

George Albert Prangnell

1881 census, Barton Village, Whippingham

Henry Prangnell	Head	50	Laborer Cement Works	Isle of Wight, Hampshire
Christine Prangnell	Wife	48	Laundress	Isle of Wight, Hampshire
Frank Prangnell	Son	18	Laborer	Isle of Wight, Hampshire
George Prangnell	Son	16	Laborer	Isle of Wight. Hampshire
Ernest Prangnell	Son	14	Laborer	Isle of Wight. Hampshire
Fred Prangnell	Son	12		Isle of Wight, Hampshire
Kate Prangnell	Daughter	9		Isle of Wight, Hampshire
Ellen Prangnell	Daughter	7		Isle of Wight, Hampshire

Isle of Wight Observer – 4 March 1882

THE FATAL ACCIDENT AT NEWPORT.

The inquest touching the death of the youth George Albert Prangnell, who met with a fatal accident in Pyle-street took place on Friday morning last before the coroner for the Isle of Wight, Mr. F. Blake. Mr. John Allen was elected foreman, and after the jury had viewed the body at Barton's Village, and visited the spot where the lamentable occurrence took place, the following evidence was taken: Henry Prangnell, father of the deceased, living at Barton's Village, said his late son's name was George Albert Prangnell, and he would have been 17 years of age on the 10th March. He lived with him, and followed the occupation of a bricklayer's and general labourer. He commenced working for Mr. Jabez James Flux last Monday morning. He last saw his son alive yesterday morning at a quarter past 6, prior to his going to work. He was in good health at the time, and came home for breakfast at 8 o'clock. Witness did not see him himself, but the deceased's mother saw him at the time. - Frederick Crews, living at 23, New-street, said he was a baker by trade. Yesterday morning he was employed on Mr. Flux's premises as timekeeper. George Prangnell, the deceased, was there working as a labourer. He was first employed in mixing mortar. There was a new oven on the premises, which had lately been constructed. The deceased went in the oven for the first time about half-past 7. There was no orders given for him to enter. He went in with a trowel and worked the earth from the back part of the oven, and remained until 8 o'clock. After breakfast he went in again, in company with a lad named Brake, who was younger than the deceased. They were both engaged in clearing the earth from the oven. Witness called Brake out to lend a hand to one of the men building above, while the deceased still remained in the oven. About a quarter of an hour afterwards Brake called out that there was a crack on the second story above the oven. The side of the house gave out immediately; the gable end fell in on the crown of the oven. This caused the crown to give way. The deceased was first caught by the legs, and then the debris descended and gradually "caught" him on the back. Witness was at the mouth of the oven trying to drag him out, but could not move him. He was completely covered with the exception of his head. He called out to Downer to assist in getting him out. He came forward, but could not move the deceased. Prangnell did not cry out, and he must have been killed instantaneously. There was not time to warn the deceased of impending danger, for after the wall cracked it gave way at once. The bricklayers were present, and saw that the deceased was working in the oven. He did not hear any orders given for him to enter. On the afternoon previous to the day of the accident he went into the oven to clear out the earth, but he went in of his own accord, for no person gave him orders. The crown of the oven had been finished nine days. - By the Foreman: Mr. Flux was not present when the deceased went into the oven. There was no means of getting the earth out but by entering the oven. On the Wednesday the bricklayers said they would have to clear out the batch, but no orders were

