

Daisy Shawyer

Isle of Wight County Press - 8 July 1905

LADY CYCLIST'S RIDE TO DEATH

ASYLUM NURSE'S SHOCKING END.

A painful sensation was caused by a very distressing cycling fatality which occurred at the top of Castle-road, Newport, on Wednesday evening. Miss Daisy Ellen Shawyer, nurse and deputy matron at the County Asylum, Whitecroft, was cycling from that institution to Newport with another nurse and attendant. A fearless cyclist of several years experience, she was mounted on a new free-wheel machine and rode very fast down Carisbrooke Cemetery-hill. At the cross roads at the top of Castle-road she seemed to have lost control and after just clearing a van on the left-hand side of the road she ran into a lad who was walking down the road on the left side, with the result that she was thrown heavily and sustained severe fracture of the skull. She was removed in an unconscious condition to Fern Bank, Cedar-hill, the residence of Mr. J.H. Green, clerk and steward of the County-Asylum, where she was promptly attended by Dr. Shaw, medical superintendent of the County Asylum, who happened to be in the neighbourhood at the time and was at once summoned. Deceased never rallied and died about two hours later.

On Thursday evening the Deputy Coroner (F.A. Joyce, Esq.) held an inquest on the body at the Sunday-school, Carisbrooke. Deceased's mother and step-father, from Heyshott, Midhurst, Sussex, and Mr. J. Thomas, J.P., C.A., a member of the Committee of Visitors of the Asylum, were present, and Supt. Ayres represented the police. Mr. H.W. Horan was chosen foreman of the jury.

Albert Edward Cook, attendant at the County Asylum, said that about 8.20 on the previous evening he was cycling to Newport with the deceased and Miss Odell, starting from the Asylum a few minutes after the others, at about 8.10. He caught them up at the Convent and preceded them down Cemetery-hill. Deceased passed him at the four cross roads at the top of Cedar-hill. Witness saw a van coming up Castle-road on the left side, and deceased passed the van. A young man who was walking down on the other side of the road moved across towards the right side as she was overtaking him and deceased's machine struck him when he was about in the middle of the road, with the result that deceased was thrown off. Deceased was travelling rather fast. She seemed to have control of the machine when she passed him. She fell badly on her head after apparently swerving to clear the van and the young lad. Deceased was badly injured about the head and a doctor was summoned. – Q. Can you estimate the speed at which deceased was riding at the time of the accident ? – I should say she was going from 18 to 20 miles an hour.

By the Foreman: He did not see the lad with whom deceased collided until she was falling and he did not hear deceased ring her bell. Deceased was going down the hill without any brake on.

The Coroner: No brake at all ? – No, sir. She had no brake on when she passed me.

The Foreman said the brakes were in perfect order on the machine which the deceased was riding, the jury having seen the machine.

The Coroner: If she had no brakes on she would have got up to a terrific speed by the time she got there.

By the Foreman: The van would not have obscured the deceased's view of the lad into whom she ran.

Miss Lottie Odell, nurse at the County Asylum, who was riding with deceased and the last witness on the evening in question, said they were all riding pretty fast down the hill. Witness had to keep up with the deceased as well as she could, as she had no bell and deceased had a bell. However, when they were getting to the bottom deceased went too fast for witness to keep up with her, and she dropped behind. When she got to the cross roads she saw the deceased fall and a crowd of boys was there.

By the Coroner: Deceased was travelling extremely fast. She was a splendid rider, having been cycling for four years at least.

By the Foreman: Witness called to some one to catch her (witness), as she could not stop her own machine, her brake not being very powerful, but they did not do it, and she turned her machine into the hedge and stopped it.

Leonard Witham, 16, Quay Cottage, Newport, cabinet maker's apprentice, said on the evening in question he was walking down Castle-road and below the footpath which runs into the Carisbrooke-road he saw a lady cyclist coming down round the bend, just below Dr. Grove's house. Deceased was travelling very fast. A van, with Mr. Barton and two lads, had just passed deceased on the left-hand side of the road. Witness continued to walk down the road and deceased ran into him behind, when he was about 3ft. from the hedge. Witness did not feel it very much, but he was knocked down. He did not see deceased fall, but when he got up he saw deceased lying on the ground very much injured. Witness ran for a doctor. Witness did not come out from the hedge just at the time of the accident; he was walking about 3ft. from the hedge all the way. There was ample room for deceased to have passed between him and the van if she had had the bicycle under proper control.

By the Jury: He did not look round to see deceased coming after she had come round the bend. Witness got a bruise on the arm and a bump on the back of his head.

The Foreman said witness got off very lightly if deceased was travelling at the rate stated.

Mr. Arthur Thomas Barton, license holder of the Falcon Inn, Castle-road, Newport, said at the time of the accident he was driving up Castle-road in a trolley van with two lads. He saw the cyclists coming down the hill fast – he should say deceased was travelling about 20 miles an hour. Witness had to pull sharply into the bank on his left to avoid a collision with deceased and when she had got past him about 12 yards he saw her collide with the last witness, who was about 3ft. or 4ft. from the hedge, on the left side. Witness could not leave his horse, as it was not safe, but his lad went back and held deceased up until other assistance arrived. – Q. Do you consider the lad she struck in any way to blame? – Certainly not. – Q. You entirely exonerate him? – Certainly. Deceased had no one else to avoid at that place.

By the Foreman: Deceased passed in the middle of the road and seemed to have lost control of the machine.

Mr. James Henry Green, clerk and steward of the County Asylum, identified the body of deceased, who, he said, had been at the institution for five years. He assisted with Miss Odell to take deceased into his house at Fern Bank. Witness sent for Dr. Shaw, the medical superintendent of the Asylum,

who arrived very quickly. Deceased died 10.30. One of the pedals, which was broken off deceased's machine, was picked up in the road.

Dr. Harold Shaw, medical superintendent of the County Asylum, said he found deceased lying at Mr. Green's house in an insensible condition, with every sign of a very severe fracture of the skull. It was quite a hopeless case and she was got to bed and died at 10.30. The injuries were just what one would have expected under such circumstances. Deceased was a fine grown woman and probably weighed over 12 stone.

The Coroner said that there was no doubt from the evidence that deceased was riding very much faster than she should have done, and if cyclists would ride at such a fearful pace down hill such a deplorable occurrence naturally resulted sometimes. He thought the first witness was mistaken in saying the lad Witham moved out from his left side, and he could safely accept the evidence of Mr. Barton that Witham was free from blame.

The jury conferred in private and returned a verdict that deceased was accidentally killed by a fall from her bicycle after a collision and that the witness Witham was exonerated from all blame.

The foreman said the jury wished to express their deepest sympathy with the parents in their bereavement.

Dr. Shaw asked to be allowed on behalf of all at the Asylum to express their deepest sympathy with the relatives of the deceased and their great sorrow at that unfortunate occurrence. Deceased had been with them for over five years and they had every opportunity of knowing her well. By her invariable amiability and pleasantness she had become universally liked, she was most reliable in the discharge of her duties, and they never had occasion to find fault with her. He could only say that they all greatly deplored her untimely end.

The sad occurrence has cast quite a gloom over the Asylum, and the annual fete and sports, arranged for yesterday (Friday), have naturally been postponed.

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