

1920 - Newent Man's Tragic Death in Tibberton.

CORONER'S COMMENTS ON THE OVERCROWDING OF 'BUSES.

The City Coroner (Mr. Charles Scott) held inquest at the Gloucestershire Royal Infirmary Friday evening on the body of James Burson, aged 47, a labourer, of Rudford who was the victim fatal accident near Barber's Bridge on Tuesday. Mr. A. Lionel Lane represented the widow, and Mr. H. Langley-Smith appeared for Mr. Davis.

Ada Burson, widow of the deceased, residing at Whitehall-lane, Rudford stated that her husband enjoyed good health, and was working to one o'clock Tuesday, the day of the accident. About 3.30 in the afternoon, he left home to go to Barton Fair. About 10.30 p.m. witness was called to the Whitehall turning on the Gloucester-road, where she found her husband lying unconscious in the road. Witness accompanied him in motor bus the Royal Infirmary, where death took place about two hours after admittance.

Frances Burson, daughter of the deceased, was with her father at the Barton Fair. There were two Newent buses belonging to Mr. Davis leaving Gloucester at 10pm. Witness travelled in the one bus and her father the other. When witness alighted from the bus, she saw her father lying on the side of the road an unconscious condition.

David Painter, residing near Newent, stated that he was on the same bus to Newent that deceased travelled on. The front seat where the driver sat was packed with passengers, and there were two standing on the car steps, he noticed that deceased was standing the second of the steps and holding on to the rail which goes the side of the 'bus. In witness's opinion, deceased was quite sober.

Mr. Davis, who was the bus conductor, collected the fares, and then informed the passengers that Tibberton turning, which past Whitehall Lane, was the first stopping place. When Whitehall Lane was approaching, the witnesses noticed deceased lowering himself from the step in the act of stepping from the bus. He made no request to the driver stop on the corner and the witness thought he had stepped safely on to the road.

Mr. Lane: Mr. Davis was standing inside the bus when he shouted, 'First stop Tibberton.' It was quite possible that deceased did not hear Mr. Davis from where he was standing?

Witness: Quite possibly not.

Mr. Lane: The bus was so packed that every seat was occupied, and passengers were standing both inside and outside?

Witness: Yes.

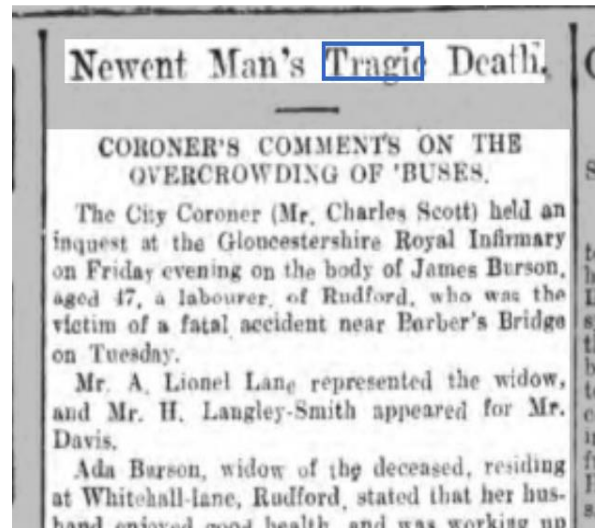
Jesse Staite, residing at Barbers Bridge said that he left Gloucester on his bicycle about 10 o'clock Tuesday night. The two buses overtook him just before he got to Whitehall Lane. He noticed the second bus stop at the turning, and when arrived at the spot found deceased lying in the road.

The Coroner: Did any other vehicle overtake you beside the two 'buses?

Witness: He had no recollection of any other vehicle overtaking me. The witness stated that he stopped car driven by Mr. Tarling, Station Master at Barbers Bridge, and asked him to drive deceased to the Royal Infirmary. Upon his request, witness stated, Mr. Tarling took no notice of and drove on. The Coroner strongly commented on the callousness refusing assistance to a man lying in a dying condition the side of the road!

Witness further stated that he thought deceased's hip was broken. The trousers were torn the right leg from the knee to the thigh. The injuries sustained were of a very severe character.

William Davis, 19, Westgate-street, Gloucester, motorcar proprietor, stated that the two cars left Westgate Street with some passengers, and then proceeded to the Fair Ground. The cars were full, and he noticed the front seat of the first car was occupied but did not notice anyone standing on the steps. He collected the fares just before the cars started, and inquired if all were on who intended going. Witness then informed his son, who was driving the first car, that the Tibberton turning was the first stop. They heard nothing of the accident before reaching Newent, when they were informed of what had happened by two cyclists. Witness felt a slight bump of the car in the neighbourhood of



Whitehall-lane, and had the car examined to see if the tyres were all right. After learning of the accident witness had the car examined by the police, but no marks of any description were found on the car. At this point, the Coroner called Inspector Woolford, inspector of hackney carriages, who produced a copy of the bye-laws regarding the running of omnibuses.