given. His head was towards the oven's mouth about two feet from the entrance. He asked him about five minutes before the accident occurred if he was all right, and he gave a satisfactory reply. There was no foreman on the works whatever, but an architect was employed. There were no iron bars on the crown of the oven. - Dr Castle said he was called to see the deceased a little after 10 o'clock. He first saw him lying between the fallen crown and the floor of the oven, and a short distance from the mouth. He was not dead at the time. Witness saw him about 12 o'clock after they had rescued him. From the appearance of the body he had no doubt that both respiration and circulation were stopped by the falling of the mass of brickwork. - Henry Gibson said he was a bricklayer, and had been employed in the building of some premises in Pyle-street for Mr. Flux, and he assisted in the building of the oven. The arch was "turned" last Tuesday week. He did not give the lad any directions to go into the oven or to clear it out, although an opinion was expressed among themselves that the oven would have to be cleared out. He thought it would be quite safe, as far as his judgement went, to have the oven cleared out. He did not see the boy go into the oven, neither on Wednesday afternoon nor Thursday morning. He did not hear Brake call out at the time of the accident. The side wall fell out, and the gable end of the old building fell in on the top of the oven. There was a wall round the oven, and they built a wall equal to 14 ins. thickness to the old 4 ½ in. wall, which was then standing. He had no experience in building ovens since he was a boy. Downer, a man who worked at the oven, had done more in that line than he had. - James Downer stated that he was a bricklayer, and assisted in building the oven. He received his orders to build the oven from Mr. Flux. They had a plan of the oven when they commenced. He did not give the deceased any directions to clear out the oven, neither did he to the other boys. He did not hear Gibson say anything that would be likely to lead the boys to suppose they would have to clear out the oven. When the accident occurred he was in the front part of the building, and he heard the fall. From the time which elapsed after the building had been completed he thought it would be quite safe for boys to enter the oven. He was employed by Mr. Flux to build the oven, and before he commenced the work he told him that he had helped to build ovens before. He added that he built some in Ryde, but afterwards stated he did not take the leading part in the erection of such ovens. - By the Foreman: He was shown a plan before they commenced, but never saw it after the work was begun. - Frederick Ochs said he was an architect, and prepared the plans for Mr. Flux's new buildings. He did not superintend the building of the oven, but he advised Mr. Flux to let out the even part as a separate contract, so as to obtain competent oven builders. Mr. Flux replied that he had two men who were fully competent to carry it out. He observed the work as it went forward, but as Mr. Flux said he had competent men he, to a certain extent, left it in their hands. In his judgement the wall was perfectly strong. He thought the oven ought not to have been cleared out, and that such work should have been done at the very last. It should have remained for six weeks, at least, at this time of the year before being touched. The removal of the core was the cause of the accident without doubt, and if no one had entered the oven it would be there at the present time. The walls were quite strong enough for the purpose. He was never more surprised in his life upon learning that they had attempted to clear the oven. The support of the oven having been taken away by removing the core, it pushed the base of the wall out, consequently the top of the wall "caved in," and fell upon the oven. He was aware the old four and a-half inch wall was pinned on to the new wall. - One of the jurymen expressed an opinion that concrete should not have been used where brick had been employed, and particularly without the support of tie bars. - The Foreman said that the accident was caused by the fact that the cross wall rested upon the oven without any bars being put for support. - George Thomas Brake, aged 18, was employed as a labourer by Mr. Flux, said, on Wednesday morning, about 10 o'clock, he heard Gibson say to the other mason, Downer, that the dirt would have to be drawn out. Brake went at once, and at 4 o'clock in the afternoon the deceased came and assisted him at his request. He would not have gone to clear the oven had it not been for the remark of Gibson. On the day of the accident the deceased took the lead and went in, while he (witness) followed. About a quarter of an hour

afterwards he called out to get some slates from the house. He saw the wall crack when he was at the top of the scaffold, but it was, five minutes, as near as he could tell, before the gable ends of the wall fell out. - The architect, at this juncture, explained that he had recommended a beam to pass from wall to wall over the crown of the oven. - Witness (continuing) said he heard Mr. Crews say that the oven must be cleared, as they wanted to get a fire there as soon as possible. - Jabez Henry Flux, said he was a general dealer, and not a builder. On February 2nd, Mr. Tucker and Downer came to Little Pan Farm, having heard he had agreed to purchase the Pyle-street property from Mr. Wadham. They asked for employment. He told them the first thing he would require was the building of an oven. He asked Tucker whether he thoroughly understood the nature of such a building, and he referred him to several jobs he had in hand in Castle-road. He then asked Downer what he was, and he answered "a mason." Witness asked him if he understood building ovens, and he replied "Yes," and mentioned three persons for whom he had built ovens. Witness then said if he understood it he should have no objection to employ him. Both Tucker and Downer came to terms for 6d per hour. Mr. Tucker engaged to see to the works, and to keep the men's time. He was employed until Tuesday, the 14th inst. Gibson said he had not built ovens, but if Downer understood it they could make a commencement. He gave instructions to Mr. Ochs, in his presence, for the commencement of the work. He quite expected that the architect had the superintendence of the oven along with the whole erection, as it was not taken away from his control. Witness was on the premises occasionally, but gave no instructions, as he did not understand it. He considered Downer was the foreman. Yesterday morning he was on the premises, having just come from Mr. Ochs'. He ran to the spot, and said "I hope no one's hurt," and his brother-in-law replied "he's dead." He did not wish the oven to be prepared for heating. - By a juryman: He never asked for bars to be put across the oven. He obtained bars for the furnace at the request of the workmen. - The Foreman: As far as I can see there is no blame to be attached to the architect, but the blame really rests on the man who carried out the work, the accident being a result of his incompetency. - The Coroner, in summing up, said although there was no one criminally responsible for the accident, some person must be open to censure in the matter. - The jury, after some deliberation, returned a verdict to the effect that deceased accidentally met with his death on the 22nd February while engaged in clearing the earth out of a newly-constructed oven, of which the crown gave way, causing the deceased to receive a blow on the chest, thereby receiving such injuries as to cause his death. They believed that such an accident was caused by the defective construction of the oven, and by the premature removal of the core which supported the same. The jury desired to further express an opinion that Downer had acted improperly in undertaking work he was unable to perform, and also for having executed the work in such an inefficient manner. - The remains of the deceased were on Sunday afternoon interred in St Paul's Churchyard, amid the sorrowings of relatives and friends. There was a large attendance of the public, as is invariably the case when death occurs through such painful circumstances. The Rev W. L. Sharpe conducted the service.

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