

## Horace Frederick Martin (No.3 Cdo)



### Man buried alive in hole being dug to make a bear pit

**A** 47-years-old Chatham man died in a hole being excavated for a bear pit on a private estate at Bekesbourne, near Canterbury, the East Kent Deputy Coroner (Mr. N. W. S. Mitchison) was told on Wednesday.

Mr. Mitchison recorded a verdict of "Accidental death" on Mr. Horace Frederick Martin, sub-contractor, of 35, East Street, Chatham. Death was due to suffocation, although Mr. Martin also suffered several rib fractures.

After evidence by the widow, Mrs. Mary Martin, Mr. Edgar C. Bennett, demolition and excavating contractor, said they were digging a bear pit at Howletts, Bekesbourne, owned by Mr. John Aspinall.

Only Mr. Martin and the excavator driver were there at the time on Saturday.

Witness said: "It is common practice not to go into an excavation while it is not shored." Mr. Martin was employed to cart away the earth in his lorry and had no business to be in the trench.

Mr. John Boorman, of 68, Fox Street, Gillingham, excavator driver, said he was a friend of

Mr. Martin. They went to clear away a previous fall which happened four weeks ago.

"I went down and used a shovel to smooth off the bottom of the trench to make it flat for the concreting.

#### "SAW HE WAS BURIED"

"I did this to make a good job of it. I didn't think it was hazardous because it was almost solid flint. I went out of the trench and started up my excavating machine to move what I had shovelled out. I heard this thud and saw that Mr. Martin had been buried.

"A piece eight feet long and 18 inches thick had fallen off the vertical bank. I went down into the trench to try and clear his head and I called for help."

Summing up, the coroner said: "I am not entirely happy that it was an accident which ought to have happened.

"It seems to me a thoroughly dangerous practice and one to be deplored that a man should go down in an excavation not shored up, where a fall had recently occurred, and dig about in the bottom of this trench.

"I trust it will never happen again, at least not on this site."

The coroner added: "It was unfortunate that this six-ton excavator should have been started up immediately over where a man was working."