

# Mill Worker's Death

## MAGISTERIAL INQUIRY.

The details surrounding the terrible death of Charles Frederick Collett, whose mutilated remains were found on the tramline in the Farleigh mill yard on the night of November 15, were disclosed at the inquiry into the circumstances, held on Thursday before Mr. T. W. Eite, J.P.—Senior-Sergeant Fowler conducted the examination.

Richard Charles Thompson, laborer employed at the Farleigh mill, said he knew the deceased Charles Frederick Collett, who had been working at the mill for about a month before he was paid off on November 13. At 8 p.m. on November 14, deceased was under the influence of drink, and witness took him to the mill barracks from the Farleigh Hotel. On the following day witness asked a man named Tarasoff if he had seen deceased. Tarasoff replied that he had seen him lying on the bank of the line when coming home for tea at 5 p.m. Witness, a man named Ryan, and Tarasoff made a search for deceased, and when crossing the cattle pits going towards the barracks, Ryan found the key of deceased room. Deceased's hat with a piece cut out of it, and his slipper were found a little further on. Two bottles of beer were also found. While walking across the line, witness slipped on something, which on examination proved to be a heart. A man named James Wibberley then came across to where they were searching, and

to where they were searching, and asked for a match, as there seemed to be something like a wallaby under a truck further up the tram line. The four went up to the railway truck filled with cane, under which they found the body of a human being, too mangled to be identified. The discovery was reported to Constable Gannon, who took charge of the body. Witness did not know if there was shunting done in the yards that night. During the month he knew deceased, he had seen him drunk on a few occasions. Deceased was deaf. The body was found about 40 yards from where the sleepers were found.

James Benman Wibberley and John Ryan, laborers, employed at Earleigh Mill, gave similar evidence.

Phineas Charles Norman, loco driver, also employed by the Earleigh Mill Co., said he last saw deceased at 11 a.m. on the day of his death, and he was then under the influence of liquor. Witness commenced shunting operations at 4 p.m. on November 15, and continued until 10 p.m., when he coupled the engine to seven railway trucks and pushed them around the carrier ahead of the engine. A lock-out for obstructions on the line was not kept in front of the trucks, as the assistant, Menzies was attending to the sending of the lines. The night was very dark, and even had there been a watch kept on, obstructions on the line would not be noticed in time to pull the engine up. While pushing the trucks no cry was heard, or bump felt, indicating that a man had been struck. Witness first heard of the accident at 11.4 p.m. He was not aware that any instructions had

not aware that any instructions had been issued since the accident to keep a lookout when shunting. There was no whistle on the engine on the night of the accident.

Harold Thomas Menzies, laborer, who assisted the loco-driver on the night of the accident, also gave evidence.

Constable Gannon stated that at about 10.45 p.m. on November 15, he accompanied four men to the Farleigh mill yard. On the line in front of the wheels of an F. railway wagon, he saw the mutilated body of a man. The head and neck were crushed to a pulp and the internal organs were lying on the ground, while blood was seen all round. The features were undistinguishable. One leg was almost severed. When witness pulled the body out he recognised it as that of Charles Frederick Collett. About 100 yards further along the line a heart was found lying between the rails. Near the body was a bank book showing a balance to deceased's credit of £5.17. An amount of 25.4.9 was found in his clothes. There were fragments of flesh and blood between the two points, the body evidently having been dragged for 100 yards. The body was subsequently conveyed to the morgue. He was about 65 years of age, and was very deaf. Witness knew that he was addicted to drink. Witness's opinion was that deceased had been struck by the front wagon, the wheels of that, and the second wagon, passing over his head and neck as he lay across the line. The body had then been caught up and dragged to the spot where it was found. It was raining on the night of the accident.

... it was found. It was raining on the night of the accident, and was very dark, making it impossible to see an obstruction on the line. Even had there been a lookout kept in front of the trucks, an obstruction would not have been seen until the trucks were almost on top of it. It was believed deceased had no relatives in Australia.

At this stage the inquiry was adjourned for the production of further evidence.

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