Benjamin Larkham

Based on a report in the County Press and South of England Reporter Sat October 26th 1895, this tells how Benjamin Larkham, a 61 year old labourer at West Medina Cement Mills, was killed as the result of doing a good deed.

After working at the Mills for nearly 40 years, one of Benjamin's jobs was to carry buckets of water to the steam crane to keep it topped up.Early in the afternoon of Friday the 18th of October 1895, the barge Gazelle was tied up at the wharf, unloading coke for cement production, and witnesses at the inquest provided the following information.

As Benjamin passed the barge, one of the Gazelle crew asked for some water, and Benjamin handed over both full buckets, which strictly speaking was against the rules, as the crew were meant to get their own water. He then waited to get the empty buckets back, and the crane passed him safely several times.

Without anyone noticing, Benjamin must have shifted 2 or 3 feet nearer to the crane, because the next time it moved it hit him, dragging him partly over a low wall. He shouted, and the crane stopped, but the damage had been done. He was released, and complaining of pains in the stomach, he was taken to the mess-room. A doctor was called, and after some initial treatment thought it best to take him home by ambulance.

He sadly died from shock and internal injuries soon after getting home.
Witnesses at the inquest had said that if Benjamin had stayed where he originally waited he would not have been hit. It was agreed that a warning notice would not have prevented the accident, as he had been working there for many years and knew the situation.
The Coroner, in his summing up, said that the incident was a pure accident, and that no-one was to blame. The jury entirely agreed.