RAILWAY TRAGEDY.

Luton Sapper Killed.

Jury's Finding.

On Friday morning an inquest was held at St. Albans Town Hall on the body of Walter William Pinney, of Beechwood-road, Luton, a sapper in the Royal Engineers, East Anglian 2nd Field Company, stationed at Norwich, who met with a tragic death at Hatfield G.N.R. Station. The Great Northern Railway Company was represented by Mr. W. Hatch, Divisional Traffic Inspector of the G.N.R., stationed at Hatfield, Mr. C. Harrington, of the Police Department, and Mr. G. Frampton, of the Locomotive Department.

Charles Scrivener, of Beechwood-road, Luton, a blacksmith's striker, brother-in-law of the deceased, said he saw deceased on Tuesday afternoon, when he brought him his tea and seemed in very good spirits. Once or twice deceased had taken too much drink, but he was quite sober on Tuesday.

Pte. Jas. Spellier, 2/24th London Regiment, military policeman, said that on May 11th, at about 6.30 p.m., he was on duty in the booking hall at Hatfield Station. He saw the deceased and two comrades walk along the up platform. The three men were in a very merry mood, and deceased was walking unsteadily. Witness next saw an express train approaching and deceased stepping on to the rails at the level crossing. He stepped back at once. The engine missed him, but something on the front carriage seemed to catch him, throwing him four or five yards. Witness sent for the motor ambulance, and deceased was conveyed to St. Albans.

William James Foxley, of Viaduct Villas, Park-street, Hatfield, a clerk, said he saw the three soldiers pass him as he was standing at the corner near the station at about 6.35. One of them was vomiting. When he entered the station he saw two of the soldiers walking arm-in-arm along the up platform. Just before they got to the bottom of the bridge steps one of them ran up the steps and the deceased walked down the slope and turned on to the crossing. Witness shouted to him, but saw him run right into the train. It looked to witness as if the steps of the engine or one of the axle boxes caught him. Witness went to Inspector Hatch's office and told him.

A Juror (Mr. Leeds): Did he seem to walk deliberately on the line?

Witness: It seemed as if his mate had left him and he was looking round to see where his mate had gone, and he did not see the express coming.

George Rolph, 3, Railway Cottages, Hatfield, crossing keeper at the station, corroborated, and said he warned defendant.

The Coroner: Did he walk directly into the train?—Witness: I cannot say. I did not see him until the train hit him. I was standing back towards him.

What was he struck by, do you think?—I think it was the footboard of the front coach. The engine seemed to flash right by him.

Witness called for a stretcher, and seeing Sir Wm. Church, M.D., coming off the down train, called his attention to deceased. Sir William went to the man.

Witness further said he had been employed at this crossing for twenty-five years, and there had been no previous accident there during that period. He was placed at the crossing specially to warn passengers and members of the staff of danger. The crossing would not be safe without somebody watching it.

The Coroner: There is a footbridge provided for passengers, which the majority of them do not use. I can tell the jury that I never use it myself unless I am obliged.

John Blunt, of 8, Goldington-crescent, St. Pancras-road, N.W., the driver of the up express from Doncaster, due to arrive at King's Cross at 7 p.m., said he saw nothing unusual when passing through Hatfield Station. He said he had never known anyone to be injured at the level crossing in the course of his experience.

The Coroner: You would say that the last witness (Rolph) was careful in keeping passengers clear of all trains? — Witness: Yes, especially so.

A Juror: Had the deceased any right to cross the line?

The Coroner: I can tell you from my own knowledge that the crossing is used by passengers under the protection of Rolph, who is put there to protect passengers and the staff who use it. Luggage is always taken over that way; it cannot be taken any other way. There is a bridge provided for the passengers, who nearly always prefer to walk over the crossing.

Mr. C. Harrington (of the G.N.R. Police Department) said as a matter of fact nobody had any right, without permission from the railway company, to use the crossing. They could compel the passengers to cross by the footbridge. Deceased held a ticket from Luton to Norwich. He had arrived by the train at Hatfield, and was going forward.

Det.-Sergt. Paine, of the St. Albans City Police, said deceased had been on leave for a week-end, and was returning to Norwich from Luton.

