

Inquest - Alfred Thomas Penny 1915



Mr F H Trethowan, Coroner for South Wilts, held an inquest at Tisbury Workhouse on Friday concerning the death of a farm labourer named Alfred Thomas Penny, of Wardour, who fell from a wagon and was crushed to death by being run over.

Richard Wastfield, farmer, of Tucking Mill Farm, Tisbury, stated that Penny, who was 43 years of age, was at the time of his death in his employ. Witness last saw him alive between 9.30 and 10 o'clock on Thursday, when he was in his usual state of health. He instructed him to fetch Frank Moore, with whom he was to proceed to Higgins Farm to fetch a load of hay.

Frank Edward Moore, carter, of Tisbury, said that he received the instructions from Penny as to the load of hay soon after 9.30 on Thursday morning. He accordingly put the horses in to a boat wagon, one in the shafts and the other in trace harness. The front horse had a leading rein on, but the shaft horse had no reins.

He and Penny proceeded to Higgins Farm and loaded up the hay. They had no trouble with the horses, which behaved all right on the return journey when witness was driving. He was near to the front horse, holding a single rein attached to the animal, and was also holding a head rope tied to the back horse. That was the usual way of taking two horses with a load. Penny, who was a cripple, was riding on the shafts.

Witness last saw him on the Tisbury side of Newtown, but noticed nothing wrong until the wagon met with some obstacle which caused an additional strain on the horses. He then turned round and saw Penny lying on the ground. The horses were never out of hand, but witness was bringing them along fairly fast, as they were rather late.

He saw a man named Trim come up to them when he was on the near side of the horses. He could not say whether Penny tried to get on the back of the rear horse or not. Both he and Penny were quite sober at the time. He remained with the body, and the horses went on and overturned the wagon. He was actually leading the front horse when he noticed the check to the wagon.

George Bennett, groom, of 64, Newtown, Tisbury, stated that he was in a field by the roadside when he saw a man riding on the shafts of Mr Wastfield's wagon, with another man walking behind. He could not see through the hedge, but noticed the wagon through a gap, and was convinced no one was leading the horse. The spot where he noticed the wagon was about 250 yards before the place where the man was crushed. When he first saw the horses they had broken into a trot, caused, he concluded, by the weight of the vehicle behind them going down the slope.

Afterwards they increased their pace, and he heard two different voices shouting "Whoa!" He went on to the road and heard someone exclaim "It is no good running after them, they are going too fast."

He got his bicycle, and thinking there was something wrong went in pursuit of the horses. He found Trim with the body, and went on and reported the matter to the police. He could swear that Moore was walking behind the load when he first saw him.

Francis Trim, labourer, of Newtown, Tisbury, said that he was working in a field by the side of the Tisbury road about 100 yards from the spot where Penny's body was subsequently found. When about 200 yards from the highway he heard a wagon coming down the road, the horses attached to it going at a good trot. He saw a man on the shafts who, while the vehicle was proceeding, rose and got on the horse's back. He saw no one else. He was on the off side, and the hedge was low; consequently he thought he should have noticed anyone on the near side with the horses. He saw the man on the horse's back tug at the horse as though to stop it and he then fell off the near side of the horse, the wheels of the cart passing over him.

Witness went straight down and found the man lying in the road in a pool of blood. He was dead. Moore came up several minutes afterwards from the direction of Newtown with a whip in his hand. The man told him he had stopped and spoken to a woman at Newtown. The horses never stopped after the accident in witness's sight.

Mr H A Baker, registered medical practitioner of Tisbury, stated that he saw the body in the Union Mortuary at Tisbury. Subsequently he made an examination, and found that something had fractured the greater number of the ribs on the right side of the body, injuring the lung. There were also injuries to the left side of the neck, the lower jaw, and the left ear. Death was due to shock caused by fracture of the ribs.

A verdict of "Accidental Death" was returned, and the jury added a rider to the effect that they considered insufficient care was taken with the horses.

The Coroner, in addressing Moore, said that for his part he considered his evidence to be the most unsatisfactory, and if he ever had to give evidence in a court of law again he should be much more careful in the statements he made.

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