

KILLED BY A TREE.MAN'S SHOCKING DEATH
NEAR EL ARISH.

MAGISTERIAL INQUIRY.

Innisfail, Nov. 12.

The "Post" recently recorded the death of a man in the El Arish district, under tragic circumstances, whilst efforts were being made to stay the progress of a fire. A big tree crashed down on deceased, and killed him instantly. A magisterial inquiry was conducted yesterday at Innisfail, before Mr. A. H. O'Kelly, P.M., into the circumstances surrounding the tragedy, and the witnesses were examined by Detective O'Driscoll. Deceased's name was George Gooliaeff.

Evidence was given by Violet Maud Gooliaeff, who stated that she was the wife of the deceased. On the morning of 18th ult., about 7.30 p.m., her husband left home to go to work for Mr. C. Holm, an adjoining cane farmer. He was then in his usual good health and spirits. Proceeding, witness said, this was the last time I saw him alive. Later the same day Ganger Jones came and told me that my husband was hurt. I immediately went up with him, and I saw some of the men washing blood off my husband's face. He was then dead. I saw that he had been bleeding from the mouth, nose and ears. I was told by his mates that a tree had fallen and struck him. My husband was engaged nearly all that morning trying to put out a fire that had started about 9 a.m., and which had burnt nearly the whole of a crop of cane. I know that my husband was always on friendly terms with the adjoining cane farmers, and they were always in the habit of giving each other a hand with the harvesting of the cane. My husband was 33 years of age, a native of Russia, and had been in Australia about 15 years. He was three years at the war, and about four years at El Arish soldier settlement, where he had a selection, with a cottage erected on it. My husband made no will. I have two children, aged four and six years. I am quite satisfied that my husband was killed accidentally, and that there was no neglect or blame on the part of any person.

"WOULD HAVE KILLED FIVE."

Albert Edward Bracewell deposed that he was a cane farmer, and resided at the El Arish soldier settlement. He had known deceased, George Gooliaeff, for the past four years at that place. Witness had the adjoining farm. Continuing, witness said: "On 18th ult., we commenced work about 7 or 8 a.m. I was working with deceased and several other farmers. We had

and several other farmers. We had burnt off a small paddock of cane the previous night, and on the following morning, about 9 o'clock, we saw that a fire had started in the cane. We tried to cut a break, but as the wind was blowing very strongly at the time, we were unable to do any good, so we moved ahead of the fire, and cut a break in my cane, with a view of preventing the fire from spreading into my paddock. By this time the fire was close to the boundary between Mr. Holm's cane and mine. We were watching the fire, and I saw some sparks had crossed the break in my cane. I also saw deceased running to try and put this fire out. He had almost got to where the fire was when I heard a crash, and I then saw a big white beechwood snap off about 18ft. from the ground, and fall on deceased as he was running to the fire. I was also running to him, and was only about ten yards distant at the time of

the fall. There were also other men running to the same place from different angles, but none of them was struck. The tree was on Mr. Holm's property, and about 50 chains from my boundary. The fire started almost opposite to where the tree was standing, and it came down as soon as deceased got close to the fire. If the tree had come a few yards further, it would have killed about five of us, as we were all running to the place where it fell. I called to the other men to give me a hand to carry deceased out. He never spoke, and death would appear to have been instantaneous. Deceased was bleeding from the mouth, nose and ears. I assisted to carry him up to the Post Office, where we left the body. Deceased was employed by Mr. G. Holm at the time of his death. His end was caused by the tree falling on him, and there was no blame whatever on the part of anyone."

Carl Holm stated that he was a cane farmer, and resided at El Arish soldier settlement. He had known deceased there for the past four years. He was on the farm adjoining that of witness. On the 18th ult., deceased commenced work with witness giving him a hand to harvest some cane that was lying down. He continued up to the morning of the accident, when he met his death by a tree falling on him. Continuing, witness said: "We came to work that morning about 7.30 or 8 a.m. We had burnt a small paddock of cane on the previous night, and about 8 a.m. that morning we saw a fire sprung up from an old log that had been smouldering all night in the paddock that had been burned. We tried to cut a break in my cane, but on account of the high wind blow the fire jumped the break and got away on us. After strenuously fight-

the fire jumped the break and got away on us. After strenuously fighting the fire, we left the paddock and went into Mr. Trestrail's cane, and cut a break there, in the hope of saving his cane. Deceased was with me at this time, and after we had cut the break, we were standing in various positions watching the fire burning on my boundary, and adjoining Mr. Trestrail's cane. After a few minutes, we saw sparks cross the break we had cut in Trestrail's cane. As I was standing about 20 yards from deceased, I did not see him running, but the first thing that I heard was a crash, and I saw the tree fall. I then heard Mr. Bracewell call out to come quickly. I ran up, and saw deceased lying under the tree that had fallen. He was bleeding from the mouth, nose and ears, and death appeared to have been instantaneous. So far as I could see the tree struck him from behind while he was running to the fire, which was almost opposite to where the dead tree was standing. The tree was not burning at the time, but the fire in the cane was coming up fast, and I think it was the draught from the fire which caused the tree to break off about 18ft. from the ground. It had a heavy top on it. Deceased will come under the workers' compensation policy. I had all my men covered on the date in question. There was no neglect or blame on the part of anybody in regard to this accident, and everything possible was done for deceased when the accident occurred.

Constable T. Murray, stationed at Silkwood, said: I received a phone message from Mr. McLellan, postmaster at El Arish, to the effect that a cane farmer named George Gooliaeff was accidentally killed by a tree falling on him in the paddock. I then telephoned to Sergeant Tuohy at Innistail, and acting under instructions I left for the place in question, where I arrived about 3.20 p.m. I called at

the post office, and saw the dead body of deceased. In the presence of McLellan, I examined the body, and saw that deceased had been bleeding from the nose, mouth and ears. The body was clothed in trousers and singlet, the boots having been removed. I then searched the body, but found nothing in the pockets. I then conveyed the body to the hospital at Innistail, made careful inquiries in connection with the death of deceased, and I have failed to find any suspicious circumstances whatever in connection with his demise, which was caused by a dead tree falling on him, while he was engaged in extinguishing a cane fire that was in his paddock at the time the tree fell on him. It was purely accidental, and there was no neglect or any person to blame for the accident. A number of men were present at the time the fatality occurred.

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The depositions will be forwarded to the Department of Justice in the usual way.