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FIVE CASUALTIES IN WRECKED LIVING-ROOM

BOY CARRIES EXPLOSIVE BACK TO MILNSBRIDGE IN BUS

A **MORTAR-TYPE bomb**, picked up by children on the Meltham moors, caused an explosion in a Cowlersley home on Saturday evening which **killed three people outright and inflicted severe injuries on two others**.

Three families have suffered by the incident, which occurred in the living-room at the home of Mr. and Mrs. T. Chapman, **32, Winget Avenue, Cowlersley**, shortly before six. Windows were shattered and plaster was torn from the walls of the room, and an indescribable scene confronted neighbours who went to the assistance of the victims.

Police ambulances rushed to the spot in answer to an urgent summons, and surgeons at the Huddersfield Royal Infirmary fought for hours to save the life of one of the women, who was stated yesterday to be "dangerously ill."



The dead are:

Thomas Johnson Chapman (39), a window-cleaner, of 32, Winget Avenue, Cowlersley; **John Chapman** (12), his son; and **Mrs. Mary Elizabeth Baxter** (33), his sister, of 6, Ramsden Mill Lane, Linthwaite.

Those injured were:

Mrs. Beatrice Constance Wilson (42), of 24, Winget Avenue (multiple shrapnel wounds to the legs, face and arms);

Mrs. Lily Elizabeth Chapman (36), wife of the dead man (wounds to the face and hands).

Neighbours described hearing "a terrific crack" accompanied by the sound of breaking glass shortly before half-past six, and almost immediately afterwards Mrs. Chapman, her face covered with blood, appeared at the front door of her home calling for assistance. The house was filled with acrid fumes, windows had been blown out, plaster dislodged and the scene in the living-room was indescribable. The three dead persons had extensive injuries, and Mrs. Wilson was in a serious condition.

An urgent summons to the Borough Police headquarters brought two ambulances in a very short time, and, pending their arrival, Police-constable J. Smith, who lives in Winget Avenue, directed the rescue operations. Dr. J. F. Smyth, of Milnsbridge, rendered first-aid to the two injured women before their removal by ambulance to the Huddersfield Royal Infirmary.

Within a short time of the occurrence the Chief Constable (Mr. James Chadwick) and Superintendent Hilton Binns, of the Borough Force, arrived on the scene.

Judging from the extent of his injuries it is assumed that Mr. Chapman was handling the bomb when it exploded, for he had extremely severe wounds to the lower part of the body.

CARRIED BOMB IN BUS

It is learned that a number of boys, one of whom was John Chapman, found the bomb on the Meltham moors earlier in the day and travelled with it to Cowlersley on a bus.

It is not known how the explosion occurred, but it is believed that a pair of pliers was found in the living-room.



Mr. Chapman



John Chapman

The spot where the bomb is believed to have been found was used as a training ground for troops during the war years. On boards on the moors are notices warning people not to pick up objects which may be found there.

Describing the finding of the bomb, one of the lads, **Conroy Chadwick**, of 21, Storth Road, Cowlersley, said:

"As we were walking along John Chapman said, 'Look, a bomb.' We decided not to touch it, but after we had moved away some distance John said, 'I am going back to that bomb.' John threw some stones at it, and two caps came off.

Chapman apparently put the bomb to his ear and said that there was 'a ticking noise.' He threw it away but later picked it up again and put it in his pocket. The boys then got on to a bus in which there were about twenty people. When they reached Cowlersley John Chapman told the other boys that he was going to show the bomb to his father.

Other boys who were with Chapman at the time were Geoffrey Normanton of 20, Storth Avenue, and Jack Smith, of Winget Avenue. Normanton, who described the bomb as being about nine inches long and fitted with a fin, left Chapman on the way home and travelled to Cowlersley in another bus.

It was shortly after Chapman reached home that the explosion occurred, and it was of such intensity that it was heard by many of the neighbours, who at first associated it with the Standard Fireworks factory a short distance away.

