

ISLE OF WIGHT OBSERVER Saturday 9th October 1920

**FATALITY AT HIGH PARK
BURIED UNDER 30 TONS OF SAND.**

A very sad and fatal accident and one which cast quite a gloom over the district, occurred on Wednesday afternoon, in the sandpit on the Preston Estate, High Park. Four men were engaged in digging sand, one of whom was **George PARSONS**, 55, of Colenutt's Road, Haylands. Another workman, named SMITH, noticing that a slide was likely to take place, called out to PARSONS to jump clear. He evidently did not hear the warning, and before further steps could be taken about 30 tons of sand gave way, burying PARSONS underneath.

The unfortunate man was extricated as soon as possible; but life was found to be extinct. The body was removed to the deceased man's home, and the Coroner was communicated with.

ISLE OF WIGHT OBSERVER Saturday 16th October 1920

FATALITY AT HIGH PARK

An inquest concerning the circumstances attending the death of **George PARSONS** was held at the Congregational Schoolroom, Haylands, on Saturday afternoon before the Deputy Coroner (W. H. P. F. THIRKELL, Esq) and a jury of which Mr HILLS was foreman.

Mr. G. W. COLENUTT appeared on behalf of Messrs WHEELER, Bros., the deceased's employers, and Mr R. L. FLUX watched the inquiry for the Insurance Co. Inspector HAWKINS represented the Police.

Mary Annie PARSONS, the Widow, 25 Colenutt's Road, identified the body and stated she last saw her husband alive on the morning of the fatality.

Bertie SMITH, 2 Riboleau Street, Ryde, a labourer in the employ of Messrs WHEELER. Bros., stated that on Wednesday about 2.30 p.m. he was working in company with deceased at the sandpit on Preston Park estate, High Park Road. Deceased was at the bottom of the pit throwing sand up on to a platform to another man named CORNEY who threw it on to the surface, witness carting it away on a wheelbarrow. When the sand shifted he called to him to look out but if he heard him he did not have time to climb the ladder to the surface and the earth and gravel fell completely burying him. He was engaged for about 20 minutes digging out the body by which time Dr INGLIS was there.

By Mr COLENUTT. He was working there from 9 o'clock in the morning and on returning from his dinner to the pit he noticed some earth had fallen into the lower part where deceased afterwards went. He did not know whether he went down to clear away the earth. It was an oblong pit with a higher and lower platform. The ladder only communicated with the surface but he could have stepped from it to the platform.

Joseph CORNEY, 2 High Park Terrace Elmfield, also employed by Messrs. WHEELER, said he was working at the pit on the afternoon in question, being on the net to the bottom platform. Deceased was at the lower park throwing up sand to witness, and he in turn threw it to the next platform. Another man threw it up to the last witness, on the surface. Some sand had fallen from the side during the morning and deceased was busy clearing it. He heard SMITH shout out. The debris passed the platform where witness was working and he jumped to clear himself and when he looked below he found deceased had disappeared. Witness helped to dig the body out and it took from 20 minutes to half an hour. There were no big stones amongst it, only ordinary gravel. He was there when the doctor pronounced life extinct.

In reply to Mr COLENUTT, witness said the pit was about 16ft deep there being a thickness of ordinary garden mould at the top, and below that gravel and loam, beneath which was the sharp running sand which he excavated. That which fell in the morning was from the face of the cutting and he was engaged in clearing this when the remainder of the earth above the concave fell in. There had been rain that morning and the previous night. Deceased was in charge of the operations at the pit.

Mr. E. J. WHEELER, of WHEELER Bros., stated they made a pit at High park Road and he had got to the bottom and were not more than 12ft. or 13ft. from the surface. Deceased was in charge of the work. On Wednesday morning witness was there and left at 11.30 a.m. He noticed that sand had fallen from the face of the put after the rain but he had no conversation with deceased about it as he left everything to him, and at the time he left deceased was working on the next platform to the bottom and he did not expect he

would go deeper again. He must have done so to get the comparatively small quantity of sand that fell from the surface.

The Coroner: You regarded it as rather foolhardy ? – Yes, because it wasn't worth any risk.

By Mr COLNUTT; The firm were building houses adjacent, for which sand was required. Deceased was a competent excavator and a man in whom they had every confidence. He had all the assistance he required and whatever material he wanted was at hand. He had been two years in their employ and was a most capable work man.

Replying to the jury witness said that deceased was in full charge of the work and if he wanted shores and struts he could have had them. He knew more about that particular work than witness.

Dr. Thomas INGLIS, "Westover," High Park High Road, deposed that he was present when the body was extricated. He was quite dead. The soil was sand and gravel and loam which was very wet and heavy. The cause of death was suffocation. There were no fractures and only a few abrasions.

The Coroner, in addressing the jury said the inquiry had been postponed because in such cases they had to give H.M. Inspector of Factories 24 hours notice of it and a telegram had been received from him stating he could not be there in time but requesting him to hold the inquest in his absence. The Inspector proposed to view the site on Tuesday and he could make any representation that he wished.

The story was simplified by the fact that the deceased was not acting under any orders at the time but on his own initiative. Mr WHEELER was surprised he took the risk of descending to the bottom after the first fall had taken place but there was nothing to show that anyone was to blame and deceased evidently thought the piece of sand was worth getting.

A Juror: In order to make a clean job of it.

The Coroner observed that the next platform where Mr WHEELER had left him was evidently a safe place because there was another man there at the time of the accident.

The jury returned a verdict to the effect that deceased was accidentally suffocated.

Mr COLNUTT desired on behalf of Messrs WHEELER to express their deep regret at such a tragic happening, as a result of which a workman in whom they had great confidence met with his death. PARSONS had been a good servant during the two years he had been in their employ and they tendered to the widow and those left behind their sincere sympathy.
