



Pyt House, West Tisbury

Inquest Into the Death of Sidney Baker

SALISBURY THE RECENT ACCIDENT AT PYT HOUSE FATAL RESULT

The Deputy-Coroner for the City (Mr. W. J. Trethowan) held an inquiry at the Infirmary on Wednesday afternoon into the circumstances attending the death of a young man named Sidney Baker who died at that institution on the previous day as the result of injuries received on the Pyt House estate on the 28th March by a portion of derrick falling on his back. Mr. T. Perkins was foreman of the jury.

Mary Jane Baker, a spinster residing in Homington, Salisbury, identified the body as that of her nephew who was an agricultural labourer and would be 27 years of age on the 26th inst. At the time of the accident he was working at Tisbury, where he had been employed for about five weeks.

Charles a gardener, employed Mr. J. Bennett-Stanford, of Pyt House, deposed that the deceased was engaged as a labourer on the Pyt House Estate. On the 28th March he, with witness and about 25 others, was engaged in transplanting a tree on the estate. The tree, which was about three tons in weight, had been removed from one part of the property to grounds which were being laid out as a cricket field, where a large hole had been dug for its reception. The root or ball had been placed immediately over the hole, the other portion lay horizontally on the ground. It was not, however, exactly in position and for the purpose of getting it in place it was raised from nine inches to a foot from the ground with the assistance of a three-legged derrick, which had been erected immediately over the hole, and which was provided with a patent combination block and endless chain. When the root had been raised and brought into position one of the legs of the derrick snapped, and, the whole structure falling, one of the legs struck the deceased, who was stooping, on the back of the neck, and doubled him up. He was released from his position soon as was possible, and after a doctor had been sent for, and a conveyance fetched he was removed to Tisbury Station, and then taken on by rail to Salisbury, where he was admitted to the Infirmary. The derrick was tested before it arrived on the estate, where it had been used previous to the accident.

By the jury: He did not know of his own knowledge that it had been tested. He was told that it had been by the architect to the estate, who informed him that the testing took place in London before the derrick came out of the hands of the maker. The leg at the part at which it broke was about seven inches square. He examined it, but could find no flaw in it, and knew no reason why it should have broken. It was about

13 feet high, and snapped some four feet from the top. The derrick, he thought, was tested to carry, with another of similar character, from six to 10 tons, but he could not say positively. The tree had been moved a mile on a timber carriage. Every care was taken both its removal and placing in position.

The Foreman of the Jury remarked that it appeared to him the cause of the breaking was that the derrick was not strong enough to carry the weight placed upon it.

Albert Burch, a professional cricketer, who is employed in making the new cricket ground on the Pyt House Estate, gave evidence of similar character. It appeared to him that the derrick was properly fixed, and that every possible care was taken.

William Gordon, house surgeon at the Infirmary, proved the admission of the deceased into that institution. He examined him, and found that his backbone was fractured, and that all the parts below were paralysed. A consultation the medical staff was held on Monday, the 30th March, when it was decided that an operation was necessary as the only means of giving relief. This operation took place, and was performed by Mr. Harcourt Coates in the presence of the whole medical staff. The deceased recovered from its effects, and there was improvement in his condition for about week, when inflammation of the lower part of the body set in, and extended to the kidneys. The patient gradually got worse, and died early on the morning of the 21st inst., the cause of death being inflammation, consequent on paralysis, the result of the injuries to the spinal cord, caused the accident.

The jury then proceeded to consider their verdict, in arriving at which they occupied some considerable time.

Mr. Solman was again called before them, and expressed the opinion that the derrick was sufficiently strong to carry the weight placed upon it. One of similar size had since been used for equally heavy weights without accident. The whole of the weight of the tree did not rest upon the derrick, as the top was not raised from the ground.

Eventually the jury returned verdict of "Accidental death," but expressed no opinion as to the soundness of the derrick.

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