

## FIVE DIE IN FIRE CAUSED BY OVERTURNED HEATER

**The Glasgow Herald, Thursday 16 November, 1967**

An overturned paraffin heater yesterday caused a fire in a council house in Hutchesontown, Glasgow, in which four children under six years of age perished. Station Officer William Clark, aged 47, of the Southern Division Fire Station, collapsed and died of a heart attack while fighting the blaze. Mr Clark, whose home was at 17 Windhill Crescent, Glasgow, leaves a wife and two sons, aged 17 and 22.

The children who died when their home at 10 Cumberland Place, off Cumberland Street, was swept by fire were the entire family of Mr and Mrs James Coyle. They were Catherine, aged five, four year old John, two year old James, and Margaret, aged six months. Mrs Nancy Coyle, their 32 year old mother, was last night in hospital suffering from shock and severe cuts, to her arms caused by shattered glass from a window. Mr Coyle, aged 40, was told of the tragedy at his work at a building site at Newton Mearns. He went to the Victoria Infirmary and last night he, too, was detained suffering from shock.

An official of Glasgow C.I.D., who are investigating the fire, said it seemed likely it was caused by a paraffin heater in the kitchenette being knocked over by one of the children. Mrs Coyle, who was upstairs when the fire started, tried to reach her children before flames forced her to jump out of a window into the arms of two neighbours, Mr Archie Higgins and his wife, Margaret, who live at 12 Cumberland Place.

Mr Higgins said later:- "I heard the children screaming and rushed next door with some other people. We tried to kick the door down but I was wearing slippers. Some workers came over and we managed to force the door, but flames came leaping out and we were driven back. "Mrs Coyle was at an upstairs window. I shouted to her to throw the children down. She was sobbing almost hysterically and shouted;- 'I can't, I can't. She lowered herself out of the window and dropped into my arms.'

Robert Conlan, 65 Gorbals Street, a labourer with Glasgow Corporation, Cleansing Department, was in Cumberland Place on his way home when he saw the fire and climbed a ladder in an attempt to get in by an upstairs window.

"I smashed the window with my fist and stuck my head in" he said. "Then the flames burst up and singed my hair and eyebrows. I had to move back. There was nothing else I could do."

Mrs Margaret Irving, another neighbour, heard the screams. She said:- "I ran out of the house and saw the smoke. I could hear Mrs Coyle shouting - 'Help, Please God, help. Oh, my children, oh, my children.' Mrs Beatrice McGhee, 77 Lynedoch Street, Greenock, was passing the house in her van when she saw the fire. As Mr Conlan was climbing the ladder she ran to the back of the house. "The front door was an inferno," she said "and thick smoke was filling the building."

Station Officer Clark, who was inside the house fighting the blaze when he collapsed, was carried out and treated by ambulancemen. He was then given mouth to mouth resuscitation and oxygen in the hallway of the house next door. He revived but died on the way to hospital.

An ambulance attendant, Mr John Wilson, 16D Sutherland Avenue, Dumbarton, said there was very thick smoke everywhere in the house. "The youngest child was in the pram downstairs near the paraffin heater," he added. "The others were upstairs. There was nothing anyone could do." Father Campion, from St Francis Chapel nearby, comforted Mrs Coyle after she jumped from the window and accompanied her to the infirmary. The Coyles home is a maisonette type flat in a scheme being constructed by the Scottish Special Housing Association in the Gorbals redevelopment. The Coyles moved into the house this summer.

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## DEATH NOTICE

CLARK Suddenly, on 15th November, 1967 (while on duty), William Clark, (station officer, Glasgow Fire Service), dearly loved husband of Agnes May Drysdale and dear father of David and Alan, 17 Windhill Crescent, Glasgow, S3. Service at the Linn Crematorium (St Mungo Chapel), Lainshaw Drive, Glasgow, S5, tomorrow (Saturday) arriving there at 11am to which all friends are invited; no flowers please.



THE  
FIREFIGHTERS'  
HERITAGE  
TRAIL