“DO COME, SOMEBODY” — VICTIM'S CRY

Mrs. A. Stewart, of 29, Winget Avenue, who lives opposite the ill-fated house, told an *Examiner* reporter that she heard a loud report and went to the door to see what had happened.

"As I opened the door," she said, "I saw Mrs. Chapman run out of her house shouting, 'Do come, somebody.'"

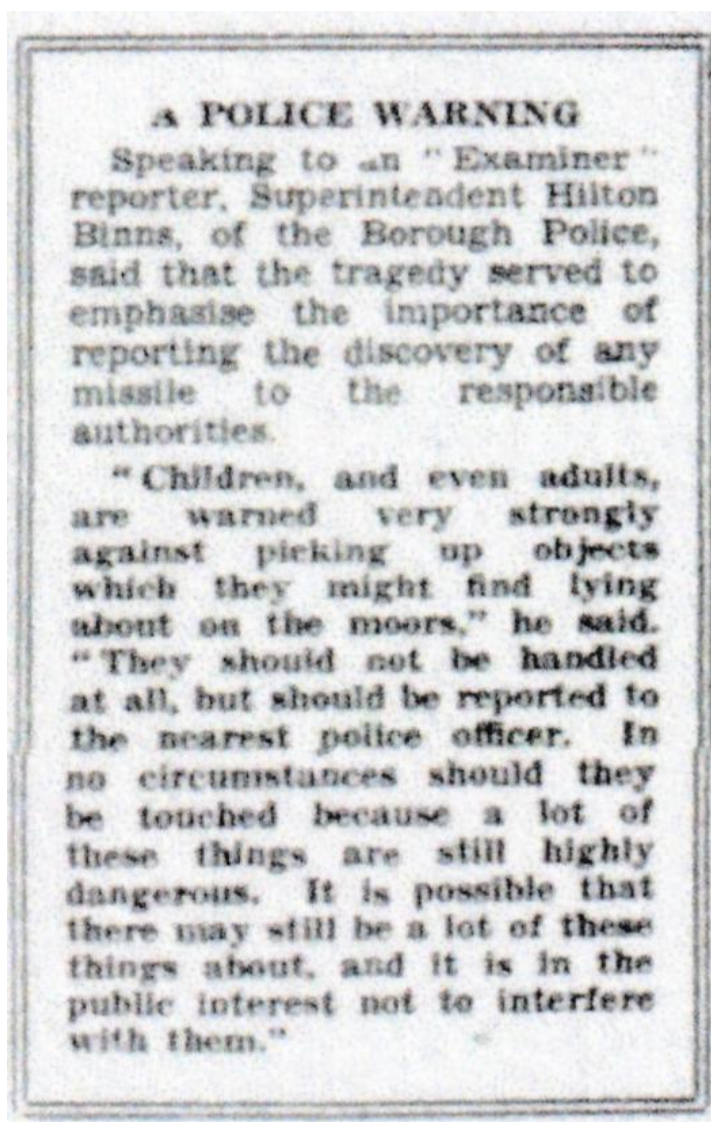
Mr. J. Bohannon, steward of the Linthwaite Labour Club, of 23, Winget Avenue, said that he walked home from the club with Mr. Chapman only a short time before the incident. He reached home at about ten minutes past six.

"I had just had my tea when I heard the bang," he said to an *Examiner* representative. "I thought that probably the gas oven had exploded or something. I couldn't put it down to anything else. We looked through the window and saw smoke coming out of the Chapmans' house."

At this point Mrs. Bohannon, who was with her husband at the time, took up the story.

"Mrs. Chapman suddenly appeared at the door of her house with her face bleeding." "She seemed to be in a dreadful state, and shouted for someone to go and help her. I ran across the road and brought her into our house. She appeared to have been deafened by the explosion and had difficulty in hearing what I said to her. She did not seem to realise what had happened."

