr., said he again had to draw attention to the great care which should be exercised when young children were exposed to open fires.

Supt. M. Gonigle and the jury joined in the expression of sympathy.