

## THE SAD BATHING FATALITY.

On Friday at noon, in the Alderminster schools, Mr. G. F. Lodder (deputy-coroner) held an inquiry into the circumstances attending the death of Francis George Plumb (18) and Amos Richard Plumb (16)

who lived at Broomfields with their parents. The Rev. R. W. Thrupp was chosen foreman of the jury.

Francis James Plumb, agricultural labourer, said the deceased were his sons. Richard was employed by Mr. James, of Whitehill, and Francis George was apprenticed as a carpenter. Richard lived in the house. On Wednesday evening Richard told him they were going down to bathe. Witness knew they were going to the Stour, but not to a spot from which they had never bathed before. He thought Francis could swim a little, but not the other one, and witness fancied that Francis was going to give Richard a lesson. The elder lad was not a good swimmer. He identified the cord (produced) as some which had been on his premises for a long time. Sidney Mooring, who was with them, told his wife that the lads were missing, and he made straight for the Stour, where he thought they were likely to be. On the way he met a boy who told him to make straight for Foxhill Bank. When he got there he sent a man for a boat, as he thought they would have a difficulty in finding them. Arthur Hathaway recovered the bodies half-an-hour afterwards. They were quite dead. When witness saw him on the bank there was no cord round Amos. Both of the lads were very good sons.

By Mr. Bates: He could not say whether the lads had been accustomed to taking the cord with them. Witness could not say why they went to that particular place.

Mr. Mooring: They have been there before.

By Mr. Bates: They went to bathe perhaps once or twice a week.

Mr. Lodder said he would get particulars as to the depth of the river from another witness.

Mr. J. H. Taylor remarked that most of the jury knew the place well.

Sidney Malburn Mooring, 12, living at Broomfields, said he went down to the river on Wednesday evening with the deceased about seven o'clock. They went down to bathe, and he saw the two get into the water at Foxhill Bank. The water was very deep where they entered. Francis could swim a little, but not Amos. He did not know why they chose that spot. It was not very deep where Amos first got in. Francis entered the water at a different spot. He wanted to go where he could dive. Witness, who had started to fish, heard a splash, but did not actually see Francis dive. They had a rope with them, and Francis said he would have it round him. Amos could hold the other end, so that if Francis went too far Amos could get him out. Witness went on with his fishing, and about two minutes afterwards, not hearing them, he went to see what they were doing. Witness saw one of the lads come up a little way, and knew that they were drowning or in danger. He heard no shouting of any kind. If they had made any noise he should have heard it, as he was only ten yards away. When he saw one of them rise he held out a stick to him, but the man (he did not know which of the brothers it was) did not take hold of it. The stick reached him. Witness then ran to Broomfields and gave the alarm immediately.

By Mr. Taylor: He had seen them bathing before, but not at Foxhill. He had not seen them with the rope before.

By the Coroner: The usual bathing place was lower down, where it was not so deep. Witness could swim a little.

Mr. Lodder: I wonder if you knew what a risk you ran in handing the stick to the man.

By Mr. Bates: Witness undressed but did not go in. He went away to fish.

By Mr. Mooring: There were bushes between the deceased and him. The river was rather wide at the spot.

Arthur John Hathaway, estate labourer, of Preston-on-Stour, said a few minutes past eight a boy told him that Frank and Richard Plumb were drowned at Foxhill. He started running, and overtook a man named Rimell, who had two hocks with him. Witness took one and commenced dragging. When he got to the place there were about 30 people there. It was two or three minutes before he recovered the bodies. He pulled Richard out first, and found the rope twisted tightly round his wrist. He asked a man named Kite to assist him in pulling Francis out. The latter had the rope over one shoulder and under the other arm. They did not appear to have been struggling.

Mr. J. H. Taylor said he was there when the bodies were brought, and Richard looked as if he had had a cramp very badly in the toes.

Witness added that a few minutes after he recovered the bodies P. C. Barrett appeared on the scene.

By Mr. Bates: The bodies were four or five feet from the bank. There was a shelf running along and then a deep hole, and he should say it was from eight to ten feet deep in the hole. It swirled round the corner. In his opinion it was a dangerous spot for bathing, and if a person got out of his depth he would drown.

The Coroner: Were they strong men?

The Rev. R. W. Thrupp: Very fine men. One would be six feet high, and the other nearly so.

P. C. Barrett, of Alderminster, said about 8.30 p.m. he received information at his station respecting the drowning of the two Plumbs. He at once obtained a vehicle, and went with all possible speed. On arriving he found the bodies had been recovered from the river. He failed to find any scars or marks.

Hathaway, re-called, said the younger brother was nearer to the bank.

P. C. Barrett said the river was 30ft. wide there and very deep. He could swim, but he should not care to get in there. He found the rope in the way described by the last witness. The clothes were about five or six yards from the spot.

Mr. Lodder said it was a very sad and unfortunate case, and they would have no difficulty in coming to a conclusion as to the cause of death. Two young men, who seemed to be in the best of health, took it into their heads that they should like to bathe, and they went to a deep part of the river, although neither of them could swim properly. It was extraordinary that no noise should have been heard by the witness Mooring, although it was quite possible the deceased did not shout. Mooring behaved very well indeed for a boy. He threw out a stick, and when he saw that did not answer wasted no time in giving the alarm.

The jury returned a verdict of "Accidentally drowned while bathing in the river Stour," and expressed their deep sympathy with the parents in their sad bereavement.

A juror suggested that a proper bathing place should be found in the villages, and all other places prohibited.

Mr. Lodder said the idea was a good one, and the Parish Council might try to do something in the matter.

Mr. and Mrs. Plumb desire to express their sincere thanks to the residents of Alderminster, Preston-on-Stour, and Wimpstone, and other friends, for the sympathy and kindness extended to them in their sad bereavement.

## THE FUNERAL.

The funeral of the two brothers took place on Saturday afternoon at the parish church, Alderminster. The sad event called forth many expressions of deep sorrow and sincere sympathy. In addition to the chief mourners, a large congregation assembled to pay a last tribute of respect, and many unable to find seats in the church waited in the churchyard and near the grave. The service was conducted by the Vicar, the Rev. R. W. Thrupp, and was partly choral. The hymn "Peace, perfect Peace" was sung inside the church, and hymn 140, A. and M., "Jesus lives," was sung at the graveside. Many beautiful floral tributes were placed on the grave, and blinds were drawn as the funeral procession passed on its way to the church. At the following Sunday services the Vicar made touching and eloquent references to the sad occasion.