

FATAL RESULT OF BICYCLE ACCIDENT

An inquest was held at the Library, Parkhurst Barracks, on Tuesday, by the Deputy Coroner (F. A. Joyce, Esq.), on the body of Lance-Corporal H.R. Burgess, D.C.L.I., aged 24, who died at the Military Hospital there as the result of internal injuries received in a bicycle accident at Arreton on Saturday afternoon. —Mr. W. D. Peachey was foreman of the Jury.

C.Q.M.S. Joseph Willmott, of the D.C.L.I., Golden Hill, Freshwater, identified the body as that of Lance-Corp. Horace Richard Burgess, D.C.L.I., His home WW1 at Pick-Hill, Tenterden, Kent, and he was a watch-maker's assistant.

John Henry Bignell, of 7 Town-lane, Newport, stableman and cartman in the employ of Messrs. James Thomas and Co., Ltd., said that on Saturday afternoon he was driving a pair of horses attached to a miller's van from Sandown to Newport. Between 2 and 2.30 he was going up the Arreton-shute, and when near the top, about 11 yards from the corner, with the horses going at a walking pace, he saw deceased coming round the corner. He came straight into the pole of the van. When witness saw him coming he pulled the horses up short and put the brake on. The effect of that would be that the pole would be pulled up and go down again. Deceased's body struck heavily against the pole. His bicycle struck the horse's front leg almost simultaneously. Witness got down, and deceased got up and walked across the road. Witness freed the bicycle from the horses, and went to deceased to ask where he had hurt himself. He said below the stomach, and seemed in great pain. Deceased asked witness to lay him down, and he got the loin-cloth out of the van and did so. He undid his clothes, but could not see any injury. Witness called a boy and asked him to go to the White Lion and tell someone to come. He asked the man who came what to do, and he told him to take him to the first doctor he came to. Witness took him to Dr. Thompson, who advised his removal to Parkhurst, where witness took him. The pole was iron clamped, it had a piece of iron at the end of it. His van was on the left-hand side of the road, close to the gutter, when the accident happened, two or three feet from the left-hand side. The van was 6ft. wide, all but 2in. Deceased had about 12ft, in which to pass. When witness first saw deceased he was about 2ft, from the hedge on his right-hand side. He did not ring his bell. He was on his wrong side. He was 11 or 12 yards from the corner when witness first saw him. He seemed travelling fast. The road was wide there, and there was no other vehicle about. Deceased must have assumed that the road was all right.

By the Foreman: Deceased was coming down hill. He had sufficient room to pass.

The Coroner said the deceased appeared to have taken the corner as if there was no obstacle, but found one there. If the witness's statement were correct there was no reason for anything like blame attaching to him.

George Cross, a lad belonging to the Boys' home, Arreton, said that on Saturday he was at Arreton-cross sitting on a gate at the top of the hill, giving a view of the road down to Arreton. He saw the horses and van, driven by the last witness, coming up the shute. They were close to the hedge on the left side. Later on the boy gave a rather contradictory account

of the position of the van. and the Coroner expressed the opinion that his evidence did not help the Jury.

Gr. John Edward Urry, R.G.A., landlord of the White Lion, Arreton, said he went to the scene of the accident because the boy came for him. They had had heavy rain, and he could trace the track of the van up the hill quite plainly. He found the track 10 or 18 yards from the corner, on the left-hand side of the road. The wheel was about 8ft. from the gutter. You could see where the bicycle came round the corner. Practically speaking, the van followed the same track all up the road. Another van could have passed it. The width of the road there was about 20ft.

Insp. Sibbock said the road was 21ft. wide where the accident occurred. The Coroner said he thought Gunner Urry's evidence very helpful. It had cleared up the position, as far as the driver of the van was concerned. As far as he could judge, the deceased took the risk on himself.

Gunner Urry: He was on the right side of the road.

The Coroner: He must have taken the corner flying.

Capt. Richard William Ely Rae, R.A.M.C., stationed at Parkhurst, said he saw deceased on his arrival there. He was suffering from shock. There was only a slight abrasion of the skin on the lower part of the abdomen; you could hardly call it an abrasion. He had had a blow across the abdomen. He said he was on a bicycle and ran into the van. He died the next evening. He was in great pain until he became unconscious.

The Coroner said he thought the evidence, which was quite clear, exonerated the driver of the van from any blame. It was obvious, as he was going up a rather steep ascent, that he was not likely to have gone up it at a very fast rate. The deceased took the corner in a way he should not have done. He thought the verdict of the Jury would be to the effect that he died from injuries sustained through an accidental collision with the van, and that the driver was entirely free from any blame whatever.

The Jury returned a Verdict to this effect.

Isle of Wight County Press 25 Aug 1917

Keywords: Horace Richard BURGESS, Joyce, Peachey, Willmott, Bignell, Cross, Urry, Sibbock, Rae, Golden Hill. Freshwater, Parkhurst Barracks, Tenterden, Kent, White Lion, Arreton

Word count: 991

Date of death: 19 Aug 1917

Verdict: Accidental death

Cause of death: Injuries sustained through an accidental collision

Transcription produced for the Isle of Wight Family History Society (www.isle-of-wight-fhs.co.uk)

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On: 16/01/2020