Mr. P. Townend, of 30, Winget Avenue, the Chapmans' next-door neighbour, said that the walls of the room were pitted with holes, and the windows were blown out. The house was full of acrid smoke when he entered.



THE DAMAGED ROOM

The walls of the room were pitted with shrapnel, the fireplace had been dislodged, and a door was blown off the kitchen sideboard by the force of the explosion. Glassware in the room was shattered, and the room was thick with burning soot. One piece of shrapnel had penetrated the ceiling of the room and was embedded in the bedroom floor, and another piece had gone through the living-room floor into the cellar. The door leading to the cellar was destroyed.

Within a short time of the occurrence Corporation workmen were on the spot and had boarded up the damaged windows. In addition to the windows of the living-room, which were completely shattered, a fanlight over the front door was smashed, and other windows in the house were cracked.

SURGEONS FIGHT FOR WOMAN'S LIFE

Surgeons at the Infirmary fought for several hours for the life of Mrs. Wilson, who was stated to be "dangerously ill" on admission. An operation was performed before midnight, and Mrs. Wilson was given blood transfusions.

Mr. Vincent Wilson, her husband, maintained an all-night vigil by her bedside. She has had both legs amputated. Last night she was stated to be "still very seriously ill." Mrs. Chapman's condition last night was described as "fairly comfortable."

On his return from the Infirmary yesterday morning, Mr. Wilson said that the doctors regarded it as "almost a miracle" that his wife had survived her injuries. She never lost consciousness until she was given the anaesthetic before the operation.

Mrs. Wilson had called at the Chapmans' house for the purpose of going to the pictures with Mrs. Chapman, and they were about to leave when the explosion occurred. His wife had told him that Mr. Chapman impressed upon those in the room that he knew how to deal with the bomb.

CHILDREN'S LUCKY ESCAPE

Mr. and Mrs. Chapman have three children in addition to the dead boy - Ronnie (14), Tom (6), and Evelyn (4) - and they had a lucky escape, having left the house only a short time before the explosion.

The two youngest children were actually playing in the street nearby when the explosion occurred. They spent the night with neighbours, and yesterday went to the home of an aunt, Mrs. E. Wootton, of Ball Royd, Longwood, who did not hear of the accident until several hours after it had happened.

The dead boy was a scholar at Linthwaite Church of England School, where the eldest boy had also attended until recently.

Mr. Chapman, who had been in the Royal Artillery for the past four and a half years, had just completed his demobilisation leave. He went to France just after D-Day, and had seen a good deal of service in Europe.

Recently he went into partnership with a friend, Mr. B. Vickers, of South Avenue, in a window-cleaning business in the Milnsbridge and Golcar areas.

Before the war he was employed in the teasing department of Messrs. John Crowther and Sons (Milnsbridge), Ltd., at Union Mills.

He and his wife have been members of the Linthwaite Labour Club for some time.

Mrs. Baxter was the wife of Mr. Harold Baxter, a miner at Emley Colliery. She leaves two children—Barry, aged five, and Ann, who is three years of age.

It is only about three years ago that Mr. and Mrs. Baxter lost their ten-year-old daughter, June, in a drowning fatality at Cambridge Road Baths.

MAYOR TO OPEN RELIEF FUND

The Mayor of Huddersfield (Alderman Mary Sykes) has decided to open a fund for the relief and assistance of the families affected by the Cawlersley disaster.

Speaking to an *Examiner* reporter this afternoon, she said that she felt that a number of people would wish to do something to help in this matter.

Certain moneys had already been received, amounting to about £70, which would form the nucleus of the fund. This sum included the £50 donated by the Linthwaite Labour Club, who had already made a move in this matter.

A small committee would be set up to administer the fund, and all subscriptions would be acknowledged.

BOROUGH M.P.'S SYMPATHY

After speaking at a Labour meeting in the Theatre Royal last night, Mr. J. P. W. Mallalieu, the Borough M.P., visited the scene of the tragedy and offered his sympathy to those who had suffered.

