

Considerable excitement was caused on Saturday night when it was reported that an elderly man had been knocked down by a cyclist in St. John's -road and killed, and that the cyclist had been seriously injured. The unfortunate victim proved to be Mr. **George PARSONS**, 53 years of age living in Abingdon-road, and who as a carpenter and paper hanger was well known throughout the town. As the result of inquiries by the police it appeared he was in the act of crossing St. John's-road, just above the entrance to the railway station, when two young cyclists came down the hill from the direction of High-street. One of them Edgar HAYES, of Marlborough Cottage Nettlestone, passed Mr. PARSONS safely but his companion, Cyril ALLEN, of Victoria-road, East Cowes, collided violently with him, knocking him down, and was himself thrown from his machine. Mr. PARSONS, who was unconscious, was taken into the Commercial Inn and medical aid summoned but before the arrival of Dr. PRIDMORE death took place. The cyclist ALLEN was badly cut about the face and was suffering from shock and he was taken to the hospital where it was found necessary to detain him. The deceased man leaves a widow and four sons, one of whom has just been discharged from the Army and the other three are still serving.

The Deputy Coroner (Alderman THIRKELL), held an inquest on the body of Mr. PARSONS, on Tuesday morning, at the Railway Mission Hall, Monkton Street. There was no Jury. The coroner, having viewed the body and the spot where the fatality occurred, took evidence.

Mrs. Caroline Louise PARSONS, the widow, of 8, Abingdon Road, identified the body and said her husband was a carpenter, working on his own account at that address. On Saturday night, about a quarter to nine, she met him in Monkton- street as she had arranged, and turned back with him to go towards home. They walked up St. Johns Road to near the Commercial Inn, where they attempted to cross over diagonally to Abingdon Road on the south side. it was very dark and she did not notice whether there was a lamp alight. (A lady in court said there was). In the act of crossing, side by side, her husband being on her right, a bicycle came along and knocked deceased down. She did not see or hear its approach and heard no bell sounded. After it had struck him in front she observed her husband lying on his back. She spoke to him but he could make no reply. She lifted him up and found that he was bleeding from the back of his head. Assistance arrived and deceased was taken to the Commercial Inn where Dr. PRIDMORE saw him. Deceased was in fairly good health at the time of the accident. He could hear very keenly but his eyesight was not grand. He wore eyeglasses but not out of doors. After the accident she saw a bicycle lying in the middle of the road but she did not see the rider. Deceased never spoke up to the time of his death.

Miss Bessie CADDIE, nurse, 19, Preston Place, an eye witness, said she was walking in St. John's Road, opposite the Commercial Inn, and heard a bicycle bell ring quite distinctly. She then saw two cyclists coming down the road, and one being a few yards ahead of the other. The front one passed deceased but not very close to him. She then heard a thud and saw the second one had knocked the deceased down. The hind one was not immediately behind the other and it was the one on the left that passed safely. The accident happened almost in the middle of the road. There were lamps on both bicycles. Witness went to the assistance of deceased and remained with him in the Commercial Inn until the arrival of Dr. PRIDMORE. He only lived for 8 to 10 minutes after the accident. Witness was present at his death which occurred before the doctor's arrival.

The Coroner: What pace were the cyclists going?

Witness: Going down hill 10 to 12 miles an hour and the brakes must have been used, as they were coming down rather casually seeing that they were approaching the end of a steep hill. She explained that she herself was a cyclist. Deceased bled profusely from the back of the head. He did not speak. The other man was brought into the inn as well, but was subsequently taken to the hospital.

By the Chief Constable: At the moment of the accident she was standing at the end of the pavement, talking to a friend. There was no more traffic, and she had not been able to form any reason for the accident except that probably deceased did not hear the bell.

Do you think the cyclist or deceased was dazzled by the street lamp just above? - No, I should not expect that.

Do you attach blame to any particular person? - No, I don't at all.

Laura Jane BUTLER, wife of George BUTLER, basket-maker, Weymouth Villas, Brading-road, Elmfield, said about 9 o'clock on Saturday night she was walking down St. John's-road and heard two bicycle bells ring, one after the other. The first, which was 10 yards in front of the other, passed deceased safely as he appeared to be crossing the road, but the second struck him, knocking him down. She

considered the cyclists were going at a moderate pace and should think the brakes were being used. She did not hear them talking and they were certainly not riding recklessly.

