

Railway Accidents

Walter Hiscock, a labourer aged 27, was killed on Friday September 27th 1895 while working at the Shide Chalk Pit when he fell between loaded trucks and was crushed. The inquest was held the following day at the Barley Mow, Shide, by Edward F. Blake. Mr. J. C. Mould attended on behalf of Messrs. Francis, Son and Co. whose manager, Mr. Baker, was also present. Mr. Walter Wells of Newport was foreman of the jury and evidence was given by Dr. Waterworth, Charles Wigley (fellow labourer), John Stanbry (working foreman), and by Mr. Williams and Mr. F. S. Coker (jurors as well as fellow labourers).

Charles Wigley said that he had been working at the chalk pit for about three months. Chalk was conveyed in railway trucks from the pit through a cutting to the railway siding at Shide. The accident occurred in a short section of the cutting where the passage was very narrow. He, the deceased and other men had been working all day (on piece-work). They stopped for supper and went back to work about 8pm – the accident happened about half an hour later when he and the deceased were taking two trucks coupled together down to the siding. There were two lights in the pit and it was a “beautiful moonlight night”. The deceased stood on the front buffer of the front truck and he stood on the buffer of the rear truck. He heard the deceased say “oh dear” and saw him between the trucks and the side of the passage but did not see him fall. He immediately applied his brake and that on the front truck then ran back to where the other men had reached the deceased. Wigley then went to fetch brandy but it was too late as Walter Hiscock was dead. The doctor stated that his injuries were internal – he had been crushed.

The inquest discussed what might have caused the deceased to fall. Mr. Stanbry, Mr. Williams and Mr. Croker agreed with Mr. Wigley that there was no reason why the deceased should have applied the brake while going through the passage as the incline was only about 1 in 200 and it was never usually necessary to use the brakes until some distance after the passage. Mr. Wigley didn't think that a jerk from the truck touching the bank would have caused the deceased to fall as vibration from the rough road was greater. Mr. Stanbry did not think the deceased was weary through working late – he himself had often taken two trucks through the passage on his own, and had never complained that the work was dangerous. The Coroner suggested that if the passage had not been so narrow the deceased might have fallen clear of the trucks and recommended that the owners of the pit should slope off the perpendicular sides of the tunnel to a considerable extent. The foreman of the jury agreed and suggested that the owners should also be asked to provide extra light. Mr. Baker said that the opinion of engineers was that it was better for the chalk to be perpendicular but that protection would be provided there. The jury returned a verdict of “accidental death” and agreed that the suggestions should be made to the owners. Mr. Mould said everything the Coroner suggested was being done but the Coroner seemed sceptical and warned him that the result might be different if another accident were to occur. [IWCP 29 Sep 1895] [Isle of Wight Observer – Ryde 5 Oct 1895]



In **July 1907** an alarming accident occurred at the level crossing of the Newport and Cowes Railway at Dodnor, near Newport, resulting in the smashing of a motorcar, the occupants of which had a miraculous escape. It appears that the car was proceeding from Newport to the wharf of the Cement Works with the intention of boarding the launch of a yacht. The car proceeded down the lane at about five miles an hour to the private level crossing, the gates of which were open, and was passing over the crossing when the train from Newport, which had approached unobserved by the driver, struck the back part of the car, throwing it on the side of the permanent way and smashing it. One of the occupants was removed from the car suffering from bruises and concussion. Fortunately, the other occupant was not seriously hurt, and the driver escaped injury. The train was slowing up to stop at the Cement Mills, or the consequences would have been more serious.



Len McDine is pictured as a schoolboy onlooker at the result of the **1924** railway crash - Len lived in the nearby Vectis cottages and was returning home (photo by kind permission of John McDine). Details of this incident are in Alan Dinnis's book.



*The 1924 railway accident on the viaduct over the mill pond with
Len McDine in his school uniform.*



As reported in the Portsmouth Evening News **16 September 1925**, an island driver was taken to hospital after a cart laden with cement coming over the level crossing at the West Medina Cement Mills was hit by the train from Cowes. The driver of the cart was severely shaken and bruised, and was removed to the hospital, possibly with fractured ribs. The horse escaped.

The train was not the responsibility of the cement works but there is a possibility it could be assumed that the works on the other side of the line should have provided more care for people traversing to or from the location.