

FRIDAY 15th AUGUST 1924

SPONDON SMASH.

Lorry Driver's Graphic Story.

NOT TO BLAME.

A verdict of "Accidental death" was returned by the jury yesterday at the inquest on Henry Ernest Haines, the Spondon stationmaster, who was killed in such unusual circumstances on Wednesday.

The jury expressed the opinion that the driver of the lorry did his best in the circumstances, a rider being added to the effect that the canal bridge at Spondon was inadequate for the traffic passing over it and that a proper road should be made.

Dr. T. A. Barron said death must have been instantaneous from a broken neck.

Alfred J. W. Frost, Fulham, the driver, said he was in the employ of Messrs. Clifords, removal contractors, of Kensington Court, London. The lorry was carrying 24 drums of acetone, and he thought the unloaded weight of the vehicle would be between seven and eight tons, and the drums weighed nine tons. He arrived at Spondon about 1 p.m. on Wednesday and was approaching the end of his destination at the Celanese Works.

Never Been There Before.

He had never been there before, and until he got on the crown of the bridge, at about six or seven m.p.h., he could not see that there was a railway crossing on the other side.

He then found the crossing gates were closed about 10 yards away and a train approaching.

At once he applied his three brakes, two hand brakes and a foot brake, and slowed the lorry down to about four m.p.h., but seeing he had not enough room to pull up in without crashing into the gates and train he looked for an opening into which to bring the lorry to a standstill.

He swung round to his left as much as he possibly could, hoping to pass to the left of the booking office. The brakes were full on, but the gradient of the hill had thrown all the weight to the front of the lorry, and it would not pull up in time.

He could not get sufficiently to the left to run into the railings and miss the building, but at a pace lower than four miles an hour the front of the lorry ran into the booking office wall. He remembered no more.

His Surprise.

The brakes were in proper working order, and had been attended to at the garage so recently as Monday.

Coroner: Did it surprise you the brakes would not hold you?

Witness: I expected the brakes would pull me up, but the surprise was to see the level crossing gates and a train.

Did you see a red danger board on your left?—No. I saw I was approaching a narrow bridge, and I sounded my horn and kept my eyes on the road. Witness said he had been driving for eight years.

In answer to Mr. Gretton witness said the lorry was constructed to carry between 10 and 12 tons so that on this journey it was carrying under capacity.

As he was approaching the bridge his attention was attracted to a woman with a perambulator and two children on the crown of the bridge. That would account for him not seeing the warning notice.

Albert Carpenter, Fulham, porter, who was riding in the lorry cab with the driver, gave similar evidence. He jumped off before the crash. At the time of the impact the lorry was going very slowly.

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HENRY ERNEST HAINES (1872-1924)

In the Office.

Horace Thomas Wigley clerk, of Had-don-street Derby, who was in the booking office with the stationmaster, said Mr. Haines was seated at his desk facing the window overlooking the road. There was a sudden crash, and, turning, witness saw the window and brickwork of the wall coming into the room. He was knocked into the corner of the office, and saw the stationmaster buried under the falling brickwork. He ran out.

William Murden, motor engineer, of Borrowash, spoke to examining the motor-lorry after the accident. It was very little damaged. The three brakes were sufficient if applied together to pull up the vehicle on the canal bridge within the space allowed, but had the driver left his steering and attended only to his brakes the accident might have been much worse. He thought the best thing in the circumstances had been done by the driver.

Police-Sergeant Costello said the lorry penetrated into the office 9ft. 3in., having made a hole 9ft. 10in. by 10ft. in a 9in. brick wall.

The Coroner said there was no doubt that the lorry driver was taken by surprise with a sight of the level crossing gates. Having found himself in an awk-

Station Master, Spondon since 1921. Died Wednesday 13 Aug 1924 when a motor lorry lost control and crashed into the S.M.'s office at Spondon Station.