

FATAL ACCIDENT ON THE NEW RAILWAY WORKS.

C.T. October 16, 1886

On Tuesday evening, a man employed upon the new Railway works between Christchurch and Brockenhurst, of the name of George Brown, otherwise known as Ray, met with an accident at Walkford, which terminated fatally. It seems that deceased, who had the appearance of a man between 50 and 60 years of age, alighted from the "workmen's mail," and unfortunately endeavoured to cross the line in front of the engine while it was standing still. However, it had just started, and he was knocked down and run over. The man, who was frightfully injured, was immediately conveyed to Christchurch, but he died soon afterwards from the injuries he had received.

The inquest was held at the board room at the workhouse on Thursday afternoon, before Mr. Druitt, when after the body had been viewed, the following evidence was adduced:—

Lewis Toomer, a navvy living in the huts at Walkford glen, stated that he had known the deceased for a twelvemonth, but did not know that his name was George Brown. He knew him by the name of Ray. His age he should think was about fifty. He and deceased worked on the same section of the new railway. He did not see the accident for he had gone home. Replying to questions from several jurors, witness said it was nothing unusual for men employed on public works to change their names. A great many took new names as they went about from one place to another. He did not think that deceased had any thought of committing suicide. As far as witness knew he was always a steady man, He was single and lodged in the huts.

Thomas Coldwell, an engine-driver, living at West end, Christchurch, deposed that on Tuesday evening he was driving a train of about half-a-dozen trucks, conveying a number of workmen who were on their way home from Sway to Christchurch and other places between on the new direct line. At about quarter to six witness stopped the train at Walkford for the men who lived there to get out. As was their practice most of the men got down on the near side of the train. It was a wet stormy night. Witness saw the deceased, who was riding in the truck next the engine, got off on the near side. Two others were getting off on the same side as deceased. The man who rode behind to conduct the train gave witness the signal to "go on." He looked ahead, saw no one, blew his whistle and started. He had not gone the length of the engine, when he heard some one call out " Oh !" He looked down and saw deceased lying near the front wheel. He did his utmost to stop the engine, but all three wheels had gone over deceased, before it got to a standstill. He jumped off, and helped lift him up. With assistance he tied his legs, and put him into a truck. He did not speak until the doctor saw him, when he only said "don't take my legs off." He got to Christchurch about six o'clock. The accident happened upon the permanent way, but the sleepers were bare. They would, of course, be wet and slippery with the rain. One of the other men waited until the train had passed.

John William Humphreys, of Purewell, foreman of machinery on the new railway, stated that he was with the last witness on the engine of the "workmen's mail," on Tuesday night. At Walkford, about 4½ miles from Christchurch, the "mail" stopped. Witness did not see deceased get out. When all had got out on witness' side, he said, "All right this side," and the last witness waited for those who got out on his side of the train. The whistle sounded for about two seconds, and there was an interval of about three seconds before the train started. They had only gone a few yards, when he heard a cry of " Oh," and he said "What's up?" The driver said "We've gone over a man," and he stopped the engine directly. They tied up his legs, and took him on to Christchurch as soon as possible, where a doctor saw him. It

was a dreadfully rough night, raining and blowing, but it was not dark at the time of the accident. The train left Milton station yard about 5.35. In reply to questions, witness said that there was no doubt deceased like the rest of them wanted to get home as soon as he could. There was no rule to stop passing in front of an engine; and he had not known of a similar accident during his experience of about 25 years. Deceased's head was in the 6ft. way, and he appeared to witness to have fallen down by letting his feet slip either on the sleeper or the rail. There was a strong wind blowing. Witness had known the deceased for about a year, as one of the workmen on the line. He did not know his proper name; he knew him as "Punch." The men generally took fictitious names for fun. Witness said he should like to say that he had never had a more careful man than the last witness as an engine-driver, while he had been foreman. He was very careful, and had shown much ability.

Dr. Hartford stated that at, about 6.30 p.m. he was called to see deceased, and he went at once. He found him in the engine shed at the railway station lying on a truck. Both of his thighs were completely mangled, from the knees to the hip joints. Handkerchiefs had been tightly tied around near the body, so as to stop the bleeding. The man had collapsed and was in a dying state. He had him removed to the workhouse where he died just before eight o'clock. He was conscious when witness first saw him, but soon became unconscious and never rallied. He attributed his death to the shock caused by the injuries he had received.

The Coroner said there was another corroborative witness, but he thought the jury were fully satisfied with the evidence which had already been given. He would trouble them with any comments on the case, as it must be so clear to them that the man died as the result of the injuries he received in the accident. The jury concurring a verdict of "Accidental death" was recorded.

Mr. Mott, the foreman of the jury, asked whether it would not be well to suggest that the company or contractors should enforce a rule to prohibit passing in front of an engine.— The Coroner said it would no doubt be well if they did, but was it likely a rule like that would be observed if one were laid down? It was possible that others would, like deceased, be blind to the danger, and throw away the lives in an attempt to save a few seconds.

The Coroner, in discharging the jury, remarked that the doctor had expressed his pleasure in seeing the excellent manner in which the witnesses had tied up the deceased's legs; the impromptu tourniquets, as he might call them, were very satisfactory, and reflected high credit indeed. When such came before them he felt pleased to name it (here, here).