In the course of the meeting, Mr. L. Sharp, chairman of the Labour Party, mentioned that the families who had suffered were working-class people. The committee of the Linthwaite Labour Club had decided to open an appeal for funds to help those who had suffered, and had also decided to open the list with a sum of £50. They desired that the children of those who had lost their lives should be provided for as well as it was possible for workers to provide for any of their comrades in distress. A retiring collection was taken in aid of the fund.

The inquest is to be opened at Huddersfield this afternoon, but only evidence of identification is to be taken.

The three coffins containing the bodies of the victims will be taken to Linthwaite Parish Church on Wednesday evening, and will remain there until the funeral at 3 o'clock on Thursday afternoon.

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Three families have suffered by the incident, which occurred in the living-room at the home of Mr. and Mrs. T. Chapman, 32, Winget Avenue, Cowlersley, shortly before 10 p.m. on Saturday. Windows were shattered and plaster was falling from the walls of the room, and an indescribable scene confronted neighbours who went to the assistance of the victims.

Police ambulances rushed to the spot in answer to an urgent summons, and surgeons at the Huddersfield Royal Infirmary fought for hours to save the life of one of the injured women, who was stated yesterday to be "dangerously ill."



HUDDERSFIELD DAILY EXAMINER,

MONDAY, APRIL 8, 1946

SURGEONS FIGHT FOR WOMAN'S LIFE

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Mr. and Mrs. Chapman have three children in addition to the dead boy—Ronnie (14), Tom (6) and Evelyn (4)—and they had a lucky escape, having left the house only a short time before the explosion. The two youngest children were actually playing in the street near by when the explosion occurred. They spent the night with neighbours, and yesterday went to the home of an aunt, Mrs. E. Wootton, of Ball Royd, Longwood.

Cowlersley Bomb Victims Inquest

Adjourned Until May 1

The inquest into the deaths of the three victims of the Cowlersley bomb explosion was opened yesterday afternoon at Huddersfield Town Hall by the Borough Coroner, **Mr. E. W. Norris**.

Only evidence of identification was taken, and the inquest was adjourned until **May 1**.

Mr. Sidney Kaye appeared on behalf of the War Department.

Joseph Wootton, warehouseman, of 19 Bell Royd, Longwood, gave evidence of identification in the case of **Thomas Johnson Chapman** (39), a master window cleaner, of 32 Winget Avenue, Cowlersley, and his twelve-year-old son, **John Chapman**, of the same address.

In answer to the Coroner, Wootton said that Chapman had recently been demobilised from the Army. He had served as a gunner in the Royal Artillery.

Harold Baxter, coal miner, of 6 Ramsden Mill Lane, Linthwaite, identified the body of his wife, **Mary Elizabeth Baxter** (37), of the same address.

He told the Coroner that on Saturday afternoon his wife left home at about **4.50 p.m.** to visit her brother.

[The newspaper clipping ends here.]

Notes

- The Cowlersley explosion occurred on **Saturday, 6 April 1946**, and the original *Huddersfield Daily Examiner* issue carrying this report would have been **Monday, 8 April 1946**, since April 8, 1946, was a Monday.
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FRIDAY, APRIL 12, 1946

FOURTH DEATH IN COWLERSLEY DISASTER

Husband's Tragic News After Triple Funeral

LINTHWAITE VICAR ON "MORBID CURIOSITY"

As family mourners and personal friends were leaving Winget Avenue yesterday afternoon for the funeral at Linthwaite Parish Church of the three victims of the explosion on Saturday night, Mrs. **Beatrice Constance Wilson**, another victim, died in the Huddersfield Royal Infirmary.

Her husband, Mr. Vincent Wilson, attended the funeral in a state verging on collapse and it was only when he returned home that the news of his wife's death was broken to him.

