

Frederick Harold Blow

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MOTOR-CYCLING TRAGEDY ON COWES - NEWPORT ROAD.

CARISBROOKE MOTOR-BUS DRIVER KILLED.

Another fatal accident to a motor-cyclist, the second which has occurred in the Cowes area recently, took place on the Cowes-Newport main road on the night of Friday week, resulting in the death of Mr. Frederick Harold Blow, 34, a driver in the employ of the Southern Vectis Omnibus Co., living at Maycroft, Clatterford-road, Carisbrooke. The deceased, who was married, left the bus depot at Somerton at the conclusion of his day's work to ride home on his motor-cycle. It was a very dark night. At 10.30 p.m., when about a quarter of a mile beyond the Horseshoe Inn, where there is a footpath by the side of the road, the cyclist collided with James Butchers, one of a party of six ex-Welsh miners employed on the Northwood sewerage extension work, who were walking from the Horseshoe to their lodgings at Newport. Deceased was thrown off his machine, sustaining a fractured skull and other injuries, from which he died on the spot soon afterwards. Butchers, who was suffering from concussion and other injuries, was conveyed in the car of Dr. Hay, who was quickly on the scene, to the Frank James Hospital, where he is understood to be recovering. He lodged at Drake-road, Newport.

THE INQUEST

was held by the Deputy Coroner (F. A. Joyce, Esq.) at the Congregational School, Cowes, on Tuesday. Mr. G. H. Jolliffe was foreman of the jury. Mr. H. R. Palmer represented the bus company, and Inspector H. Rogers the police.

Kathleen Florence May Blow, the widow of the deceased, said her husband had been accustomed to driving a motor-cycle for some years. She last saw him on Friday morning.

P.C. T. McVicar said that at 10.45 p.m. on the previous Friday he went by car to the scene of the accident and saw deceased lying in the road about 440 yards on the Newport side of the Horseshoe Inn. He was unconscious and had extensive head injuries. Two or three minutes later Dr. Hay arrived and attended the deceased, who died a few minutes afterwards. The body was removed to the Cowes mortuary. The road where the accident occurred was in excellent condition. It was 24ft. wide with a 5ft. footpath on the left side going to Newport. There were marks in the road which appeared to have been made by the off-side foot-rest of deceased's motor-cycle for a distance of 47½ ft. along the road to within 5ft. of the off side of the road. The motor-cycle, a New Imperial, was badly damaged. Four men were in the roadway by deceased when he arrived and another was lying injured on the footpath, to which he had been moved out of the way of traffic. The latter was bleeding about the face and hands and was conveyed to the hospital. There was blood in the road 7ft. from the path on the near side.

Replying to the Coroner witness said he would not say that not one of the men he saw was incapable of making a statement and tendering an explanation of the accident, but they were under the influence of drink. The statements he received the same night were rather rambling.

By Mr. Palmer : There was no one else who could give any statement. He could find no independent witness.

James Ball, labourer, of 5 Albany-road, Newport, said on Friday evening he went to the Horseshoe Inn about 8.20 p.m. in company with Ivor and John Rees, Oswald Davies, Harold Lee and James Butchers, and left at 10 o'clock. They all went outside together, talked for a little while. Two of them were going away

to Salisbury the following day and they had had a farewell gathering. As they walked along the road in the direction of Newport, John Rees and Butchers were about 40 or 50 yards in front of the other four. It was very dark. Witness was with the rear party nearest to the hedge on the left side of the road. A motor-cycle suddenly passed his party without his having heard any warning and appeared to strike something and swerve right across the road. The cycle lamp was burning, but was very dull. Butchers was lying down in the road injured and the motor-cyclist and his machine were on the other side of the road. He went back to the Horseshoe to obtain assistance. Dr. Hay arrived soon afterwards.—Q. You heard the statement of the policeman that all of you were not exactly sober?—I can honestly say I only had three drinks. He added that they did not go to the Horseshoe entirely for drink, but to say good-bye to two of the party who were going away on a new job.—Q. It is just possible that the hilarity of your good-bye caused one or two of the party to take more drink than they should have done?—No, I am sure no one took any more than he should have.

By Mr. Palmer : They were not singing and shouting, but walking quietly along. He heard the crash and they all ran to the scene. He could not see where the men in front of him were walking. Two of his party were on the path. Witness denied that they were under the influence of drink or that there was any fighting. The only difficulty was that one of the men objected to a bus driver moving the motor-cycle before the police arrived, and there was an argument about it.

Ivor John Rees, labourer of 34 Pyle-street, Newport, who was with the other men walking behind Butchers and John Rees, gave similar evidence. Butchers and Rees, he said, were about 50 yards in front. The motor-cycle flashed past them, and the next thing he saw was the machine apparently skidding across the road to the right. He stopped a car and asked the driver to go for a doctor. There was no kerb to the footpath, and in the darkness it was a job to distinguish between the road and the path.—Q. You heard the suggestion made by the constable as to the state you men were in. What do you say about that?—I was sober, sir. He could form no opinion of the speed of the motor-cycle. They were all talking and not paying much attention to what was going on around.

