

Benjamin Larkham

Hampshire Advertiser – Wednesday 23 October 1895

THE FATALITY AT THE CEMENT MILLS.

On Saturday afternoon Mr. Edward F. Blake held an inquest at the Falcon Inn, Newport, on the body of Benjamin Larkham, 61, of Melbourne-street, Newport, who was killed at West Medina Cement Mills on the previous afternoon under circumstances detailed below. – Mr. J.C. Mould watched the proceedings for Messrs. Francis and Co., the owners of the works. - William Henry Saunders, mariner of Newport, said he was mate on board the barge Gazelle, which was discharging coke at the Cement Mill Wharf, on the previous afternoon. Deceased was carrying water to feed the crane and the third man on the Gazelle asked him for a bucket of water, which deceased handed over a dwarf wall. Deceased was waiting for the bucket to be returned when the body of the steam crane, which was working near, struck deceased in the loins and crushed him against the wall, dragging him partly over it. Witness shouted out and the crane was stopped, and deceased was released and taken to the mess-room, where he complained of pains in the stomach. Deceased did not say how the accident happened, but witness said he must have thoughtlessly have stepped too near the crane, as it had passed him two or three times all right whilst he was standing waiting for the briquettes about two or three feet away. Had deceased remained in the position in which he was when he handed the water to the vessel he would have been quite out of danger.

William Harber, driver of the crane, said deceased was employed in supplying the crane tank with water. He could only fill it when stopped. It was no part of his duty to supply the water to the vessel. The crane was brought up by catching deceased against the wall, and he reversed the crane as soon as he heard deceased cry out. Of course it was a dangerous thing to get where deceased was. He could have handed the water elsewhere, where he would have been entirely out of danger/

Wm. Hayter, who was engaged in receiving coke which was being landed by the crane, gave corroborative evidence.

Dr. Coombs, who was sent for and attended at once, said when he reached the mills deceased was in such a state of collapse that he did not think it advisable to make a strict examination. Deceased said he had pain in the back, and something prevented him from breathing freely. He could move his legs. After administering stimulants and applying other restorative means deceased rallied somewhat, and he was removed home on an ambulance stretcher. He died from the shock shortly after reaching home.

The Coroner briefly summed up, remarking that deceased in performing a good-natured action lost his presence of mind and got too near to the crane. It was a pure accident, and no one was to blame. - The jury agreed, and returned a verdict accordingly.

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