

RYDE BOY KILLED IN ACCIDENT

Robert Steffan PIETAK, aged 16, a pedestrian, was killed and two other people were injured in a road accident near Ryde airport on Saturday night.

Robert, who was the second son of Mrs. SMITH and the late Mr. Ignancy (Joe) PIETAK, of 117 Great Preston Road, Elmfield, Ryde, was walking with Miss Lynn CHESSELL, of Lower Bettesworth Road, Ryde, when a collision occurred on the Ryde to Brading Road, involving a car driven by Mr. Robert COLVER, of 94 Pellhurst Road, Ryde.

Miss CHESSELL was injured, and Miss R. COLVER, a passenger in the car, was slightly injured.

The inquest was opened at the Town Hall, Ryde, on Wednesday by Mr. J.V. BULLIN, coroner, who adjourned the hearing for seven days after evidence of identification by Robert's step-father, Mr. David SMITH, and P.C. D. GRANGER.

Dr. P.D. SWINSTEAD, Island consultant pathologist, said death was due to multiple injuries, consistent with a motor accident.

Robert PIETAK was a former pupil at Bishop Lovett School, Ryde, and Ryde High Street. For just over a year he had been employed locally as an apprentice carpenter and had attended the I.W. Technical College, Newport. He was a keen angler and pigeon fancier.

The funeral took place yesterday at St. John's Church, Ryde. Robert was buried at Ryde Cemetery in the grave of his father, who died 12 years ago.

ISLE OF WIGHT COUNTY PRESS Saturday 14th July 1973

The Island Coroner, Mr. J.V. BULLIN, was on Wednesday asked by an inquest jury to seek road improvements to the main Ryde-Brading highway near Ryde Airport - the second such request he had received as a result of a pedestrian being killed in the area.

ISLE OF WIGHT COUNTY PRESS Saturday 14th July 1973

A verdict of accidental death was returned on Robert Stefan PIETAK (16), apprentice carpenter, of 117, Great Preston Road, Ryde, fatally injured in a midnight tragedy as he crossed the road.

The jury, at Ryde Town Hall, added a four-point rider;

For a 30 m.p.h. speed restriction in the Ryde Airport area (which includes the La Babalu and Carousel night clubs, and a petrol filling station); provision of first-class road lighting; provision of a pavement on the eastern side of the road; and some form of signposting or pedestrian crossing to ensure that people leaving the complex did so at the same point instead of crossing the main road over a wide area.

Mr. BULLIN commented: "In September, 1971, I held an inquest on a pedestrian killed near the same spot.

"Subsequently the question of a pavement and street lighting was put to the local authority.

"They said the question of a footpath was governed by expense, although there was some suggestion of future development, but regarding lighting, they did not consider such expenditure warranted on that section of road.

"However, I shall contact them again," he added.

"TERRIFIC BANG"

Miss Lynn Christine CHESSELL, student, of Treetops, Lower Bettesworth Road, Ryde, said that at 20 minutes past midnight, on July 1st, she left the Carousel with Robert PIETAK and another youth, Ian YOUNG. They went to cross the main road. Before doing so she looked both ways and saw no traffic.

Ian had reached the opposite pavement, and she was just about to step on to it, followed by Robert, when there was a terrific bang.

"I don't know what happened," said Miss CHESSELL. "I was thrown on to the pavement. My glasses and shoes were gone ... I thought "I'm dead."

Ian then came to help her up, but she did not see Robert again. Neither did she see the car involved; she did not think it struck her, but that Robert may have pushed into her.

Ian YOUNG, factory worker, of 113, High Park Road, Ryde, also said he saw nothing approaching before the accident.

“I remember standing on the pavement. I did not see Robert again at all.”

A motorist, who was sitting in a car parked in the petrol station forecourt, Mr. Norman John COOK, of 8, West Street, Newport, said he was facing Sandown but also saw no sign of an approaching car.

He recalled the three young people crossing the road, then there was a bang, and he got the impression of lights from the La Babalu reflected from the car involved.

Not until later did he see the car, which was then parked, having apparently carried Robert PIETAK along the road. The boy's body was face down in the gutter.

The driver of the vehicle involved in the fatality. Mr. Robert COLVER, progress chaser, of 94, Pellhurst Road, Road, Ryde, said his speed was between 40 and 45 m.p.h. and he was on dipped headlights, travelling from the direction of Sandown to Ryde.

Just before the La Bablu there was a bend and dip in the road, which could well mask an approaching car from anyone crossing near the club.

In the Renault 12 saloon with him were his daughter, on the front passenger seat, and another girl on the rear seat. He saw two people two or three feet from the nearside kerb, braked and veered towards the centre of the road to avoid them.

FELT A BUMP

“A few seconds later, my windscreen shattered, and almost at the same time I felt a bump ... The victim eventually hit the nearside part of the shattered windscreen and the glass fell completely in on top of us, cutting my daughter.

“Eventually the victim fell from the bonnet into the side of the road, face downward in the gutter.”

Replying to the coroner, he said he had no idea what caused his windscreen to shatter just before the accident; it might have been a chipping from the road.

All the witnesses in the case said the road was badly lit.

Mr. COLVER was represented by Mr. John ASPINALL (counsel), who received an assurance from Police Sergeant J. PEMBERTON during the hearing that the police contemplated no action against the driver.

The inquest was opened on July 4th and adjourned after evidence of identification, and medical evidence, which showed that Robert PIETAK died at the scene from multiple injuries.

Researched & typed by
Ann Barrett
Margaret Truckel