

Charles Baker, Master of the dredging smack Mary

Based on a report in the Southern Echo Saturday April 18th 1896, after the inquest into the death of Charles Baker was held at the cement Mills.

The dredging smack Mary delivered a cargo of stone to the Mills on Wednesday April 15th 1896. After unloading, Charles Baker, the 60 year old master, and George Shutler, the mate, decided to scrub the vessel. This involved supporting the ship on a wooden leg.

After 2 hours of work the leg suddenly, for no apparent reason, suddenly sank in the ground.

Charles was caught between the quay and the boat. It took 20 minutes for workers at the Mill to get him out, by which time he was dead.

Charles had been going to the Mill for the past 40 years, and doing a similar job on the boat' so he was well experienced. George Shutler, who only just escaped himself, said it was no-one's fault; it was a pure accident.

The Coroner, in summing up, said it was clear that there was no one to blame for the matter, but if in the future better means could be taken for shoring up a vessel, it ought to be done.

Let's hope it was. The jury returned a verdict of "Accidental death".