

Five boys died on an 80mph shopping jaunt

A shopping expedition by five 17-year-old schoolboys ended in tragedy when they were killed as their car—estimated to be travelling at about 80 m.p.h.—was smashed beyond recognition in a collision with a lorry, an inquest jury was told yesterday.

The students, all pupils at Cowbridge Grammar School, had decided to use a free period to drive into Cardiff to buy past examination papers.

As they travelled down Tumble Hill at a "considerable speed" their car skidded into the path of an oncoming lorry and all five died as the vehicle "burst apart" in the impact.

The students, all from the lower sixth form, were William Bruce McColville, of Flower Mill Farm, West Aberthaw; Philip Hewitt Hambleton, of Bowman's Way, Cowbridge; Anthony Clive Norman, of Birchgrove, Llanharry; David William Jordan, of Willow Road, Llanharry; and Andrew David Massey Evans, of Derwen Road, Pontyclun.

'Joy riding'

After hearing the evidence of nine witnesses, the jury at the Cowbridge inquest returned a verdict of accidental death.

Cowbridge School headmaster, Professor John Idwal Rees, told of his rule which forbade pupils from using their cars and scooters other than to drive to and from school.

"About 18 months ago I noticed more cars were being brought to school," he said.

"I foresaw the dangers of pupils joy riding during the lunch hour and I announced to the school that the cars were not to be used for joy riding."

'Responsible'

Professor Rees said the students had left during school hours that day without his permission. But providing he knew their parents approved he would probably have allowed their trip that day.

He described the boys as

"responsible, co-operative and pleasant."

Medical evidence showed that all five died from multiple injuries.

A Wiltshire medical practitioner, Dr. Hugh Prentiss, told how he was driving up Tumble Hill ahead of the lorry at the time of the accident.

Tyre smoke

He said, "I saw a maroon car in the centre lane overtaking three cars. As it approached the apex of the bend it began to skid and smoke came from the rear tyres."

"About 10 yards from me the vehicle corrected itself, but one or two seconds after it passed me I heard the impact."

Questioned by the East Glamorgan coroner, Mr. Owen Rees, Dr. Prentiss estimated the car was travelling at about 80 m.p.h.

One of the cars which was overtaken on the hill was driven by Mr. Gordon Harold Evans, of Westfields Crescent, Nottage, Porthcawl.

He said he was driving at between 60 and 65 m.p.h., but the maroon car passed him travelling at a speed considerably more than that.

'Very fast'

The driver of the lorry, Mr. Brian Taylor, of Harriett Street, Cathays, Cardiff, said he was travelling up the hill at about 30 m.p.h. when he saw the car in the centre lane.

"It began to slide, corrected itself, and then slid sideways into me," he said.

"The car was travelling very fast as it overtook the other vehicles."

Summing up, the coroner said, "They were young men on the threshold of life and we can ill afford to lose young lives in this way."