The Cowlersley catastrophe was caused by a trench-mortar bomb picked up by children on the Meltham Moors. They took it to the home of Mr. and Mrs. T. J. Chapman, 32 Winget Avenue, where it exploded, killing Mr. Chapman (39, a window cleaner), John Chapman (12), his son, and Mrs. Mary Elizabeth Baxter (38), his sister, of 6 Ramsden Mill Lane, Linthwaite.

Mrs. Wilson (42), who lived at 24 Winget Avenue, was so severely wounded that both her legs had to be amputated.

The triple funeral service began at three o'clock, but an hour before that time several people had entered the church.

ROADS THROGGED, BUSES PACKED

By 2.45 over a hundred women were in the church; adjacent roads were thronged with people making their way to the funeral and buses from Huddersfield were packed.

In the chancel lay the three coffins covered with palls borrowed from St. Thomas's Church, St. Cuthbert's Church, Birkby, and Copley Parish Church, near Halifax; and immediately behind them on two large stands hung many wreaths, most of them from neighbours and relatives.

The Vicar (the Rev. F. Shaw) watched women with children and girls wearing brightly-coloured scarves on their heads swarming into the church. When the body of the church was almost full, and a group of women were on the point of entering, he said to them, "There is room upstairs if you insist on coming in." Turning to our reporter, the Vicar criticised those who had come to the service out of morbid curiosity.

During the service Mr. Shaw declared,

"By common consent it is not the practice of the Church of England for sermons to be preached at such services as this because it is generally accepted that such services are not, and ought not to be made public occasions. ... I think we could best express our sympathy not, as I say, by making such a service a public occasion but in a practical way."

Mr. Shaw then told the congregation that outside the church after the service they would find members of the Linthwaite Labour Club with bags into which they might wish to place a contribution to the distress fund, thus expressing their sympathy in a practical way.

"BETTER THAN STARES"

This collection, which the Vicar decided to take up when the church was almost full, realised **£8**, and when the money had been counted he said to our reporter,

"£8 is better than stares."

Mr. Rex North was at the organ, and during the service the hymns "**Abide with Me**" and "**The Strife is O'er, the Battle Done**" were sung.

The following members of the Linthwaite Labour Club bore the coffins of Mr. Chapman and his sister across the road and through the crowd to the burial ground:

P. Haigh, W. H. Quarmby, J. Bullas, W. Bohannon, J. Bohannon, A. W. Thompson, R. Milsom, K. Oldham, D. Harvey, A. Thorpe, W. Dawes and L. Norman.

Six boys from Linthwaite Church of England School carried the coffin of young John Chapman. They were Jack Smith, Bryon Batley, Charles Breed, Leslie Ford, Norman Barker and Norman Knight. The first-named boy was with John Chapman when they and other youngsters found the bomb.

The three coffins were lowered into one grave.

THE FAMILY MOURNERS

Family mourners and personal friends present included members of the Chapman, Wilson and Baxter families. Councillor T. Beattie represented the Linthwaite Labour Club, of which he was president.

Among the floral tributes were wreaths from the teachers and scholars at Linthwaite Church of England School, the Milnsbridge Nursery mothers and staff, and the directors of Messrs. Taylor Livesey and Co., Ltd.

The news of his wife's death was broken to Mr. Wilson by his sister, Mrs. J. Batley, of 11 Winget Avenue. She had been informed during the service by another member of the family. Mrs. Hollingworth, of 18 The Lodge, Cowlersley, who had gone to the Infirmary to sit with the dying woman...

INQUEST ON MRS. WILSON

The Borough Coroner (Mr. E. W. Norris) this morning opened the inquest on Mrs. Wilson at the Social Welfare Office.

Vincent Wilson, capstan operator, the husband, who gave evidence of identification, said that on Saturday evening his wife went to visit Mrs. Chapman. He accompanied her to the Royal Infirmary after the explosion. She was severely injured and suffering from shock and died yesterday at the Infirmary.

The inquest was adjourned until May 1.

