

Inquest report from the Newark Advertiser Wednesday,
July 12th 1922

KILLED ON THE LINE

Muskham Platelayer's Sad Death

No One to Blame

The sad story of how a Muskham foreman platelayer, Thomas Bellamy, was knocked down and killed by a locomotive near to his home, to which he was proceeding for breakfast, on Thursday morning was unfolded to a jury presided over by the Coroner, Mr. F. B. Foottit, who held an inquest at the house of the deceased, on Friday night. Mr. H. B. Friend was the foreman.

Mr. W. H. Franks represented the N.U.R., and others watching the inquest were

Mr. C. H. Davies, locomotive inspector of Doncaster, and Mr. D. Curnock, Police Department of the G.N.R., Grantham.

After instructing the jury upon the various points and probabilities they had to consider the Coroner proceeded to call the evidence.

Mrs. Eliza Ellen Bellamy, widow of deceased, gave testimony of identification, adding that her late husband was a foreman platelayer on the Great Northern Railway. He was 59 years of age and had worked for the company for 25 years. He left home on Thursday morning at 6.50 a.m. He was quite well then, but later she was informed of the accident. His hearing and eyesight were quite good, as was his general health.

George Kirk, a Bathley platelayer, employed by the G.N.R. Co., said he knew Bellamy. Witness and Henry Frecknall were working on the line at North Muskham, at 9.30 a.m. They were mowing grass on the line side. It was a rather blustery day with intermittent showers. Deceased came to them, speaking about the weather and saying he was going for his breakfast. Before deceased left them they had all taken shelter from the rain in a hut. After a short time Bellamy left them. They heard the whistle of an engine approaching on the down line about a quarter of a mile away. When they heard it whistle they knew that something unusual had occurred. Witness saw the driver wave his hand and he and Frecknall ran towards the engine, knowing something had happened. When they reached the engine Bellamy was laid on the side of the bank dead. The

engine was standing still and he said to the driver, "Whatever have you done: have you killed our ganger?" The driver said "Yes." Witness then said "Didn't you see him, couldn't you have stopped?" The driver said "No he walked in front of the engine." Kirk went to Bellamy and thought his neck and arm were broken. There was room for Bellamy to have walked away from the line out of the reach of a train. If he had been caught by an engine he must have been walking in danger.

By a juror: When the driver blew his whistle the engine was coming towards them.

By Mr. Franks: The wind, S. W., was travelling north. He never saw the engine coming forward. The only time he saw it moving was when the driver had reversed his gear and was travelling backwards. At that distance he could not see whether the brakes had been quickly applied.

Harry Frecknall, of North Muskham, also a platelayer, who was mowing grass with Kirk on Thursday about 9.15 a.m. said they had had to stop for rain, and Kirk, Bellamy and himself had been in a hut until the rain stopped, and then Kirk and he went on mowing. Bellamy walking on the outside of the down road, towards his home. The next thing he heard was the whistle of the engine, and upon looking they saw the engine going backwards on the down line about a quarter-of-a-mile away. He started to run towards the engine, and upon reaching it they saw the driver and fireman get down from the engine and Bellamy lay on his left side on the bank. He appeared to be dead. Kirk said "Whatever have you done, have you knocked our ganger down and killed him". The driver replied "I have." as well as he could, as he was cut up. Kirk told the driver to go to Carlton to get the stationmaster to wire to Retford. The driver also said "He was in front of the engine." There was room for anyone to walk between the bank and the line on either side out of the reach of a train.

By a juror: There was no other train passing at the time.

ENGINE DRIVER'S VERSION

Frederick Sanderson, elected to give evidence. He lived at 41, Carview Avenue, Balby, Doncaster, and was a driver in the employ of the G.N.R. He had been driving for 22 years, and on Thursday last he was driving an engine from Colwick to Doncaster, light. When he reached North Muskham there was a strong wind, but the weather was fair and clear. He was travelling about 30 miles per hour. There was a fireman with him and both of them were keeping a look-out. Witness was watching the signals. After leaving the gatehouse between North Muskham and Cromwell he saw Cromwell's distant signal off. That showed the line was clear. He saw two men working at a distance on the metals. When he saw the signal was off he looked inside the weather board to see the

water gauges were all right, and upon looking out again he saw Bellamy walking towards him about 30 yards away. He was on his set of metals. Witness opened the whistle and applied the brake. He shut his regulator and stepped over to his mate's side to see if the man had got clear. He was just in time to see the man turn over on to the bank. His engine rolled a matter of 60 yards before he got her under control. He reversed and brought her back to where the man lay. He and his mate got off the engine, examined Bellamy and found him dead. He called the attention of the two platelayer, and they came. He told them Bellamy was dead and one of them advised him to go to Carlton and report to the station master. This he did, but before that he had not above three words conversation with the platelayer so far as he could remember. He did not remember one of the platelayers saying "Have you killed our ganger". The witness had said "Who is this man?" The platelayer said "Have you killed him" Witness replied "Yes." Both he and the platelayer were very upset. After reporting the case at Carlton, he proceeded to Doncaster.

By a juror: The man might have been holding his head down owing to the wind, but he could not see very well owing to the distance. He could not say whether the man was walking just outside or inside the metals, but he was nearer the left-hand side of the engine than inside. That was the outside.

By Mr. Franks: He had been in the service of the company for 34 years. He had had 17 years' experience of the road on which the accident occurred. This was the first casualty with which he had been connected. When he saw Bellamy first he hurried to apply his brakes. He did not bother to see whether Bellamy was inside or outside of the metals. He pulled up within three engine lengths.

Arthur Barringer, 59, Elsworth Street, Doncaster, who was the fireman on the engine concerned, said that on Thursday morning there was a very strong wind blowing from the man to the engine. Witness did not see the man before he was knocked down. As soon as the driver opened the whistle he jumped up and saw the left-hand front buffer strike deceased. Then they stopped and went back. He saw the man lying on the bank and found him dead. One platelayer said "Oh dear, oh dear, what have you done: have you killed our ganger." Witness replied "Yes." He could not remember whether the driver said anything as to where deceased was walking prior to the accident.

By a juror: Witness was sitting-down, but could see 30 or 40 yards away through the weather glass. They were provided with seats, which, on this type of engine were fixed. He could not see directly in front of the engine from the seat. He might have been doing something, bending down perhaps, before deceased got into the 40 yards. If a driver had got a

fireman he could not trust he was responsible for the engine. When not otherwise engaged it was a fireman's duty to share the look-out.

By Mr. Franks: Any discrepancy in the evidence regarding the conversation would be due to their being upset at the time and not remembering everything. From Muskham they were on a big curve and perhaps the fore part of the engine prevented the driver from seeing the man approaching. He would have seen him on the straight. The driver did everything in his power to pull the engine up.

The jury returned a verdict of "Accidental death." They also exonerated the driver and fireman, and expressed deep sympathy with the widow and family.

Mr. Franks, on behalf of the driver and fireman, associated himself with the latter remarks, with which the Coroner also concurred.

Submitted to the Capturing Memories website by Carolyn Suter

June 2019