

Percy Kimber

Isle of Wight County Press – 9 August 1924

FATAL LAMP ACCIDENT AT ALVERSTONE.

NEWPORT MAN KILLED.

Mr. Percy Kimber, 44, a platelayer, of 31 Woodcock-terrace, Barton-road, Newport, employed by the Southern Railway Co., died at the County Hospital on Saturday very shortly after sustaining severe head injuries in an explosion at Alverstone.

The inquest was held at the Hospital on Tuesday by the Acting Deputy Coroner (W. H. Thirkell, Esq.). Mr. G. Hall King, solicitor, of Portsmouth, who watched the proceedings on behalf of the Railway Co., expressed deep regret at the unfortunate accident, which had resulted in the death of a man who had been in their employ for a considerable time.

Bernard Allen Kimber, market gardener, of Newchurch, a brother of deceased, said deceased was a signal lineman.

John George Nutman, platelayer, of 31 Sea-street, Newport, stated that on Saturday he was performing the duties of signalman on a railway bridge over the river at Alverstone, and a party of men, including deceased, were re-laying the line over the bridge. The accident happened at about 10.25 p.m. The men were waiting for the last train to go through before they commenced work. They had two large portable acetylene lamps to give light for their work, and deceased was about to light one of these when, as he struck a match, there was an explosion, and the bottom of the lamp struck him on the left side of his head, just above the eye. He fell immediately, and was apparently seriously injured. Dr. O'Grady was sent for and arrived from Sandown by special train. The injured man was made as comfortable as possible in the waiting-room, about 50 yards away, and was then conveyed to the Hospital in the train. No time whatever was lost.

William Henry Benjamin Knowles, another platelayer, of 20 Worsley-road, Newport, said he travelled to Ryde in the special train and remained at the Hospital with deceased until his death.

Fred Booth, Fairlee Villa, Newport, inspector of permanent way, who was in charge of the party on the night of the accident, said deceased had been accustomed to working acetylene lamps such as that produced for 12 years. He had never before had any serious trouble with one. The lamp in question had been tested three weeks before and had been used since then in the Cowes tunnel. Witness personally filled the lamp, and the usual amount of water and carbide had been put in.

Mr. E. W. Landon, J.P., a representative of the National Union of Railwaymen, asked the last witness whether deceased was actually working at the time of the accident.

The Coroner did not think there was any dispute on that point.

Mr. Booth replied that deceased had started, in that it was his duty to prepare the lamp.

Miss Elizabeth Mary Martin, house surgeon at the Hospital, received deceased at about midnight on Saturday and removed the bandages to examine the wound. Nothing could be done, however, and he died about a quarter of an hour after being brought in. Deceased had sustained a fractured skull, and death was due to that.

The Coroner, in recording a verdict of "Accidental death," said that the man had met his death by something quite unforeseen. No blame could be attached to anyone. One could not help being impressed

by the thoroughness of the railway officials in getting a special train to fetch a doctor and to convey the injured man to the Hospital.

The deceased had been an active member of the committee of the Unitarian Christian Church, Newport, for two years, and had acted as financial secretary to the Newport Fellowship. A memorial service will be held at that church to-morrow (Sunday) evening.

Deceased, who was a son of the late Mr. Kimber, who formerly had the blacksmith's shop at Snook's-hill, Newport, was of a cheery and kindly disposition, always ready to give a good turn for others. He was a good handy workman, and was deservedly popular with those with whom he was brought into contact. The deepest sympathy is felt with his widow and family of five children in their heavy bereavement.

The funeral took place at Newport on Wednesday, the first part of the service being at the Unitarian Christian Church, and the interment at Newport Cemetery. The Rev. W. R. Clark-Lewis officiated, and before a large congregation at the church made touching reference to the tragic nature of the fatality which had so suddenly deprived them of a much esteemed colleague and valued worker. He expressed deepest sympathy with the bereaved family. Mr. Leslie Dore presided at the organ.

The personal mourners were the two sons, Frank and Albert, Mr. B. Kimber (brother), Messrs. Damp, A. Richards, and W. Stark (brothers-in-law), and Messrs. S. Kimber and P. Appel (cousins). There was a large attendance of the staff of the Southern Railway and members of the Newport Fellowship and of the Unitarian Church, including Mr. Leslie Chatfeild-Clarke, J.P., M.B.E., and Mrs. Chatfeild-Clarke, Mrs. Clark-Lewis, and Mr. J. Dowden. There were also present Mr. F. Peach and Mr. H. Osborn. The railway staff present included Mr. H. D. Tabourdin (chief engineer), Mr. F. Booth (permanent way inspector), Mr. G. Ranger (traffic inspector), Messrs. F. Gray, P. Gladdis, G. Pierce, L. Hendy, A. Watson, J. Clark, W. Rickman, T. Smart, A. Blow, and P. Rolf (engineer's department), Messrs. G. H. Matthews, E. Shiner, A. Leal, G. H. Jenvey (representing Ryde Branch National Union of Railwaymen), E. W. Landon, J.P., T.C., W. Whittington (station-master, Newchurch), and T. Hales (traffic department), Messrs. F. Westmore, W. Taylor, E. Warne, and G. Lines (Medina Wharf), and Messrs. F. Cheverton and P. Rogers (locomotive department). Four of deceased's fellow workers of the Southern Railway acted as bearers, namely, Messrs. S. Spencer, J. Nutman, B. Knowles, and R. Whinham.

Transcription by Tony Barton for the Friends of Newport & Carisbrooke Cemeteries © 2020
<https://www.foncc.org.uk>