

## Arthur Frederick Saunders

### 1911 England, Wales & Scotland Census

9 Clarence Rd, Mount Pleasant, Newport, Isle of Wight, Hampshire, England

Name	Relationship	Status	Age	Occupation	Birthplace
Jacob Saunders	Head	Widower	73	General Sawyer	Chale, Isle of Wight
Edgar Saunders	Son	Widower	43	General Labourer	Newport, Isle of Wight
Edith Saunders	Daughter	Single	37		Newport, Isle of Wight
<i>Arthur Saunders</i>	<i>Grandson</i>	<i>Single</i>	<i>18</i>	<i>Wheelwright apprentice</i>	<i>Newport, Isle of Wight</i>
Constance Saunders	Granddaughter	Single	15	Dressmaker apprentice	Newport, Isle of Wight
Doris Saunders	Granddaughter	—	12	School	Newport, Isle of Wight

Isle of Wight County Press - 30 August 1913

### TRAIN TRAGEDY NEAR BLACKWATER

#### Young Newport Man's Terrible Suicide

#### "A Letter of Death to Father"

On Saturday the Deputy Coroner for the Island (Francis A. Joyce, Esq.) held an inquest at St. Thomas's Mission-hall, South-street, Newport, on the body of Arthur Frederick Saunders, 20, wheelwright, son of Mr. Edgar William Saunders, of 9 Clarence-road, Newport, whose mangled body was found on the railway line between Blackwater and Shide late on Friday night, as reported in our last issue. Mr. N. H. T. Mursell was foreman of the jury. Inspector H. Sibbeck and P.S. Shotter were present, and Mr. George Ranger, traffic inspector of the I. W. Central Railway Company, was also in attendance.

Edgar William Saunders, fitter's mate, identified the body of deceased as that of his son. Deceased had been employed by Mr. H. Ingram, of Ventnor, for about four months. Witness used to send letters to deceased c/o Mrs. Coleman, St. Catherine's-street, Ventnor. Witness last saw him about two months ago. The last note he received from him was respecting his National Insurance card.

The Coroner said that deceased had left two written communications, addressed to his father, one a postcard and the other, a letter.

Witness said that the postcard and letter referred to were in deceased's handwriting. He further stated that his wife died in the County Asylum eight years ago, after being in that institution for about four years. She went there about the time he (witness) went to the war in South Africa.

By the Foreman: Witness was not expecting deceased home on the previous day. He came home on the previous Sunday morning and remained about 10 minutes, but witness did not see him.

Ellen Smith, wife of George Smith, labourer, of Horringford Cottage, Arreton, said that on the previous afternoon, at about 4 o'clock, deceased called at her house and also at about 5.30 or 5.45 p.m., and again at 7.40 p.m., when he came to wish them "Good-bye". He said he wanted to get home and she persuaded him to go as quickly as possible, as he had no light on the bicycle he was riding. Deceased said that he did not like the idea of going home, as he was in trouble. He did not say what the trouble was. He asked witness's daughter if she would go a little way on the road with him, as he did not like the

idea of travelling alone, but she declined, saying it was too late. He seemed in very good spirits in the afternoon when he was at her house. He was a nephew of her daughter-in-law, who was living near; he was not a relative of witness. When he left he went away up the road on his bicycle, and she took it that he was going home. It would be about three miles from Horrington to the place where deceased was found on the line. Deceased had no business at all where his body was found. He said nothing to witness as to committing suicide by placing himself in front of a train, but he made some statement to her daughter.

Robert James Barrett, engine-driver in the employ of the I. W. Central Railway Company, said that he was in charge of the 8.35 train from Sandown to Newport on the previous evening. He did not see anything on the line just after passing Blackwater about 8.55 when it was quite dark. When about opposite Marvel witness felt a slight jar as if the engine had gone over some stones. Witness heard no sound and saw nothing. Fireman Smith was on the engine, with him. He reported the occurrence to the Shide station-master that he might advise the driver of the light engine which was following from Merstone to look out, as he (witness) had struck something. Deceased was a perfect stranger to witness. There was no public right of way across the line there. No one had a right to go there except with the knowledge and permission of the Railway Co.

The Coroner said that there might be a right-of-way across from field to field for those who occupied the land.

Mr. Ranger said there was no right of way across the line there.

The Coroner: I think that is arguable. There was no right of way from station to station, but there might be a right of way across to be used by farmers or others occupying the land on either side.

Mr. Ranger: Not at that spot. It was right opposite Marvel.

The Coroner said he knew there was a plank across the stream somewhere near.

Mr. Ranger said any one who went there would be trespassing.

The Coroner said then he was afraid he had trespassed many times.

Walter Harry Baines, of 1 Myrtle Cottage, Victoria-road, Newport, driver in the employ of the I. W. Central Railway Company, said that as he was leaving Merstone with a goods train at 9.10 he received a message from the signalman conveying an intimation from the previous witness that his engine had struck something between Blackwater and Shide. It was then his duty to be on the look-out, and after passing Blackwater he slowed down and proceeded quietly. Some way past Blackwater he saw something in the road, stopped the train, got down, and found the body of a man lying in the 4ft. way between the rails. He examined the body and found that the man was quite dead. He ran on to Newport, leaving his goods at Shide, and reported what had happened to the police, and Insp. Sibbick and P.S. Evans returned with him to the spot where the body was found. That was near the distance signal opposite Marvel.—Q. Were you able from the position of the body to form any opinion as to the way in which deceased was struck by the engine?—He was lying on his back and his arms were all cut to pieces. I should say he was standing up when struck and he must have been furlled over and over under the train.—In reply to a further question witness said he should say that deceased was not lying down at the time the engine struck him. About 27 yards away, on the Blackwater side of the body, were found deceased's cap, a bunch of flowers, and a collar stud.