April 16, 1946

FOURTH BOMB VICTIM

Tributes at Funeral of Mrs. V. Wilson

FEW SIGHTSEERS AT LINTHWAITE

A grief-stricken husband, supported on either side by his two young daughters, headed the large number of private mourners at the funeral of **Mrs. Beatrice Constance Wilson**, of 24 Winget Avenue, Cowlersley, the fourth victim of the Cowlersley bomb disaster, which took place at Linthwaite Parish Church yesterday afternoon.

Mrs. Wilson, who was forty-two years of age, received severe injuries in the explosion of a trench-type bomb at the home of Mr. and Mrs. T. J. Chapman, 32 Winget Avenue, on April 6. The explosion caused the deaths of Mr. Chapman (39), his twelve-year-old son John, and his sister, Mrs. Mary Elizabeth Baxter (38), of Ramsden Mill Lane, Linthwaite.

Mrs. Wilson, who was in a critical condition when admitted to Huddersfield Royal Infirmary, subsequently had both legs amputated, but in spite of the efforts made to save her life she died on Thursday, just as the other three victims were being buried at Linthwaite.

Mr. Wilson, who was among the mourners at the funeral, was at that time unaware of his own bereavement.

In contrast to the previous Thursday's service, when Linthwaite Church and graveyard were besieged with sightseers, comparatively few people other than the private mourners were present yesterday afternoon.

APPROVAL FOR VICAR'S ATTITUDE

This fact was commented upon to an *Examiner* reporter by the Vicar, **the Rev. F. Shaw**, who expressed satisfaction that there was not such a display of curiosity as on the previous occasion.

Mr. Shaw added that his remarks on "morbid curiosity" appeared to have met with general approval, and that a band of men from one of the mills in the district had sent him a message of congratulation on the attitude he had adopted towards sightseers on that earlier occasion.

The Vicar officiated at the funeral service, which included the hymns "**God Moves in a Mysterious Way**" and "**Abide with Me.**" Mr. Rex North was at the organ.

The remains were laid to rest in a grave only a few yards from that in which the other victims were buried, and the coffin was borne to the graveside by six of Mr. Wilson's fellow members of Linthwaite Labour Club:

- Messrs. J. Bohannon
- H. Vickers
- W. Dawes
- E. Thorpe
- T. Haigh
- R. Woodhead

The many wreaths included those from the directors, staff and employees of **Messrs. Shaw, Son and Greenhalgh Ltd.**, engineers, of Huddersfield, where Mr. Wilson was employed; neighbours in Winget Avenue; and Mrs. Chapman, widow of one of the victims, who was herself injured in the explosion.

Family Mourners

The private mourners were:

- Mr. Vincent Wilson (husband)
- Misses Doreen and June Wilson (daughters)
- Mr. and Mrs. T. Hanley (stepfather and mother)
- Mr. and Mrs. H. Walsh (brother-in-law and sister)
- Mr. and Mrs. L. Pearson (brother and sister-in-law)
- Mrs. R. Handley (sister)
- Mr. and Mrs. W. Daly (brother-in-law and sister)
- Master Aubrey Pearson (nephew)
- Mrs. J. Adey (aunt)
- Mr. and Mrs. R. Pearson (uncle and aunt)
- Mrs. H. Hollis (aunt)
- Mr. Peter Adey
- Mr. and Mrs. R. Pearson
- Mrs. A. Hirst (cousin)
- Mrs. Kibble
- Mr. and Mrs. F. Wilson
- Miss G. M. Wilson
- Mr. and Mrs. R. A. Wilson
- Mr. and Mrs. C. Taylor
- Mr. and Mrs. J. Betley
- Mr. and Mrs. E. Hollingworth
- Mrs. W. Mitchell (brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law)
- Mr. and Mrs. J. A. Wilson
- Mrs. Hinchliffe
- Mrs. Blakey (cousins)

Friends present included:

- Mrs. J. Wootton
- Mrs. Gowkridge
- Mrs. Batley
- Mrs. Steele
- Mrs. T. Beattie
- Mrs. Bohannon
- Miss Bowers
- Mrs. Chapman
- Mrs. Eastwood
- Mrs. Townend
- Police Constable J. Smith

