

William James Bell

1911 census, 1 Kelso Cottages, Bellemeade Lane, Newport

<i>William James Bell</i>	<i>Head</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>Brewers Drayman</i>	<i>Capel, Surrey*</i>
Beatrice Ellen Bell	Wife	33		Barton, Isle of Wight *
Wilfred George Bell	Son	8		Barton, Isle of Wight
Harold Jack Bell	Son	6		Barton, Isle of Wight
Violet Isabel Bell	Daughter	2		Barton, Isle of Wight
Hubert Edward Bell	Son	5mths		Barton, Isle of Wight

* Other records show William James Bell, born 1880 Whippingham, I.W.,
Beatrice Ellen Mitchell, born 1878 Capel, Surrey

ISLE OF WIGHT COUNTY PRESS

31 October 1914

FATALLY CRUSHED BY STEAM TRACTOR.

NEWPORT STEERSMAN'S PAINFUL DEATH.

INQUEST YESTERDAY

On Wednesday a very distressing fatal accident occurred at about midday on the Blackwater-road, near Newport, the victim being Mr. William James Bell, aged 34, the well-known steersman of the large Foden steam motor-lorry belonging to Messrs. W.B. Mew, Langton, and Co., Ltd., of the Royal Brewery, Newport. Deceased, who lived at Kelso Cottage, Bellemeade-lane, Newport, was returning to Newport and was steering the engine, which has the lorry attached. He was just approaching Upper Shide Mill. The lorry was being kept on the left-hand side of the road to enable vehicles to pass it, and deceased was occupying the steersman's seat on the left side, with his leg, as usual, extended out to the left behind the side of the engine. Suddenly deceased called out to the driver to stop, and it was found that the left wheel of the lorry struck the bank and the side of the engine came into collision with an oak post and wall at Mr. H. Tullidge's garden, with the result that deceased's left leg was crushed between the post and the engine, and pinned there. The driver, assisted by Mr. Percy Hollis, of the Mill, and his men, and Mr. Charles Wyatt, set about the difficult task of extricating deceased from his painful position, and in order to accomplish this the post had to be cut off and part of the fence removed. In the meanwhile medical and ambulance aid was summoned from Newport, and Dr. Foster quickly motored to the scene, followed by Dr. Thompson, and with the assistance of Supt. J.W. Gibbs and Messrs. W.G. Denness and E. Huck, of the St. John Ambulance, rendered all aid possible to deceased, whose leg and thigh were badly crushed, and he was suffering from other injuries. Mr. T.R. Tilling (secretary of the Royal Brewery) was also on the scene after securing medical and ambulance aid, and Insp. H. Sibbick was present. The motor ambulance of the Royal I.W. County Hospital was telephoned for, and in this the sufferer was very expeditiously conveyed to that Hospital in charge of Mr. W.G. Denness (Ambulance). Unfortunately on arrival at that institution deceased succumbed to his injuries. Deceased was of a cheerful and kindly disposition, and was always ready to lend a helping hand to others. In his earlier years he was an athlete of some attainments, and he had been keen and enthusiastic in training the Barton Council School boys to take part in tugs-of-war and other healthy physical exercises. He leaves a widow and five young children, for whom much sympathy is felt.

THE INQUEST

— was held by the Deputy Coroner (Francis A. Joyce, Esq) at Ryde yesterday (Friday) afternoon. Mr F. Woodford was foreman of the jury. Mr. J. Fardell represented the interests of Messrs. W.B. Mew, Langton, and Co., Ltd., the employers of deceased.

EDWARD SMITH, 3 Mount-terrace, Newport, a driver in the employ of Messrs. Mew, Langton, and Co., gave evidence of identification. He said the deceased was employed with him as a steersman, and they had been working on the same engine since August 25. On Wednesday they were returning with the engine from Sandown. Everything went satisfactorily until about 12.30, when they were passing Brookside House, Blackwater-road. Deceased suddenly shouted out, "Hold up," and almost immediately the engine bashed into an upright post, jamming deceased between the post and the engine. It took some considerable time to extricate his leg; in fact, the fence had to be sawed down.

In answer to the Coroner, witness said he was travelling at about five miles an hour at the time. In witness's opinion the accident was caused through deceased being too close to the engine, thereby being unable to work the steering gear. It was not due to any defect in the steering gear, for which deceased was solely responsible. There had been no trouble with the steering gear since he had been on the engine. No instructions were issued from the firm as to the speed at which they were to travel, but generally they did between four and a half and five miles an hour. Deceased sat on the steering seat generally with one leg on the step. If his leg had not been hanging out the chances of an accident might have been avoided.

The CORONER gave it as his opinion that the steering seat did not appear to be particularly safe.

The witness added that he had not complained about any defect in the steering, and he did not think deceased had.

In reply to the Foreman, witness said it was not possible for both the steersman's legs to be inside - there was not room.

The FOREMAN observed that in his opinion it was necessary for deceased to have one leg outside to enable him to have proper control of the steering.

The CORONER remarked that it seemed strange, if the engine was only going at five miles an hour, that deceased could not swing his leg inside.

In reply to Mr. Fardell, witness said deceased was well acquainted with the road, having travelled on it on an average four or five days a week. It was absolutely unsafe for the steersman to have both his legs inside the well. But for the fact that deceased had the misfortune to strike against the post, the result would not have been so serious.

The CORONER said he rather thought that if the engine was going under five miles an hour witness should have pulled up in a short space.

Mr. FARDELL said the total weight of the engine and tractor was eight tons.

EDWARD TARRANT, of the Madeira Hotel, Shanklin, said he was about 200 yards away when the accident happened. He saw the engine gradually swerve to the left and stop. Presently he heard a man shout out "Oh, Bill, my leg has gone." Witness hurried to the spot and saw that deceased was pinned between the post and the engine. He considered the accident was caused partly through deceased hugging the bank too closely. The engine was going at quite a normal speed. Witness added that he had passed deceased on the road several times, and in his opinion he was a very excellent steersman.

Dr. STANLEY FOSTER, practising at Newport, said when he arrived deceased was still pinned between the wooden structure of the wall and the engine. His leg was badly smashed, and he was partially unconscious. He was bleeding profusely from a punctured wound. The hemorrhage, though profuse, was almost immediately controlled. His opinion was that deceased died from shock. He must have suffered a tremendous lot of pain.

Dr. A.B. WADE, temporary house surgeon at the County Hospital, said deceased was brought into that institution at about 2.45. He gave two gasps whilst he remained in the ambulance and died almost immediately. Witness afterwards ascertained that his thigh was very much hurt.

The CORONER, in summing up, said deceased was a man of considerable experience and had sole charge of the steering apparatus. The solution which the witness Smith suggested was undoubtedly the right one — that in consequence of hugging the bank too close he was unable to steer the apparatus aright. There was no confirmation of the suggestion of excessive speed, and they had no right to conclude that the engine was travelling beyond the regulation speed. He was not disposed to suggest that the slightest blame be attached to any one.

The jury returned a verdict of misadventure, adding a rider that there was not sufficient protection for the man who was steering.

Mr. FARDELL, on behalf of the firm, said nobody regretted more than Messrs. Mew, Langton, and Co. the result of that unfortunate accident. In the deceased they had lost an employé who came into their service at the age of 20 — 14 years ago — and who was, as far as they knew, a man whom they could respect and a man who had always done his work properly and well. They deeply deplored the loss sustained by the family.

Transcription by Rosemary Stewart, further research by Tony Barton, for the Friends of Newport and Carisbrooke Cemeteries, © 2019
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