

TRIED TO RESCUE BABY



Mr. James Beckett, who tried to save the four-months-old baby son of Mrs. Henry Nicholls.

MOTHER'S HEROIC ATTEMPT TO RESCUE CHILD

Fire Tragedy at Braybrook

Heroic attempts at rescue by his mother failed to save Edwin Joseph Nicholls, aged four months, from a fire which destroyed his parents' home in Duke street, Braybrook, on Saturday afternoon.

The infant was burnt to death, and his mother was saved only by the courage of a neighbour, who rushed into the burning house and dragged her out. Both Mrs. Nicholls and her rescuer suffered slight burns to the face.

Anxious for the safety of her son Henry, aged 9 years, who was fishing in the Marybyrnong River, Mrs. Nicholls left the house to find him. She left the baby

in a wooden cot in the kitchen with her other children, William, aged 2 years, and Norma, aged 4 years, playing in the backyard. The river is only a few hundred yards from the three-roomed weather-board house, and Mrs. Nicholls was absent only for between five and ten minutes, but when she returned with the boy

only for between five and ten minutes, but when she returned with the boy smoke and flames were issuing from the kitchen windows. She rushed into the house through the back door and attempted to reach her child, but was driven back by the smoke and flames.

Mrs. Nicholls was making a second attempt to rescue the baby when Mr. James Rockett, of Northumberland road, Braybrook, who was watching cattle a short distance away, ran to the house and dragged her screaming and scrumpling into the open air.

"She fought with great strength to re-enter the blazing house until she collapsed," said Mr. Rockett. "When I found Mrs. Nicholls in the house she was

almost overcome by smoke. Had I not had to rescue Mrs. Nicholls I would probably have been able to rescue the child by cutting through the wooden wall of the kitchen with my mattock."

As the nearest telephone was a considerable distance away some time elapsed before the alarm was given, and when the Footscray and Sunahine fire brigades arrived the house had been burnt almost to the ground. The firemen had to pump water for nearly 1,600ft. from Ballarat road.

The house, which was valued at £100, was owned by Mr. John Middleton, of Woolshot street, Braybrook. It is thought that the fire was caused by the wind blowing flames from the kitchen stove on to the woodwork.