



SOUTH WILTSHIRE CORONER'S INQUESTS



Durrington

Richard BLAKE

14th September, 1917

Runaway Horses

The story of an accident attended with fatal consequences near the Stonehenge Inn was the subject of an inquest held by the Coroner for South Wilts (Mr F. H. Trethowan) at Fargo Military Hospital, on Wednesday. The victim of the mishap was a brewer's drayman, Richard Charles Blake, of Foundry Lane, Reading. He was 51 years of age.

George King, of Reading, a drayman in the employ of Messrs Simonds, identified the body and said he saw Blake at 9.15pm on Monday leaving No 18 Camp, Larkhill. Blake was then perfectly sober. The horses he was driving were perfectly safe and quiet, and Blake had three lamps alight on his dray.

Lieutenant Shepherd, of the RGA, stationed at Great Bedleigh, Essex, said he was coming along the road from Stonehenge Inn about 10pm, when a car passed from behind going at a considerable rate. He was on a wagon drawn by six horses and the car passed on their off side. After the car passed he noticed the reflection of lights to the off side of the road and then heard runaway horses, and saw them pulling the dray and the driver sitting back endeavouring to pull them up. He jumped down to try and stop them. As the dray drew level the near hind wheel caught the curve and threw the driver off the dicky. He picked him up and laid him on the pavement. The driver of the car then came up and complained about his hand. A medical officer saw both men and they were afterwards removed to the Fargo Hospital.

In answer to the Coroner, the witness said he did not notice whether there were any lights on the dray.

Gordon Macey, a temporary postman, said he was going towards Durrington Camp Post Office when he saw a car coming towards 3a Camp at about 10 or 15 miles an hour. Hearing a "bump" he turned round and saw the runaway horses coming at a considerable speed, the driver trying to check them. He ran after the horses and later saw the driver of the dray, who had been thrown out, talking to a soldier, and then fall down. After the collision the dray had no lights on it.

Arthur Tanner, motor driver, of 81, Culver Street, Salisbury, said that he was riding beside the driver of the motor car, and there was an Australian also in the car. They followed a military wagon, which, he believed, was drawn by four mules and was going to pass when a brewer's dray, without lights, came up. There was not room for them to pass, and the car struck the off wheel of the beer wagon. The horses ran away. Spicer got out of the car and ran after them. He was positive there were no lights on the beer wagon. At the time of the collision the motor-car was going about four miles an hour.

In reply to a juror, he said he did not see the horses until they were on top of them.

Sidney George Spicer, of Coombe Road, Salisbury, motor owner, and the driver of the car, said he was passing the military wagon when the dray approached, without lights, and the horses trotting fast. He put on his brakes and stopped the car and the dray collided with it. He was as close to the wagon as he could get.

In reply to questions he stated that he was driving slowly because he was expecting his passengers to tell him to stop. He was three or four yards from the horses when he first saw them, and could not hear them because the army wagon was rattling.

PC Adlam, stationed at Durrington, said that he went to a point on Durrington Road about 300 yards from the Stonehenge Inn and saw the wagon lying on its near side. The pole was smashed and the tilt damaged. He found two lamps, one front lamp was on the floor of the wagon inside, and a rear lamp was standing on the tailboard. There was some candle in the front lamp. The car was badly damaged on its left side.

Capt. Phillips, RAMC, of Fargo Hospital, said Blake was brought in unconscious and with a small wound at the back of the head which had been dressed. The cause of death was injuries to the head.

The Coroner, addressing the jury, said the evidence was most unsatisfactory, and they would have considerable doubt in deciding exactly how the collision occurred. They could only find a verdict of manslaughter against the driver of the car if they came to the conclusion that his driving was either reckless or that he was driving in such a way that it was obvious he did not care whether any one was injured or not. A slight act of negligence was not sufficient for them to find a verdict of manslaughter, but if they did find that there was any neglect on the part of the driver which did not amount to gross negligence they could censure him. In that case the verdict would be one of accidental death.

In giving the verdict the Foreman said the jury found one of "accidental death," and did not wish to add any rider to it.

Extract published with kind permission from [Salisbury Inquests](#)