

## William Albert Hiscock

**William Albert Hiscock**, aged 38, a labourer at the West Medina Cement Mills, was killed at work on Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> December 1912 by a blow from a grab attached to a crane being used in unloading a ship. The inquest was held the following day by Deputy Coroner Francis A. Joyce at the Cement Mills with Mr. T. C. Hayward (HM Inspector of Factories), Police Inspector Sibbick, P.C. Hutchin and Mr. J. L. Warsap (representing the Associated Portland Cement Co.). Mr. T. Warne was foreman of the jury and evidence was given by Dr. Hutton Castle, William Woodmore of 2 Catherine Terrace, Hunnyhill (a fellow employee of the deceased), Edward John Bull of 1, Victoria Road, Newport (the crane driver), and James Dawkins of Wickham Road, Fareham (mate of the barge *Rochester*). The deceased was identified by his father-in-law, Edward Fry of 132 Pyle Street, Newport.

William Woodmore said that the accident happened at about 3am when he, the crane driver and the deceased had all been working on the barge *Rochester* discharging coal since 5pm the previous evening without a break except for meals. He and the deceased were moving oil barrels in the hold to get at the remaining coal when the grab of the crane suddenly came down and something struck him across the chest. When he recovered he saw the deceased under the grab and tried to lift it. He called to the mate and they sent for assistance. There was no warning and the deceased made no sound – he died immediately. Both Woodmore and the Inspector confirmed that there was plenty of light in the hold and on the quay. Mr. J. J. Simmons, a juror, asked whether if there had been a stand-by he would have been able to warn the men in the hold. Mr. Warne said he had worked at other ports where there was a stand-by but Mr. Warsap stated that although they always had a stand-by for larger vessels, with barges which were so shallow and had large hatchways the crane driver could see into the hold. The Coroner said that the footbrake was suddenly touched and the fall of the grab was instantaneous so that no warning could have prevented the accident.

The crane driver said that he had worked for the Associated Portland Cement Co. on and off for 11 years and this was the first accident he had experienced. He worked the crane with a foot-brake and had a lifting pinion to steady the lowering of the grab. He got off the crane to put a piece of wood under the wheel – normally when he left the crane he would push the pinion in but on this occasion he forgot. When he got back on the crane he kicked a nut on the foot-plate which threw his foot onto the corner of the brake which immediately released the grab. He thought if the pinion had been in he should have been able to clap his foot on the brake and avoid the accident. He didn't know when the locking gear of the crane had last been overhauled and did not think it was tested at any time. Mr. Warsap said he received a written report on the crane every week, signed by the driver and the foreman fitter. Mr. Ash, another juror, suggested that if there had been some protection around the foot-brake the accident might not have happened – the Inspector said this had been his idea the previous night and it would be carried out.

The Coroner ruled that, while it was an unfortunate mistake on the part of the crane driver to forget to insert the pinion, he was informed by the Factory Inspector that Board of Trade regulations did not require the pinion to be put in, so the driver was not negligent. A verdict of "Accidental death" was returned.

The deceased was highly respected by his workmates – he was an earnest and devoted local preacher of the United Methodist Church. Several of the jurymen and witnesses gave their fee to the widow. [IWCP 7 Dec 1912]