Dr. James Johnson Smith, of St. Albans, said deceased arrived at the military hospital at Bricket House in a dying condition, and died in a few minutes. The real cause of death was fracture of the pelvis, which was completely smashed, and the right side was protruding through a wound in the right groin. There were many other injuries, and witness concluded that the deceased was probably struck by the footboard of one of the carriages.

In reply to a question by the Foreman as to whether there was not somewhere in Hatfield that the deceased could have been taken instead of bringing him to St. Albans, the Coroner said we were under the dispensation of the military, and soldiers in uniform could only be treated in military hospitals, of which St. Albans was the nearest. It made no difference, however, in this case, as the man would have died wherever he had been taken. He was conveyed in the ordinary form of ambulance as used for conveying wounded people at the front, only in this case it was a shorter distance and over better roads. The deceased was so badly injured that he was practically moribund as soon as the accident happened.

The jury found that the cause of death was fracture of the pelvis and other injuries accidentally caused.

On the question as to the sobriety or otherwise of the deceased at the time of the accident, the jury showed diffidence in coming to a finding, but after the Coroner had pointed out that some expression of opinion was necessary they added the rider that deceased was under the influence of drink.

MILITARY FUNERAL.

Full military honours were accorded Sapper Pinney at the funeral at Luton Church on Saturday afternoon.

The coffin was conveyed to the mortuary of Messrs. T. and E. Neville, Castle-street, where the gun-carriage of the Lincolns was in waiting. A number of deceased's comrades bore the coffin (which was draped with the Union Jack) to the gun-carriage. This was drawn by several fine horses. The procession was led by a firing party of the Lincolns, followed by the buglers of the Lincolns. Then came the band of the Notts and Derbys playing the Dead March in Saul, and the gun-carriage and mourners followed and then about 150 N.C.O.'s and men of the East Anglian R. E., in command of Lieut. Barltrop. The cortege slowly proceeded to the Church Cemetery, and the coffin was conveyed to the Church, where the Rev. E. G. Jaquet officiated at the short service. Meanwhile the soldiers formed round the grave, and soon the coffin and the widow, and relatives, and a large number of civilian mourners came to the graveside. After the committal, the firing party fired three volleys. Then the "Last Post" was sounded. The service and the military ceremony were deeply impressive, and many women present were moved to tears.

There were many beautiful floral tributes.

TO THE EDITOR.

Sir,—Will you allow me to say a few words in reference to the sad and fatal accident to the late W. W. Pinney at Hatfield Station last Tuesday week? At the inquest on Friday at St. Albans, I see that the inquiry finished up stating that he (the deceased) was under the influence of drink and, therefore, not careful enough. Now, I am in a position to furnish facts, if need be, concerning this sad affair, but suffice it to say that I know when he was about to leave Luton his wife gave him 5s., which I can prove was all he had got. When his clothes were searched at St. Albans there was 4s. 9½d. out of 5s. How, then, could he be the worse for drink? He left my place at 5.10 o'clock, en route for Norwich. My point is this, I think the blow of losing her husband like this is a bad enough trial for Mrs. Pinney, but added to this there is this unvalued-for statement to make the trial more bitter.

Yours, etc.,

ONE WHO KNOWS.

PEPPERSTOCK.

BAPTIST CHAPEL.—The Sunday School anniversary was held on Sunday. The services were conducted by the Rev. Martin Ashby, of Markyate, and good congregations attended. The singing of the children under the leadership of Mr. J. T. Cookson (conductor) and Miss B. Wood (organist) was very much enjoyed. The soloists were Miss Ivy Toyer and Miss Annie Frost. The collections amounted to £17 12s. 7½d.

LEIGHTON BUZZARD

DEVIL'S PHILOSOPHY.—"All that a man hath will he give for his life," was the Scriptural quotation upon which the Rev. R. T. Anderson addressed the Leighton Men's Society on Sunday. The speaker held that this was the philosophy of the Devil and the Germans. It was the attitude of the Kaiser and his staff when they entered Belgium. They were quite unable to appreciate the principle held by other nations that there were things worse than death, and one of those was dishonour. The British were not given to boasting, but it was a fact of which they might well be proud, that they had taken a stand for the principle of brotherhood.

GRAND THEATRE.

The £2,000 Organ.

