



Coroner's Inquest Report

Shocking Occurrence on the Railway

A Platelayer Killed

The district coroner, Mr. R. A. Wilson, held an inquest on Saturday morning at Huggler's Hole, Semley, on the body of Alfred Mills, a platelayer, in the employ of the London & South Western Railway, residing at Huggler's Hole, Semley, who was knocked down by a passing goods train and instantly killed, whilst engaged on the line at a spot about three-quarters of a mile west of Semley station the previous day. Deceased was forty four years of age, and leaves a widow and nine children. He was caught by the train from behind, the back part of his head being smashed in. Mr. E. Roberts was chosen foreman of the jury. Inspector H. W. Trump watched the proceedings on behalf of the railway company.

Job Parsons, the first witness called, a platelayer, deposed that on the previous day he was working with deceased on the line near the 102 mile post from London. At about seven o'clock he saw an up passenger train coming, but did not at first notice a goods train on the down line. He afterwards looked up and saw the down train close upon him, and had just time to get out of the way. He immediately shouted to deceased, but as he turned towards him, he saw him knocked down before he could get out of the way. Witness was about 20 yards on from deceased in the direction the train was going, and was on the same line. When he reached deceased he was quite dead. The down train was very late.

Frederick William Martin, of Exeter, stated he was the driver of the 3.30 down train from Salisbury, on the morning in question. The train started from Salisbury two hours and forty minutes late. He passed the up train about three-quarters of a mile from Semley station, and was then travelling at a rate of between 25 and 30 miles an hour. He did not see any men on the line, although he was keeping a good look out, but the steam from the engine was blown back in his direction and obscured his vision. He did not hear of the accident until he reached Exeter, and on examining his engine he found no traces of blood on it.

Frederick Scance, of Newton, Exeter, the fireman of the goods train, gave corroborative evidence.

William Baggs, of Tisbury, the permanent way inspector, stated that the men worked in gangs, and one man was supposed to keep a look out for the trains.

A verdict of accidental death was returned and the jury gave their fees to the widow.

Salisbury Times, 20 October 1899