Mr. Palmer : In a statement to the police the next morning you said you were in the company of five men, three of whom who were walking about 50 yards in the rear of the other three. Now you say there were two in front and four behind. Is it not a fact that you don't know how you were walking?—No.—Q. You had all been drinking?— No, sir. I had two drinks.— Q. Weren't you singing and shouting and a thoroughly merry party going all over the road?— No, sir.

Harold Lee, labourer, also living at Newport, confirmed the evidence of the two previous witnesses, and said in his opinion the motor-cycle was going at a very fast pace. The cyclist might have sounded a hooter, but he did not hear it. When they left the Horseshoe they were quite sober. Witness said he did not get there until 8.30, and did not have sufficient time to get the worse for drink.— Q. Was there not time between 8.30 and 10 p.m. to take enough to get the worse for drink?— I don't think so, not myself, at any rate. I am quite aware of what took place.

By Mr. Palmer : It was too dark to see how far ahead the others were. He denied that he was fighting drunk. He got a little excited when the motor-cycle was shifted, but a little later, when he found that permission had been given, he apologised. There was no fighting.— Q. But you had to be held back, did you not?— No, sir.— Q. I suppose you were all more or less drunk, and you were the worst of the lot?— No, I was not there long enough to get drunk.— Q. Do you mean to tell me that between 8.30 and 10 you could not take enough to get drunk?— No, sir.

A juror : Then I should say you can carry some (laughter).

The Coroner said the question of the sobriety or comparative insobriety of the witnesses was not very vital for the purposes of that enquiry, though it might be interesting in another direction. It was the duty of the cyclist to see that the road was clear before he proceeded. It was the driver's duty to see if there was any obstacle in the road. If he saw a drunken man in his way he should stop. There was no doubt about the

common law of the land as to the right of pedestrians on the road. Whether the men were drunk or not and making a noise, it was the cyclist's duty to slow down.

Dr. A. E. Hay said when he arrived on the scene of the accident at 10.40 p.m. deceased was lying across the road in a dying condition and another man was lying against the hedge on the other side, badly injured. The motorcyclist died about three minutes after his arrival, he thought, as the result of a fractured skull.

The Coroner, in summing up, said deceased appeared, according to the somewhat confused evidence, to have been travelling at not too high a speed and came across a group of men, none of whom appeared to be capable of giving a very connected story. But they must not take an exaggerated view of the importance of whether they were sober or not because it was the duty of motor-car drivers and cyclists to see that the road was clear, and if there was an obstacle, to stop. The motorcyclist was travelling fast, and with ordinary care he should have seen the men, as it was his duty to avoid them. The right of the foot passenger on the road was supreme. Foot passengers had a right to be on the road, although it was common sense to move out of the way of cars or seek the greater safety of footpaths, but nonetheless the responsibility rested with drivers of vehicles and motor-cycles to see that the roads were clear. If the jury accepted his view they would find a verdict of accidental death and add nothing to it.

The jury, after retiring, returned a verdict accordingly, and the foreman expressed their deep sympathy with the widow and other members of the bereaved family. Mr. Palmer, on behalf of the Southern Vectis Bus Company, and the Coroner also tendered sympathy, the former saying that deceased had been with the company for several years and was a very trustworthy man.

The jury and three witnesses gave their fees to the widow.

THE FUNERAL

took place on Wednesday, at Carisbrooke, in the presence of a large assembly. The first part of the service was held at the Parish Church, the Rev. H. S. Footman, B.D., officiating. The interment was at the Cemetery. The family mourners were Mrs. Blow (widow), Mrs. E. Blow (mother), Mrs. Prince and Mrs. Cullings (sisters), Mr. A. Blow (brother), Mr. and Mrs E. Cham, Miss H. Cham, and Miss R. Cham. A large number of deceased's fellow employees attended and Vectis bus drivers acted as pall-bearers. Mrs. G. Taylor represented the Southern Vectis Omnibus Co. Ltd. The many floral tributes included one from his fellow workers and one from the residents of Niton, by whom deceased was well known, as he had been driving on the Newport-Ventnor route for several years. Wreaths were sent from the following : From his broken-hearted wife Mary ; his mother ; mother and father-in-law; Archie and Clive; Clas (?) and George; Doris and Alf; Millie and Bert; Marg and Bert; Josie and Mick; Hilda and Don; Clas (?) and Jim; Rita and Albert; Reeds Farm; Alfred; Nellie and Eva; Elsie and family; and many others; Southern Vectis Bus Co.; the office staff; fellow workers; all at Somerton Garage; old workmates; Weeks Ltd. staff; Lipton's staff and Priory Stores, Carisbrooke. The arrangements were carried out by Mrs. Thomas, of Cowes.

Mrs. F. H. Blow wishes to thank all kind friends and relatives for beautiful flowers sent and sympathy shown during her very sad loss. Please accept this as the only intimation as letters are too numerous to answer.— Mr. and Mrs. Cham, The Hays, Bowcombe, wish to thank all kind friends for beautiful flowers and the kindness shown to their daughter in her sudden bereavement.

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