

# Baby Dead, Five Burned In Carrington Fire: Cottage Guttled

A 19-months-old baby girl was burned to death and five other persons were burned about the face, arms and body when fire destroyed a cottage in Gipp-st., Carrington, early this morning.

Heroic efforts were made by the father and a neighbor to force their way into the blazing room where the young child was sleeping, but they were driven back by smoke and flames.

The list of dead and injured is:—

## DEAD

Kerry Hunt, 19 months.

## INJURED

Mrs. Nola Hunt, 33, burns to the face, chest, both arms and hands.

Robert Hunt, her husband, burns to the right arm.

Deidre Hunt, 11, burns to both hands and severe shock.

Robyn Hunt, 6, burns to the face and right hand and severe shock.

Robert Middleby, a neighbor, cuts and burns to right arm and back.

Two other cottages, one occupied by Mr. Milton Merrilees and the other by Mrs. M. Ellerington, were damaged in the blaze.

Mrs. Hunt, Deidre and Robyn were burnt in escaping from the flames in their night attire.

Another child, Tim Hunt (4), was dragged uninjured through his bedroom window by his father.

The father received cuts and burns about the arms as he attempted to force his way back into the blazing home.

Mr. Middleby also received his injuries in a courageous rescue effort.

## Body Recovered

Mrs. Hunt was admitted to hospital, but the injured children, Mr. Hunt and Mr. Middle-

by, were allowed to return home after treatment.

The baby's badly charred body was recovered by firemen hours later, when the flames finally were subdued.

Firemen faced a hopeless task when they reached the blaze about 3 o'clock this morning. The house then was burning fiercely.

The fire was discovered by Mr. Hunt, who was awakened by smoke in his room before 3 a.m. He said he was sleeping in one room with the baby, Kerry, Mrs. Hunt and the two girls were in a front bedroom and the boy, Tim, was sleeping by himself.

Mr. Hunt said he ran to the rear of the house and saw that the fire was blazing fiercely in the lounge room. He attempted to re-enter his own room to rescue the baby, but smoke and flames drove him back.

## Through Window

He then ran to the window of the room in which Tim was sleeping, tore away a gauze wire screen and lifted the bewildered child to safety.

Dashing to the front of the house, he took Robyn and Deidre through the window. They were handed out by their mother, Mrs. Hunt, who was burned as she climbed through the window to safety.

Mr. Hunt by this time had

the window to safety.

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been joined by Mr. Middleby, who lives three houses away. Together they made repeated attempts to force their way back into the blazing weather-board cottage.

They made desperate efforts to smash in the front door and eventually succeeded when Mr. Hunt thrust his elbow through the glass.

## Father Restrained

In the meantime, Mr. Middleby, wrapping his pyjama coat about his head, had forced his way through a window into the blazing cottage, but he moved only a few feet into the room before he was compelled to retreat.

Mr. Hunt also made further efforts to reach the child through the front door and through the window, but was unsuccessful. He was restrained in a final rescue bid by neighbors, who could see that the attempt was hopeless.

The blaze completely destroyed the Hunt home and, fanned by a light northerly wind, heavily damaged Mr. Merrilees's home, which was separated

from the burning cottage by a narrow laneway.

It charred the entire fibro wall of the Merrilees home and burnt through the interior linings of two rooms. The tile roof and rafters supporting it were badly damaged.

Mr. Merrilees's furniture also was blistered and water-damaged. Floor coverings were ruined.

The Ellerington home, on the other side, escaped with a scorched wall and some cracked windows. All three cottages were covered by insurance.

Several residents complained that water supply to fight the fire at the outset was inadequate.

District Officer Rogers, who was in charge of the Carrington and District Brigades which attended the blaze, said it was usual to encounter water difficulties in Carrington. This, he said, was due to small, old mains.

"It would have made no difference," he added. "The place was well alight and we could

was well alight and we could not have saved it. It was gone before we got there."

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# Poor Water Supply At Tragic Fire

(Continued from page 1.)

*The water supply in the early stages of the tragic Carrington fire early this morning was "obviously very poor" said Mr. M. Merrilees. Several hoses were connected from which no water was being delivered.*

"There was a fire in Carrington a few months ago and firemen had to stand and watch it burn because they could not get water to fight it.

"I have heard this morning that some residents intend taking up petitions of protest about the water supply to the suburb."

Mr. Hunt also complained about the water supply.

"It took them about three-quarters of an hour before they could get any water through the hoses and then it was only a trickle," he said.

(When the complaints of low water pressure were referred to the Hunter Water Board today the Distribution Engineer, Mr. F. E. Cooksey, said inquiries had shown that the water pressure was constant and that the quantity of water was up to the capacity of the mains to carry it.)

## Roar Of Flames

Mrs. J. Scully, who lives opposite the houses which were burnt, said she was awakened by the roar of the flames in the early hours of the morning.

"When I went outside the cottage was well alight," she said.

Mr. Merrilees also said he was awakened by the roar of the fire.

"My wife rang the fire brigade while I got our kiddies out of the house and connected a garden hose to play on the flames until the fireman arrived.

"Flames licked the side of my house for two hours," he said.

The injured Hunt children were put to bed in the Middleby home when they returned from hospital.

by none when they returned from hospital.

Tim, the uninjured member of the family, not realising the tragedy, played happily with other children among the knots of spectators who came to look at the scene of the blaze this morning.

After the fire had destroyed his home Hunt's only clothing was a pair of khaki shorts and his wife and children had only their night attire.

He received his holiday pay yesterday and was to have begun his holidays on Monday.