

James Baker

Isle of Wight Observer - 3 May 1884

FATAL ACCIDENT TO A DRAYMAN.

On Monday morning an inquiry was held at Sir John Barleycorn Inn, Trafalgar- road, Newport, before the Deputy Coroner for the Island (Mr E. F. Blake), touching the death of James Baker, a drayman, who, on Thursday last, received such severe injuries by accidentally falling from his dray when returning from Ashley racecourse, as terminated fatally early on Saturday morning. The jury having viewed the body, the following evidence was taken:

Noah Barber, dealer, East-street, deposed that on Thursday night, as he was returning from Sandown, he came up with a horse and dray - one of Messrs Mew, Langton, and Co.'s — near the Hare and Hounds public-house, at Down End. The deceased was on the shafts, and there were other men inside. They appeared to be lighting their pipes. Denton said to witness, "You had better ride with us," but he declined to do so, and walked on in advance. When near Mr Ford's house witness heard the dray coming behind. Looking back he saw the deceased lean forward to catch the reins; he missed his footing, however, and fell. It appeared as if two wheels went over his chest. Witness was some distance away, but ran back and stopped the horse, after which the men got down. Witness went to the deceased, who was lying on his back. His nose was bleeding. Witness procured some water from Mr Ford's house, but the deceased was unable to take any. He showed no signs of consciousness whatever. With the assistance of the others he was placed upon the dray and brought into Newport, and afterwards conveyed to his house, in New-street, by the direction of Dr Foster. The accident occurred about half-past seven in the evening, and witness farther stated that the horse was travelling at an extremely moderate pace. Of the other three men there was only one in a sober condition, and that was Denton.

William Denton, porter, said he had been engaged by Mr Welsh, of the Antelope Inn, High-street, Newport, to go to Ashley racecourse for the purpose of packing and returning goods. After the goods were packed the deceased, in charge of the dray, started for Newport. Witness, together with Wheeler and Adams, accompanied the deceased. He considered the deceased was a little the worse for drink. Everything went well until they came to the Hare and Hounds public-house. Witness and Adams stopped there for a minute or two, but the deceased and Wheeler walked on. Shortly afterwards witness and his companion overtook them, and got into the van again. When the accident happened deceased was sitting on the footboard in front of the van. He held the reins on his arm whilst trying to light his pipe. The deceased then stepped forward as if to turn the rein (which had got twisted), when his foot slipped and he fell to the ground, the dray passing over him. Witness got down directly, and went back to the deceased. He was unconscious, and never spoke.

Mr Millbourne Coombs, surgeon, practising at Newport, stated that about a quarter to 9 on Thursday evening he answered a summons to attend the deceased, who had been conveyed to his lodgings in New-street. He was perfectly unconscious at the time, and witness observed that blood had been flowing from his nose. He thought he could not live long. Witness was of opinion that the wheel of the dray passed over the head of the deceased rather than over his chest, as had been stated, inasmuch as the injuries were principally confined to the head. On Friday morning deceased had rallied slightly, but was

still unconscious, and died the next morning at a quarter to 1. Witness could not speak positively as to the nature of the injuries sustained by deceased, but he thought it quite probable that they would include a fracture of the base of the skull.

The witness Denton (re-called) said the weight of the dray and its contents would be about three-quarters of a ton.

Before the summing up of the Coroner, Mr Welch voluntarily stated that both deceased and Wheeler were perfectly sober when they left Asheby.

The Coroner answered the jury did not attribute any blame to Mr Welch, nor any one. - This being the whole of the evidence, the jury immediately returned a verdict of "Accidental death." - Deceased was 31 years of age, and unmarried.

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