

Bury and Norwich Post - Tuesday 12 July 1887

FATAL RAILWAY ACCIDENT AT BURES A SUDBURY MAN KILLED. Late on Thursday night a sad and fatal accident occurred close to the Railway Station at Bures, an engine driver, said to be one of the steadiest and most careful in the employ of the Great Eastern Railway Company, named Edward Smith, a native of Sudbury, being the unfortunate sufferer. The facts concerning the occurrence appear to be as follows

A "pilot," or additional engine, was attached to a heavy excursion train which was running from Clacton-on-Sea to Mildenhall, in order to lender assistance in ascending the gradients between Colchester and Sudbury.

The engine was detached at Sudbury, and was making the return journey to Colchester, when, on approaching Bures, the gates of a level crossing were found to be closed, and the engine was stopped in consequence.

In order to assist the gate-keeper to open the gates, the fireman got down from the engine, and the engine having passed through, the deceased, having applied the brakes, also dismounted, and the three men stood in conversation. Whilst they were so engaged, however, the brakes, from some unexplained cause, became released, and the engine started down the incline in the direction of the closed gates.

Seeing this, Smith ran to the gates and endeavoured to throw them open, in order to prevent them from being smashed.

He succeeded in opening the first gate, but whilst attempting to open the second he was caught between the buffer beam of the engine and the rails of the gate.

He was severely crushed between the chest and shoulders, and died almost instantaneously.

The deceased, who is married, and about 50 years of age, bore an excellent character, was very much respected in Colchester, where he resided, on the Bergholt-Road.

He leaves a widow and three children.

On Friday morning his widowed mother and his widow arrived at Bures, and on turning the corner leading to the station their conveyance was upset, but although its occupants were violently thrown to the ground, they fortunately escaped without serious injury.

The inquest was held on Friday evening, at the Swan Inn, Bures St. Mary,

before J. Harrison, Esq., coroner. Mr. Allen Pettitt was chosen foreman of the jury. Mr. Robertson (of the Locomotive Department, Ipswich), Mr. Church (local foreman, Colchester), and Inspector Norman were also present.— The brother of the deceased identified the body.— Mr. Smith, of Sudbury, said deceased had been in the service of the Great Eastern Railway Company for 28 years.

Geo. Theobald, gatekeeper at the crossing, was called, and said deceased was at the crossing about ten o'clock the previous night, when the gates were shut.

Witness opened and closed them when the engine had get through.

Deceased got off, and was talking to witness's wife, when the engine moved backwards, and deceased appeared as if he tried to stop it with his shoulder, but he was crushed between it and the gate ; he never cried out, but appeared to die directly.

The doctor was sent for, and the body was taken to the railway station.

The fireman said the engine got through safely, and deceased got down to have a chat with the gate- keeper, and while doing so, the engine began to move. Witness got on the engine to try and stop her, but failed to do so.

He saw deceased between the buffer and the gate.

He afterwards got a crowbar, and with assistance, got the engine back.

Mr. Settle, a pupil at the Rectory, who saw the accident, gave corroborative evidence

Mr. McDermott said he had examined the body, and found both bones of the left forearm were broken, and several of the ribs on the left side were broken and driven into the lungs, which caused death ; probably the heart was pierced as well.

The Coroner said if any blame rested with anybody it was the deceased himself, as there was a rule that both driver and fireman should not be off the engine at the same time, but as the engine was not timed, probably he thought it did not matter.

The fireman got off by the order of the deceased, so that no blame could be attached to him. —

A verdict of " accidental death " was returned.