Messrs. **F. G. Kemp** and **E. Beaver** represented **Messrs. Shaw, Son and Greenhalgh Ltd.**

The funeral arrangements were carried out by **Messrs. William Hoyle and Son, Jowl, Linthwaite.**

EXPLOSION RELIEF FUND— A sum of **£60** has been raised for the Cowlersley Explosion Relief Fund as a result of an effort held at the Warren House Inn, Milnsbridge. A concert in aid of the fund was held on Tuesday, at which items were given by Mesdames Woodhead and Clark, Messrs. H. Walker, J. Flanagan, W. Holland, F. Woolsey, P. Nelson, Forbes, Hargraves, H. Hanson, J. Brodie, S. Armitage, Junr., and Bell-house. The accompanists were Messrs. Fred Mortimer and Leonard Brook. The artists were thanked by Mr. Wright Wood (secretary of the effort)

From Huddersfield Examiner 25/05/1946

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Death Notices

BAXTER—On April 6, as the result of an accident, Mary Elizabeth, the dearly beloved wife of Harold Baxter, of 6, Ramsden Mill Lane, Linthwaite, aged 37 years. Interment at Christ Church, Linthwaite, on Thursday, at 3 p.m. Friends please accept this (the only) intimation. Flowers to be sent to Linthwaite Parish Church. 9

CHAPMAN—On April 6, as the result of an accident, Thomas Johnson, the dearly beloved husband of Lillias Elizabeth Chapman, of 32, Winget Avenue, Cowlersley, aged 39 years. Interment at Christ Church, Linthwaite, on Thursday, at 3 p.m. Friends please accept this (the only) intimation. Flowers to be sent to Linthwaite Parish Church. 9

CHAPMAN—On April 6, as the result of an accident, John, the dearly beloved son of Lillias Elizabeth and the late Thomas Johnson Chapman, aged 12 years. Funeral arrangements as above. 9

Historical notes

- The Cowlersley explosion occurred on **Saturday, 6 April 1946**, and the original *Huddersfield Daily Examiner* issue carrying this report would have been **Monday, 8 April 1946**, since April 8, 1946, was a Monday.

Taken together with the previous articles you've shared, this completes a poignant sequence of reporting:

1. **8 April 1946** – Opening of the inquest into the three fatalities.
2. **11 April 1946** – Triple funeral for Thomas Chapman, John Chapman, and Mary Elizabeth Baxter.
3. **12 April 1946** – Death of Beatrice Constance Wilson while her husband's was still at the funeral service for the other victims and Rev. Shaw's remarks about "morbid curiosity."
4. **16 April 1946** – Mrs. Wilson's funeral and reports that the public had largely respected the Vicar's appeal by staying away.

Thanks to the Maureen Wheeler of the Huddersfield and District Family History Group for unearthing these clippings, which together form an unusually complete contemporary record of the Cowlersley tragedy.



A horrifying tale but true

Many a Voice of the Valley reader will have fond memories of **Jack Smith**, or John Smith as he was christened. He was a Second Tenor for years and he always had a good story.

At one time he told me a tale, suggesting he was very lucky to have joined the Choir at all.

It all goes back to when he was 13 or so, just after the war. This was in 1946. He told me this story and it has taken me a long time to verify it. Jack had quite an imagination so I wondered for a while if it was apocryphal.



It turns out to be 100% true and it's a shocking story about a devastating explosion.

Jack and his pals find a bomb!

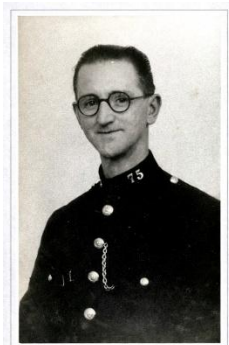
It seems that Jack and his pals, when they were about 13 or 14, heard that during the War a German aircraft had crashed on the moors somewhere near Deer Hill above Meltham and they set out to find it. They didn't manage to find any wrecked plane but they did come across some fins sticking out of the ground on the moors above Meltham and they dug away at it and unearthed what looked like a bomb. Well, they set it up on a dry-stone stone wall and threw rocks at it - all good fun.



