

MARRIAGE: 13th Dec 1871 Holy Trinity Church, Ryde, IW.
George BURNETT. 20. Bachelor. (father: James BURNETT)
& Annie Eliza DART. 21. Spinster. (father: James DART)

George & Annie had two young daughters who died within two days of each other:-
Edith Helen BURNETT aged 2, died 5th Dec 1876 (IW Registrars ref: R22/E126)
Amelia Annie BURNETT aged 4, died 7th Dec 1876 (IW Registrars ref: R22/E129)

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1881 CENSUS: RG11/1178. folio 111. page 17.
Address: George-street, Ryde, IW.

George BURNETT. Head. Mar. 29. Porter. Ryde.
Ann E. BURNETT. Wife. Mar. 28. Devonshire.
William BURNETT. Son. 4. Ryde.

ISLE OF WIGHT OBSERVER Saturday 2nd June 1883 page 5

FATAL ACCIDENT ON RYDE PIER

An inquest was held on Saturday evening at the Royal Isle of Wight Infirmary, by the deputy Coroner, E.F. BLAKE, Esq., touching the death of **George BURNETT**, 32, porter in the employ of the Joint Railway Companies. The jury, of which Mr. CRABB was foreman, having viewed the body, the following evidence was taken :

Christopher MURSELL deposed that he was in the service of the Ryde and Newport Railway as booking clerk and acting stationmaster at Haven Street. On the previous day he went down in a goods van by the 1.15 train. When they got to the station at the end of the pier only one porter (deceased) assisted in getting the luggage out of the van. He took a few parcels and a hamper to the platform opposite that which the train was drawn up, and to do this crossed the line. After he had taken over the small parcels, he came back for the portmanteau. It was not a very heavy one, but he put it on his back, and was about to take it to the opposite side of the platform where the others were. It was necessary when the train got to the bottom of the pier that the engine should go down to the points and then come up the other side. While the deceased was taking the portmanteau witness heard the engine whistle, and said to the deceased "look out for the engine." The engine was about twelve yards off, but deceased had already started across the metals to go to the opposite platform, and he had got about a pace from the guard's van. Witness did not think he heard what he said ; he took another step ; the engine caught him and knocked him down. He was not thrown on either side of the line, but the engine carried him forward a little way, and then threw him down inside the rail, and went over him. Everybody there then ran and did the best they could to get him out. Did not know the deceased.

James TUFFNELL, head porter in the employ of the Joint Railway Companies, deposed that on the previous day he was on duty at the end of the pier. Saw the Newport train come in, she was due at 1.49, and was within two or three minutes of her time. Saw BURNETT remove some luggage and carry it to the opposite platform across the other line. He had taken some small parcels and a hamper over, and came back for the other things. Witness was placing the things in a cage on No.1 platform. The engine passed, and witness heard the driver cry out "He's underneath!" The engine at that time stopped. Witness jumped off the platform and ran to the engine. Saw the deceased right underneath the engine against the ash-box. He gave orders for the engine to go easy, and then went underneath and pulled him out. When he first saw him he was lying doubled up near

the ash-box, but when the engine moved he fell on his back. He was bleeding from the mouth ; the engine had gone over his feet, and he kept groaning. Deceased thoroughly understood his work. He had been doing the same sort of work ever since the line had been open, and he had been a porter in the Pier Company's before that. Did not think he was deaf.

- The Coroner : Who ordered this luggage to be taken over the line? – No orders were given.

- The Coroner : What is the object of taking luggage across the line instead of putting it out on the near platform ?- Where there is a quantity of luggage we land it on No.2 platform, but when there is only a small quantity we take it to No.1 platform. That is done to save time and to get on with the work.

- The Coroner : Who decides as to whether it is sufficient ?

- The Guard. No one told BURNETT about it, but as to where only a small portion of luggage he went to take it as part of his duty. If there was only a small portion of luggage, deceased would bring it across on his own responsibility to save time. Rightly we ought to have a cage on each platform for the luggage, but instead of having two cages half full we would rather have one full one, and cross the line to the other platform to put it in the cage there, into which the other luggage brought by the Isle of Wight Railway train would be put.

The Coroner : Were there actual directions that this should be done in this particular way, or do you do it on your own responsibility ?- There is no orders given. – they do it on their own responsibility.

- The Coroner : Can you account in any way for this poor man being knocked down ? – No I cannot.