The Coroner: Or too fast? - No, sir, not too fast. She could not judge the rate per mile. They were not in line when deceased crossed the road.

Do you attach blame to anybody? - No, sir.

Then how do you account for the accident? - Well, the man kept walking, he didn't stop at all, not noticing the second bicycle at all. Mr. PARSONS was on the left-hand side of his wife, (not the right as the latter stated) and nearer the middle of the road. Mrs. PARSONS and the lady with her were on or near the pavement at the time. There was no one else in the roadway other than the deceased and the cyclists.

The Coroner: That throws a little more light on it.

By the Chief Constable: The cyclist that passed safely rode near the left-hand side when deceased had only just left the pavement. The second cyclist swerved to the right in attempting to avoid deceased who kept straight on.

Alfred George JOY, 41 Albert-street, railway porter, who was walking towards the station at the time of the accident, said that when opposite NELSON's shop he heard a woman shout "Look out" and then saw two bicycles. He did not hear any bell sounded. The cyclists were only a few yards apart. The front bicycle turned to the right to avoid several people standing in the middle of the road, and the second turned to the left which caused him to come nearer the kerb, when he struck deceased who fell on his back. Witness went to his assistance. The cyclists were travelling at from 8 to 10 miles an hour, which he considered very moderate, and they must have been using their brakes. The cyclist who struck deceased was obliged to go near the kerb on his left side to avoid the other cyclist who in turn had to swerve to avoid the people. When he heard the woman's shout, deceased was standing in the middle of the road with several people.

The Coroner remarked that contradicted the previous evidence.

Edgar HAYLES, Nettlestone, motor driver, employed by Messrs. CREETH, one of the cyclists referred to stated that about 9 o'clock on Saturday night, he Cyril ALLEN, of East Cowes, rode down St John's Road from High Street on their way to Nettlestone, ALLEN staying with him for the week-end. Witness was the front rider, and when approaching the foot of the hill, passed deceased, ringing his bell before doing so. He did not hear ALLEN ring his bell. Witness used both brakes when half way down the hill, and was riding at what he judged was a moderate pace. He was in front all the way down the hill and saw nothing of the accident.

The Coroner: What about this crowd of people spoken of by the last witness? - My bicycle was turned to the right to avoid deceased. There were only two persons - deceased and his wife - who had first started crossing the road and were near the kerb on this side of the road. Deceased was on his wife's left hand, but were not close together when I passed. As I went by deceased appeared to slow down.

Dr. J. W. PRIDMORE deposed that he was called to the Commercial Inn after the accident on Saturday to see deceased whose body lay next to the door. The man was quite dead. Deceased bled from the nose and his death was due to fracture of the base of the skull as the result of falling on the back of his head, which was consistent with the evidence of those who witnessed the accident.

This closed the evidence that the Coroner proposed taking, as the injured cyclist was unable to leave the hospital to give his version of the case and it had transpired that he himself was rendered practically insensible and knew little of the actual circumstances.

In summing up the case, the Coroner remarked that it was not a very important part of the inquiry whether there was one or a dozen persons in the middle of the road at the time, though speaking as a cyclist he could testify to the inconvenience, if not danger, that was often caused by the congregation of people there on a Saturday night. Most of the evidence showed that deceased and his wife were attempting to cross the road, and PARSONS, whose eyesight was apparently very defective, was hastening to get home and after hardly allowing the first cyclist to pass him without stopping him was proceeding on his way without having regard to the second one that was following. That was the most dangerous thing in the world to do, having allowed the first to pass they should always keep their eyes open for the second or third coming down a hill. He did not think however, that they could attribute any fault to the cyclist in the present case. The evidence conclusively showed that the riders had full control over their machines and that they were not travelling at more than 8 or 9 miles an hour, the witness who had been called stating that he had applied his two brakes. The Chief Constable had suggested that the street lamp which was illuminated might have been found rather too dazzling to deceased in coming into its glare from the darkness. However, he had no hesitation in arriving at the conclusion that deceased's death was accidental although the evidence was very

contradictory in regard to the number of people in the roadway. He thought Mrs. PARSONS had been mistaken, and that her husband in his anxiety to get across, left her side and got far into the road.

A verdict was then returned accordingly.

The Chief Constable (Mr. GREENSTREET) watched the case on behalf of the police.

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Researched & typed by  
Ann Barrett  
Kate MacDonell