Later there was a bit of an argument as to who was to get to keep this trophy. Jack told me that he only lost that argument because he suddenly remembered he had to get back to do his paper round back in Cowlersley. It was his mate, John Chapman, who got to keep it and he took it home on the bus.

Seemingly, whilst Jack was delivering his newspapers, there was an enormous explosion near his home on Winget Avenue.

(The street is still there but not the original houses. Al has clarified the picture of the house in the local paper - presumably taken before the explosion.



Anyway, Jack went on, it was his father, the local bobby who lived very nearby who was the first to arrive. He came across a scene of utter destruction. The house was pretty well destroyed.

It was clear that the bomb, found on Meltham Moor and taken home by one of Jack's pals, John Chapman, had gone off.

The lad's father, who was a veteran from the D-Day landings, apparently felt he had the skills to defuse it. Well, it turned out he was wrong.

Jack's pal, was instantly killed, so were his father and his aunt. His mother, who wandered hurt and bleeding into the street calling for help, survived.

A neighbour, Mrs. Beatrice Wilson, who had gone round to see Mrs Chapman so that they could go to 'the pictures' together, was also very badly injured and taken off to hospital. They amputated her legs in an attempt to save her but a few days after the event, she became the fourth victim when, the injuries that she'd sustained proved to be terminal. It seems she died while her husband was at the triple funeral in Linthwaite Church.



Mr. Chapman



John Chapman



Jack Smith (seen as a boy in his Army Cadet Uniform, above) carried the coffin of his pal, John Chapman.

He told me he often thought that he would never have managed to join the Choir if he'd been the one to win that argument and take the bomb home with him instead.

The shocking story comes to light

At the time, Jack told me this tale, your Editor, tried to research it, but with a name as common as John Smith to look up, you don't get very far, even in these days of internet searches.

However I had the good fortune recently to meet with a leading light of the Meltham-based **Huddersfield and District Family History Society**, **Maureen Wheeler**. (<https://hdfhs.org.uk/>)



I began to relate it to her and she exclaimed, 'I know this story.' Subsequently she has kindly sent VotV copies of the contemporary reports in the Huddersfield Examiner. It seems that the only thing that I misunderstood from Jack's initial telling of the tale was that the event took place, not in Golcar, where I thought it had happened, but in nearby Cowlersley, just across on the other side of our Colne Valley.

Thanks, too, to Andrew Smith for the photographs of his Dad and Grandfather



Why do I mention this story now?

Well we were immensely grateful for Jack's survival.

He was in the second tenors for 47 years and his older brother, **Melvin**, was a stalwart of the Choir for many years, too - indeed our one-time Librarian.





It's also because Melvin had been married to **Doris Smith**. She was - because of Melvin's enthusiasm presumably - also a keen supporter of the Choir.

Later, the childless widow of Melvin, she continued to have close links with CVMVC via a very good and close relationship with Jack Smith, her brother-in-law, right until his death a year or so ago.



It turns out that when Doris, herself, passed away quite recently, she remembered us in her will.

Much to our surprise, that bequest, which has only just arrived, turns out to be fairly substantial. It will be very useful in boosting Choir savings and hence in securing our financial future for the coming decades.

Thank you, Doris.

Your Editor has been unable to find a photo of Doris Smith. (If you have one, do please send it in.)

But we do have this fascinating tale.

And a record of the incident that so nearly put paid to Jack's long career as a singer.



Readers who may want to see the original reports and transcripts can see it all in the PDF edition of VotV, available on our website on this link.

<https://colnevalleymvc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/07/Bomb-story-full-reports.pdf>