By a Juryman : Deceased acted as shunter as well as porter. He uncoupled the engine that afternoon.

– The Coroner : That makes it all the more strange. He of all men in the world, ought to know where the engine would be. I suppose if there had been no accident he would have had to attach the engine again ?- Yes; he has been a shunter ever since the line has been opened.

Mr. ASTRIDGE said he should like to know whether anything was said to the deceased before he started across the line. – Yes; I said “ George look out for the engine.”

The Coroner : Why did you say that ?, is it usual to warn any one if the engine is coming, I should think he heard me, for he was very close to me.

James PEARCE, engine driver on the Ryde, Newport and Cowes Railway, said he was in charge of the train which left Newport at 1.15. when they got to the end of the pier deceased detached the engine from the train. As soon as he called out “right” witness blew the whistle, and went through the cross road on to No.1 line. He then had the signal that the line was clear, and proceeded. He saw deceased cross the line with a hamper and then go back to the van. When witness was about 25 yards off he saw deceased turn round and take a portmanteau on his shoulders. When the witness was three yards from him he stepped out from the van with the portmanteau on his back. Witness touched his whistle and reversed the engine, and while he was doing so the engine struck deceased. He jumped down and called out “Good God ! he is underneath the engine.” He saw that deceased was being crushed by the portmanteau against the ash-pan. Then he moved the engine and they got him out. Cross Examined : I was not going with any speed. I was not going more than four miles an hour.

John Henry ASTRIDGE, Stationmaster at the Pier Head and Esplanade, said he was not present when the accident occurred. There was no order for the porters to cross the line in the manner stated, but he was aware that it was done when there was not much luggage. If ordinary care was exercised, no accident ought to happen. He did not object to the porters taking over small packages.

John Walter HOPKINS, house surgeon of the Royal Isle of Wight Infirmary, said deceased was brought to the infirmary the previous afternoon, between 2 and 3 o'clock. He examined deceased and found that his feet were very much injured. He complained of his back, due he believed to fractured ribs, and his breathing was very bad, showing that something was wrong with his lungs, his feet were dressed and he was put to bed. He was quite conscious, but did not say how

it occurred. Witness remained with deceased till his death, which occurred at half-past 5 o'clock. Without making a *post mortem* he could not say exactly what injuries the deceased had received, but he thought he had died partly from shock to the system, and partly from the rupture of the large blood vessels of the heart.

The Coroner said it had been suggested whether they had not better have a *post mortem* but it must be patent to all of them that deceased died from the effects of the injuries he had received, and they could imagine what those injuries were. He thought it only right to spare the feelings of the relatives. He therefore thought that there was no necessity for a *post mortem*. The deceased having carried out these particular duties for three years must have been well conversant with them, and therefore there was no question of inexperience or anything of that sort. The only question was who had given the orders that the luggage should have been removed from the train in this manner this was, and although it was satisfactory to himself as it must be to them to find that no orders were given, and that the poor man acted as it might be expected he would do in order to save time and trouble, and consequently no blame was attributed to anybody, still he thought it might be well if they were to suggest to the Railway Company not to allow this sort of thing in the future. The luggage should be put upon the platform opposite to which the train happens to come. Though he had no doubt the officials would see the importance of this themselves, still he did not think any harm would be done if they made some recommendation a rider to their verdict.

The jury returned a verdict of "Accidental death," and added a rider as suggested by the Coroner, that the Railway Company should not allow crossing the line with the luggage in the future.

THE LATE ACCIDENT THE FUNERAL

The funeral of Mr. **George BURNETT**, the particulars of whose accidental death upon the Pier are recorded in another column, took place on Tuesday afternoon at the Cemetery. Mr. **ASTRIDGE**, station master, and all employees of the Joint Railway and the Pier companies who could possibly be spared, testified their sympathy by attending. The Foresters, to which order the deceased belonged also attended in considerable numbers, nearly 100 altogether following, in addition to a very large and sympathetic body of the general public. A number of flowers were placed upon the coffin, including a very beautiful wreath, composed of spireas, lilies of the valley, bouvardia, pelargoniums, azalea, double white narcissus, white roses, maiden-hair fern, &c., which was contributed by the employes of the Joint Railway Companies. The funeral service was impressively performed by the Rev. **A.J. WADE**. The funeral arrangements were efficiently carried out by Messrs. **JENKINS**.

Researched & typed by
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