Insp. Harry Sibbeck said that at 9.45 on the previous night he received a report of the tragedy, and in company with P.S. Evans and Railway officials he proceeded by special engine and brake van to the scene of the occurrence, where he found the body at the spot indicated by the previous witness. It was

about opposite Marvel. Deceased was lying on his back near the right hand metal going towards Newport. He examined the body and found that the left arm and shoulder were severed and badly mutilated down to the wrist, the left side of the neck and jaw were smashed, the left leg was severed and badly mutilated from the thigh to the ankle, the right leg was smashed below the knee and the boot torn off.—Q. Did you infer from these injuries that he was standing at the time the engine struck him?—No; I formed the opinion that he must have been lying on his back across the line and that the engine struck him on the left side, knocked him sideways, and carried him along the line. About 27 yds. on the Blackwater side there was a trolley, and about a yard on the Shide side of the trolley there was some blood on the metal. He did not know whether that was near a plank crossing the stream. He had searched the clothing of deceased and found the postcard and letter which had been identified by the first witness as being in deceased's handwriting. The communications were in a wallet in deceased's inside jacket pocket, with other documents. There was no date on the postcard—[Mrs. Smith said deceased wrote a postcard at her home on Friday afternoon.]—The postcard read: "Dear father, I hope this card will find you well. Then when you read this and hear the news you will be bad. From Arthur. Good-bye. .. Good-bye for ever. This was written on a picture postcard, illustrating the song "Needles and pins." the picture representing a young man sitting in a chair with a young woman leaning over his shoulder, and the printed verse under the picture was:

Five minutes precisely, five minutes had fled;  
She opened the door with a sigh.  
Since we have settled to part, she said,  
I wanted to say "Good-bye."  
We never shall meet any more, she wept,  
Alone we must live and die.

The letter was headed.

A Letter of Death to Father,

—and was dated August 12, 1913. Dear father,—Just a little letter to you. If you read this book it will be my last letter to any one, so I hope who reads it, and also Him above, will forgive me for saying such a thing as this. I suppose people will say when they read it "He is mad or in trouble or he would not have written such a letter." But they will be mistaken. I am not mad, but in trouble, and I cannot ask father or any of my friends, if I have any, to stand up for me now, but to let me go to prison and suffer for all my sins. Do not stand for me, as I am a bad boy, and two years would not be too long: then a day or two, and back again. It is bad for a lad of 20 years going to prison after being a good lad till the last year. Now I am on top of the pit waiting for the ground I am standing on to give way and then right into the pit, and that will be a few days from now. But do not stop me, because if I am to be brought out of darkness into light the power of God will do it. So do not trouble to own me as your son, because when I once leave there I shall never return again to you, and you will not know whether I am dead or alive. I am no good alive, only a trouble to everybody. I should very much like to die out of it all, but I cannot yet (I am a downright bad boy), and I shall never be any different as long as I live, so, my dear father, do not trouble about me, as I am too bad. It is for the last time that I shall say my father. Perhaps when I come out of prison you will be miles away; let me hope you are, as it will be better for you and your name will not be disgraced by me. I must now bring this letter to a close—this my last letter (Ah! Mon Dieu!). We shall meet some day, so with a broken-hearted love I will say to all of you adieu! From your son, who was once.

A. F. Saunders.

Dieu de Love

It was suggested that the date of the letter was intended for August 21.

The Coroner said it was just possible deceased wrote that letter some days ago. After hearing those communications read he did not think that the jury could come to any other conclusion than that deceased intended to commit suicide. He thought the postcard was quite clear on that point. That correspondence disposed of the theory of the accident. No doubt that unfortunate young man, as he stated in the letter, was in trouble. He (the Coroner) excluded the possibility of accident altogether, after hearing that letter and postcard read. The engine driver was in no way to blame, for no doubt deceased went on the line with the intention of committing suicide. The father had stated that his wife died in the Asylum after having been in that institution, and that would be sufficient justification for them to come to the conclusion that deceased was of unsound mind at the time, there being an hereditary predisposition to insanity.

The jury returned a verdict that deceased committed suicide by placing himself in front of a train whilst of unsound mind.

The Foreman said the jury wished to express their sympathy with the father and to hand their fees to him.

The Coroner thanked the jury on behalf of the father.

It was stated that the "trouble" mentioned in deceased's letter probably referred to his dealings with hired bicycles. Deceased was riding a bicycle from Arreton on the evening in question and this was found abandoned in Marvel-lane, near the scene of the tragedy.

The funeral took place at Carisbrooke Cemetery on Tuesday afternoon, the Rev. W. J. Sugden (St. John's) officiating in the presence of the father and other relatives and friends. There was a number of floral tributes. These included the bunch of sweet peas which were found on the railway near the body, which deceased was carrying home from Arreton on the fateful evening. Messrs. H. and F. Damp carried out the funeral arrangements.

*Transcription by Ian Roach for the Friends of Newport & Carisbrooke Cemeteries © 2019*  
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