FILE NAME: Newspaper & Magazine Articles (NMA)

DATE: 1930

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DOCUMENT DESCRIPTION: Newspaper Article - Asbestos Worker's Death with Cover Memo from British Fibrocement Works, Ltd.

ASBESTOS WORKER'S DEATH.

The case of an asbestos worker who died from asbestosis was investigated by the West Ham Deputy Coroner (Mr. Milner Helme) on Tuesday.

The deceased was Sidney Fisher, 42, of 723, Barking-road, Plaistow. The inquest had previously been adjourned for a statement of the results of microscopical investigations made at the post-mortem examination.

Previously the widow, Margaret Mary Fisher, stated that her husband was an asbestos worker employed at the Cape Asbestos Company, at Barking, from 1929 until November, 1929. He had enjoyed good health until two years ago, but in November had medical attention. On August 13th he was sent to the Victoria Park Hospital, and died on October 13th.

Dr. Pearce, of the Victoria Park Hospital, said that on admission deceased complained of shortness of breath and loss of weight. He was examined, and was found to have considerable pulmonary fibrosis. He improved for a short time, and then began to get worse, and died on October 13th. A post-mortem examination revealed extensive fibrosis in both lungs, and signs of apparently obsolete tuberculosis in the right lung, which had nothing to do with the cause of death. Death was caused by pulmonary fibrosis.

Edward Everett, wages clerk and cashier at the Cape Asbestos Company's works, said that for nearly 8½ years deceased was employed in the high-pressure jointing department. His work was to take a paste which was made previously and place it into a machine containing very large cylinders. The paste passed between the cylinders, but after the paste had been placed in the machine it was shut down and entirely enclosed.

The Coroner: Had he anything else to handle except this mixture?—No, only operate the machine.

Was there much dust made by the process on this machine?—There would be no dust.

Were any dusty processes carried on in that particular part?—Yes. Over dusty processes we have hoods and suction to take away the dust.

If he breathed any asbestos dust in his work would that come from other machines?—If he did, it certainly would come from other machines.

Witness added that for seven months deceased was employed in the general department, being sometimes in the factory and sometimes in the grounds. For 3½ months he was in the packing department, and for 4½ months he was in the fibrising department.

Answering the solicitor for the company, witness said that the proportion of illness in the asbestos trade was very low, although he could give no figures off-hand. It was not an unhealthy trade.

The Solicitor: I think the Home Office send their inspectors there very frequently?—Yes.

Are they quite satisfied?—Yes.

Deceased's brother-in-law, Thomas McKay, who said that he had worked at the factory for five years, also gave evidence.

With regard to the microscopical examination of sections of both lungs, Dr. Pearce now said that this showed extensive fibrosis and numerous asbestosis bodies. There was no sign of pulmonary tuberculosis.

The Coroner: What, in your opinion, was the cause of death?—Pulmonary asbestosis.

The jury returned a verdict accordingly, adding that the firm had done all they could to prevent the disease.

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British Fibrocement Works Ltd.,

ERITH.

To

J. Carter, Esq.,

ROCHDALE.

Your Ref.

Our Ref JAC/O.

18th November, 1930.

Dear Mr. Carter,

Knowing that you, personally, are interested in the question of Asbestosis, or Fibrosis, I am sending you a cutting out of the Uxbridge local paper about a case of Fibrosis which occurred at the Cape Asbestos Co.

You will see that the Coroner was rather favourably disposed to the "Cape" in his summing up.

Yours truly,

J. Adam

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J.A.Cann, Esq.,

Erith.

FRP/EK

19th November, 1950.

Dear Sir,

Asbestosis

On behalf of Mr. Carter I acknowledge, with thanks, receipt of yours of the 18th instant enclosing cutting out of the Uxbridge local paper in connection with a case of fibrosis which occurred at the Works of the Cape Asbestos Co.

Yours faithfully,

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