

Fire Engine Amok Inquest on Cripple Killed in Sheffield An Exciting Ride

A fire engine tender was amok in the streets of Sheffield yesterday, and a cripple was run over and so seriously injured that he died a few hours later.

The unfortunate man was Patrick Mannion, Corporation night watchman, of 92, Townhead Street Flats. The circumstances of his death were the subject of a Coroner's inquiry to-day.

Mannion, who had a wooden leg, was knocked down by two runaway horses, which were attached to a tender, in Broad Lane, on Sunday morning.

Willie Allott, son-in-law of the man said when he visited him at the Royal Hospital, he asked him if his crippled condition hindered him from getting out of the way of the horses, and he replied, "If I had had twenty pairs of legs I should not have been able to get out of the way." He did not blame anyone added the witness.

Dr. J. R. Liddle, a member of the resident medical staff at the Royal Hospital, said Mannion was conscious when admitted. There was a bruise on the right side of the head and bruises on his right hip. He was treated, and the doctor thought he would be in a condition to be removed to his home later. However, on visiting him again some time afterwards, he found that he was not in a fit condition to be removed, and he admitted him immediately to one of the wards. Death took place several hours later from a fracture of the base of the skull and haemorrhage.

Fireman H. Lockett, who stated that he had been a member of the Fire Brigade for seven years, and had been accustomed to driving horses for 20 years, described the adventures of the runaway ride. The two horses attached to the tender, he said, had been in the possession of the brigade for about ten days, and he had driven them six or eight times, without experiencing the slightest difficulty with them. They had been very quiet animals.

When the horses were harnessed in the tender, and he had taken his position on the box something startled them, and they went "full gallop" out of the yard. Sergeant Outram was on the step at the rear of the tender. They were turned to the right, and careered along the street, but the witness failed to turn them into West Street and they dashed over the tram lines, down the lower portion of Rockingham Street, into Broad Lane, and up the raised ground on the far side of Broad Lane, where they were brought to a standstill. Sergeant Outram rushed to their heads, and he altered the reins in order to give the driver a better command.

On the Footpath

But as soon as he had done this, one of the horses made a plunge and both swerved round, knocking Sergt. Outram out of the way, and then made a wild dash in the direction of Westbar. Near St. Thomas' Street corner they went onto the causeway, one of the horses knocking Mannion down. The witness endeavoured to pull the horses into the

middle of the road in order to prevent the wheels from passing over Mannion, but the (witness thought) the offside hind wheel went over him.

The horses continued their wild career, dashing from one side of the road to the other, until they reached the bottom of Broad Lane, when the tender seemed to swing round and the horses dashed into a house. One of the horses ran through the door of the house, smashing it completely, and the other fell down. The witness remained on the box the whole time, and he had no chance of avoiding Mannion.

The Coroner: Do you think he could have got out of the way if he had been an active man?

Witness: I really cannot say. It happened so suddenly.

Can you give any explanation why the horses ran away? – No, only that something seemed to startle them, and I could not get them to settle down at all.

First Time without Blinkers

Sergeant F. Outram stated that the offside animal, which was a five-year-old mare, took fright. It had been used to the streets of the city. It had been in the shafts of a hansom. The Witness mentioned that Sunday was the first occasion that the animals had been put in “wide awake” bridles – bridles without blinkers – and in his opinion that this was the cause of the animal taking fright.

In answer to Mr. J. Varley, who appeared on behalf of the Watch Committee and Fire Brigade, the witness said that during the whole of his 15 years’ experience in the Fire Brigade he had seen no quieter young animal put in harness.

The Coroner said it seemed to him that the fact that it was the first time the animals had been worked without blinkers was the cause of the mare’s bad conduct. He thought there had not been the slightest negligence on the part of the two witnesses who had been called for the Fire Brigade. In fact, they did extremely well. Lockett stuck to his box and the horses in their wild career, and Outram stuck on the tender as long as he could. It seemed to him they could not possibly criticise their conduct in any way. They were deserving some praise for their pluck in sticking to the horses as well as they did.

“Accidental Death”

The jury returned a verdict of “Accidental death” and expressed the opinion that the driver did his best with the horses.

Mr. J. Varley tendered sympathy with the relatives of the deceased, his remarks being endorsed by Councillor Fordham on behalf of the Watch Committee.