There is a complete change in the character of the entertainment which is being given this week at the Grand Theatre, Luton. It is a considerable time since the management provided a variety programme, and now this has been done the programme has the merit of being of a somewhat novel character. The principal attraction is an 8-ton cathedral organ, stated to have cost £2,000. The organist is Mr. Max Erard, and in conjunction with Miss Lena Vevey he gives a most interesting entertainment. When one remembers that week by week this organ is moved from place to place, and that some parts of the mechanism of an organ are of a very delicate character, while sudden variations of temperature will cause pipes to go out of tune, it will be agreed that this organ is a stage triumph. When drums and cymbals come into use in a descriptive piece, it is a bit "roundabouty," but otherwise it is excellent, and it is played with a master hand by Mr. Max Erard. Miss Lena Vevey sings in both voice and piano accompaniment, and some of her songs are very attractive. The one in which the drummer and the piper are introduced has been very popular, and so also has another where she found some old shoes. These two artistes, with their assistants, put on a capital turn, and one which, as has been mentioned, is decidedly original. Bosco and Holden, two comedy magicians, are very diverting, but some of those in whose pockets Bosco "finds" things must feel a little sheepish. Some good trick cycling is done by Will Tyler, and a little military sketch, "The Colonel's Granddaughter" is well played by Mr. Harry Liston and Miss Lord Eversley. Miss Helen Alston is a pleasing vocalist, Miss Mina Box is responsible for character dances, and Mr. Tom B. Barr is a successful comedian.

AIRCRAFT OVER LUTON.

Sunday Night Incident.

Great mystery attaches to an occurrence late on Sunday night, coming as it did in conjunction with the Zeppelin raid on Edinburgh.

About 11.30 on Sunday night Mrs. F. Smith, of the police force, and other Luton residents, heard the noise of aeroplane motors, and judging by the sound, the machine, whichever kind it was, must have been high up in the air. It was too dark to discern anything in the sky, but the buzzing sound of the motor led the hearers to believe the aircraft was going towards London.

Immediate steps were taken in accordance with prevailing orders, to cope with emergency, and military guards were soon out. It is certain that an aircraft passed over Luton, but there is no clue as to its nature, and the matter remains a mystery.

WALLER STREET ADULT SCHOOL v. BAILEY HILL BROTHERHOOD.

The above teams met on Saturday at Waller-down, and the competition in the out of the three rinks was extremely close, as will be seen from the totals. Bailey Hill, however, gained an aggregate majority of 12 points. Scores:—

Rink I.—Waller Street: P. White, J. Bone, W. Eling, and K. Ward, 17. Bailey Hill: S. Bird, J. Hoy, J. Farr, and J. Ellingham, 19.

Rink II.—Waller Street: W. Butfield, F. G. Hughton, B. Hutson, and H. Ivery, 10. Bailey Hill: F. Bush, S. Bull, R. Higginbottom, and J. Noble, 21.

Rink III.—Waller Street: R. Mariner, J. Henderson, A. Gower, and W. Mariner, 19. Bailey Hill: Pte. R. Gower, D. Randall, S. Puddephatt, and C. Holdstock, 26.

Totals: Waller Street, 46; Bailey Hill, 58.

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WOBURN.

The recent whist drive and dance realised a profit of £2 9s. 6d., which sum has been handed over to the Belgian Relief Fund.

The epidemic of measles is proving very troublesome in the town and the schools have been closed for a further period of a fortnight.

The funeral of Mrs. Sarah Burnidge, of Leighton-street, took place on Tuesday afternoon in the presence of many relatives and friends. She had been ill for some months, and passed away on Friday night. She was the widow of the late Mr. Burnidge, who was well known as the driver of the Bedford Arms omnibus.

The Engineers billeted here raised a cricket team on Saturday and paid a visit to Bletchley to play a team of the R.E.'s stationed there, proving victorious by about 30 runs.

TODDINGTON.

KILLED IN ACTION.—Pte. James Coles, 2755, 1st East Surrey Regiment, who is reported killed in action at Hill 60, was 34 years of age. He was a native of Toddington, but recently had been living with his sister, Mrs. J. Chance, of Chalton. He had served a term in the old Bedfordshire Militia, and being called up as a reservist at the Boer War for home defence, was stationed at Colchester. In October last he volunteered for service and was sent to France in January, landing on the 22nd. He had since been in several engagements. He has two other brothers in the trenches and one in training at present.

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