

# Man dies after 'hunting' gun accidentally goes off

A MAN was fatally wounded in what was believed to have been an accidental shooting ahead of a hunting trip yesterday.

The 41-year-old victim died after he received gunshot wounds in an incident at a house in the Ballyphehane area of Cork city.

It is believed that the shooting was a result of the firearm being accidentally discharged.

Gardaí are investigating the incident which occurred shortly after 4.30pm at a house on Plunkett Road on Cork's south side.

Emergency services were alerted and paramedics immediately made their way to the scene. However the man was pronounced dead at the house.

The Irish Daily Mail understands that there were two people in the house and they were looking

By **Darren Hassett**

at a hunting rifle at the time of the incident. It is believed that at some stage the licensed gun inadvertently went off.

The firearm was being prepared ahead of a hunting trip.

Gardaí say they are not looking for anyone in relation to the incident at this time and their investigations are ongoing.

Local councillor Mick Finn said: 'It just seems to have been a terrible accident.'

Locals have said the victim was a 'quiet and nice fella' and say they are shocked by the tragedy.

Gardaí commenced door-to-door inquiries in the area to determine the precise sequence of events. It is understood the other man who was at the scene

of the tragic incident was assisting gardaí with their inquiries.

Assistant State pathologist Dr Margo Bolster earlier carried out a preliminary examination at the scene yesterday.

The victim's remains were removed from the scene last night and a forensic examination was due to take place.

Dr Bolster is due to carry out a postmortem on the man's body at Cork University Hospital today.

Local priest Fr Michael Murphy was at the scene of the shooting yesterday. He said: 'The whole community is in shock. The family would be well-known.'

'Looking at the demeanour of what was happening there, it would look like [an accident].'

He praised the gardaí for their professionalism at the scene.

# Dr Mark Dooley



## MORAL MATTERS

# A child's lesson in care shows shame of our health service

**T**HE bad news is that children can get chickenpox twice. Last week, I noticed a spot on our four-year-old's neck. 'It couldn't be!' exclaimed his mother, but it was.

It is just over a year since he first contracted the virus. 'That's it now,' said Mrs Dooley, 'we're finally finished with the chickenpox.' His two older brothers had previously fallen victim to the illness.

That is why, when there was a recent outbreak in his preschool, we were unperturbed. I won't say we were smug, but we weren't worried that it might hit us again. Like most parents, I believed getting it a second time was impossible.

Slowly, we lifted up his shirt to discover his torso covered in spots. Our hearts sank as we pondered the agony, the daily bread soda baths and the application of countless tubes of camomile lotion. The fact that we had been through it all before did nothing to assuage our dismay.

However, when it comes to chickenpox, Mrs Dooley is something of an expert. She has a natural instinct for how to treat it effectively.

After one or two of her bread soda baths, our little patients usually show signs of recovery.

On this occasion, we had the added difficulty of having to treat tonsillitis. In fact, it was while checking his sore throat that I discovered my son's chickenpox. So, on top of everything else, he was prescribed a heavy dose of antibiotics.

The poor little mite, who turns five on Friday, smiled through his pain. It is bad enough to have to endure the chickenpox once, but twice is a burden no child should have to carry. Add to that a vicious sore throat and you might think he would take to the bed for a month.

My week with him was nothing like that. Once he got his medication, he went quietly off about his business. He never once complained, cried or nagged.

Even during my long hours writing, he simply played outside my study. Guided by his imagination, he moved in and out of character, from toy to toy and from book to book. He was, in short, the best patient possible.

What's more, my little son taught me an extraordinary lesson.

At some stage during the week, he asked for a bite to eat. I dished it up and left the room for a few moments. When I returned, there was, as we say here, a 'holy mess'.

The floor was covered with food. He looked like he had dived into the bowl head first. It was like a war zone.

Before I could say anything, he had obviously noticed my shocked expression. As I frantically grabbed a pile of wipes, he looked at me with his

soft little eyes and gently said: 'Please be nice to me, I'm very sick.'

I stopped and stared at this wonderful child who has wisdom far beyond his years.

'Please be nice to me, I'm very sick.' What a beautiful, heart-rending thing for a small boy to say.

Rarely in my time as a parent have I felt so lost for words, so ashamed that I might have been unkind to someone so vulnerable.

He stood silently in his little dressing gown as I hugged him tightly. 'Of course I'll be nice, you did nothing wrong,' I said while cleaning up the mess. As I did so, I realised I had just learned something vital.

At some stage in our lives, we are all going to be patients. We are all going to have to put our lives in someone else's hands and hope that they will be nice to us. No matter how healthy or strong we are now, we will someday feel as vulnerable as my little son.

It is this vulnerability which essentially unites us all. As we go about our daily lives, we are often indifferent to one another. When, however, we are sick, in hospital or in care, we see each other as we ought to be seen: gentle souls in need of help and love.

The way we treat our sick is, of course, the supreme moral measure. That is why our chronically dysfunctional health service is a shameful blot on our country's conscience.

That people should die simply because they have to wait so long for a diagnosis is a tragedy that cries out to Heaven.

**W**HETHER we like it or not, we will all be patients. We will all be in need of that care and kindness to which all vulnerable people are entitled. And in that moment of our greatest need, we should not have to say: 'Please be nice to me, I'm very sick.'

As I cleaned, he ate the rest of his food, followed by his antibiotic. Then it was off to play again. I got up from the kitchen floor struck by the fact that, yet again, a little child had taught me a life-changing truth.

One small boy, sick with something he did not deserve, spoke for the whole nation when he uttered those poignant words.

We all fear pain, sickness, hospitalisation, and the least we can hope for is that we shall be seen as people and not simply as a number. When we are very sick, we simply long for others to be nice to us.

The chickenpox has gone and I am home alone. My son is back in school and counting the hours to his birthday. Reunited with his friends, he has already forgotten our week together.

Little does he know that I never will.

—mark.dooley@daily@mail.ie—

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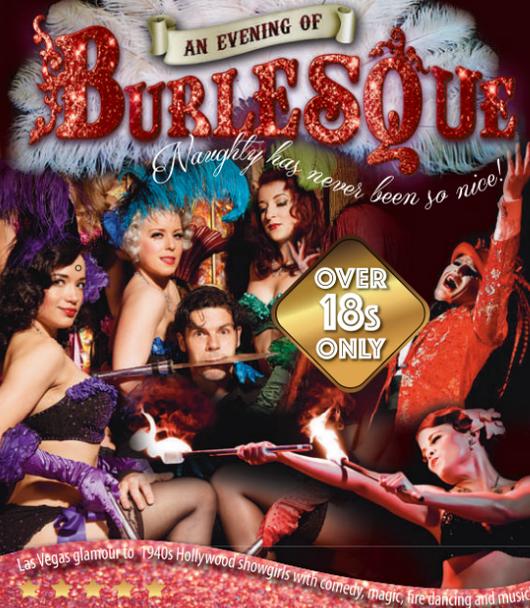
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