



CORONERS INQUESTS



John Morris Lacey

BOY KILLED IN GUN GAME.

Three small boys, playing soldiers, scorned their water pistols when they saw a "real gun." The gun went off and killed one of them. The dead boy was John Morris Lacey, aged nine, of Valenda Cottage, Stoford, Wilts. With Raymond Oak (9) and Frederick Smith (10) he had a holiday from Wishfords' School, near Salisbury. The three of them spent most of the afternoon playing in a dugout, and later went to Raymond's home at Oaklands, Stoford. In the hall they saw a gun. John and Freddy said they would like to play with it, and when Raymond offered them water pistols they said: "Let's play with a real gun." Raymond took down the gun to show the other two how it worked. He pulled back the hammer and then the trigger. There was an explosion, and John, standing about two yards away, fell to the ground, shot through the stomach. Raymonds' mother rushed from her kitchen, asking if anyone was hurt; and John, who had struggled to his feet, said: "Yes, here in my side." He died while being taken to hospital. Raymond was the principal witness at the inquest. He was exonerated by the coroner, Mr. A. M. Wilson, who said: "Boys will be boys all the world over." But he severely criticised the owner of the gun, Bert Stewart Ballett, who lodges with Raymonds' mother. Ballett said he left the gun in the hall after a cartridge had jammed in the ejector, intending to fire it off later. The coroner told Ballett: "I consider you are guilty of the very greatest carelessness and thoughtlessness." The verdict was death by misadventure.

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