



# CORONERS INQUESTS



## *Hankerton*

### **Newly Born Baby**

Mr Hugh Baker (chairman), Col the Hon A F Stanley, Miss E G Luce, and Mrs Morrice were the magistrates at a special court at Malmesbury when, as a sequel to the finding of a child's body at Hankerton, Hilda Hope Major was committed for trial at the Bristol Assize on a charge of concealment of birth.

Frederick Hicks, of Hankerton, a carter, gave evidence of finding the body of a newly born baby on May 30.

Dr R Moore stated the body was that of a full born male child, and the cause of death was inattention at birth.

PS Mortimer also gave evidence of having interviewed the woman, who made a statement as to giving birth to a child in the field and her leaving it there.

The magistrates granted an application for legal aid. She was bound over to appear in £20 and her father as surety in £10.

*Western Daily Press Wednesday 10 June 1936*

Upon the direction of Mr Justice Goddard, the jury at Bristol Assize yesterday found Eleanor Hope Major (17), of Hankerton, near Malmesbury, not guilty of secretly disposing of the dead body of a male child born to her in an endeavour to conceal its birth.

Mr Hughes Clark opened the case for the prosecution, and called evidence to the effect that on May 28, the girl cycled two and a half miles from home to a field, where the child was born. It was subsequently found dead by a farm labourer, George Frederick Hicks, of Hankerton.

The girl Major, in a statement to a police officer, admitted the child was hers, and said, "Afterwards I walked home. I never told my parents about it. I had been helping my mother with the washing all day.

At the conclusion of the case for the prosecution, Mr Justice Goddard said to the jury, "The girl is charged with secretly disposing of the dead body of the child, but there is no evidence that she did that. She left a live child there to die. I hold there is no evidence on the charge against her, and you must return a verdict of not guilty.

*Western Daily Press Thursday 18 June 1936*

Mr A L Forrester (coroner) held an inquest at Malmesbury as to the cause of death of the newly born child found in a field at Hankerton on May 30. A verdict that death was due to inattention at birth was recorded.

*Western Daily Press Friday 10 July 1936*