The car on which deceased was travelling, he explained, was a single deck, 30-seater. In section 14 of the byelaws it states: "A proprietor, driver, or conductor of an omnibus shall not cause, or knowingly suffer, a greater number of passengers to be carried in or upon such omnibus than will permit adequate accommodation to the extent of least 10 inches from side to side, and 15 inches from front to back, to enable passengers to sit with ease." The Coroner, commenting the bye-law, said witness had not observed the regulations laid down in Section 14. In this case the whole the seating accommodation inside the 'bus was taken up, and passengers were standing both inside and outside the car.



*Probably a 30 seater omnibus (Charabanc). From a trip to Cheddar Gorge with people from Newent around 1920.
Note the lower step that runs alongside, between the wheels.
Could James Burson have been standing on the lower step!*

Witness said there were four seats, which could be fixed down the centre of the gangway, but they were not being used on the night in question.

The Coroner: Do you consider that there were more than enough persons inside the car?

Witness: I did not receive any complaint and thought everyone was comfortable.

The Coroner: If standing had not been allowed on this bus, the man would not have lost his life. You state that you were not aware that deceased was standing on the step, and that you did not collect a fare from him, therefore, you cannot be held responsible for what occurred. It does however, appear that you are responsible for the witness Painter and another man who were standing on the platform and for those who were standing inside the bus.

Francis Neilson Davis, son of the previous witness, said he drove the car in question from Gloucester Tuesday night. Seated on the front besides himself was a police constable, on his right, and lady, the witness Painter, and a man named Clarke on his left. Witness did not see anyone standing on the steps. Passengers were not allowed stand on the steps, neither was standing allowed on the platform, but it being Barton Fair day, an unusually large number of passengers were travelling. The car was travelling about five- or six-miles an hour when passing Whitehall Lane, Deceased made no request to him to stop the car. There was a notice in the car-requesting passengers not to step from the car before it was at a standstill.

Dr. Rufus Harris, house surgeon at the Royal Infirmary, deposed to deceased being brought to the institution late Tuesday night, he was suffering from considerable loss of blood. The right thigh was crushed, and the thigh bone was fractured in four different places. There was a lacerated wound in the abdominal wall about seven or eight inches in length, he was immediately admitted the operating theatre, "where his injuries were attended to, the right leg being amputated. He put to bed and died about 2 a.m. In witness's opinion death was due shock from the severe injuries and haemorrhage.

The Coroner, in summing up, said it was quite clear that death was due to shock and haemorrhage from the injury to the leg. From the evidence it appeared that the man in getting froth the car fell to the ground, the back wheel of the omnibus apparently passing over the right thigh (the Coroner) not say that anyone was actually responsible for the deceased having fallen from the car. He thought Mr. Davis was to blame for allowing anyone to stand on the front.

If standing was not allowed on the platform, then most certainly standing should not allowed on the steps, which was far more dangerous. However, it was not the riding the steps which was responsible for the man's death, it was the jumping off and therefore Mr. Davis was not legally responsible for what occurred. He must find that deceased met his death accidentally, there being practically alone excepting the deceased himself who was responsible for him jumping from the bus he did.

Mr. H. Langley-Smith said wished express behalf of his client how deeply he regretted what had happened and extended his sympathy with the widow and relatives the deceased in their sad bereavement Mr Lane behalf of the widow, acknowledged the sentiments expressed by Mr. Langley-Smith.

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| BURIALS in the Parish of <u>Tibberton</u> in the County of <u>Gloucester</u> in the Year <u>1920</u> | | | | |
|---|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------|-------------------------------------|
| Name. | Abode. | When buried. | Age. | By whom the Ceremony was performed. |
| James Burson <small>Accidentally killed at the corner of Whitehall Lane.</small> | Rudford (Whitehall Lane) | October 2 nd 1920 | 47 Years | George Lewis Rector. |

No. 649.

Note: The above date 2nd October 1920 was the date of death and not the date he was buried, probably in a now unmarked grave in Tibberton graveyard.

Background information on James Burson revealed he was James Burson, born 1873, and is named in some records as Busson and that he married Ada in 1895 in Compton Abdale, near Northleach Gloucestershire. James was a Carter and Waggoner living and worked around Northleach up until 1911 when he is when the family moved to Rudford/Tibberton.

James and Ada Annie had a family with eldest son Ernest Walter Burson born in 1896 becoming a Private (Service No. 202874) in the East Yorkshire Regiment 1st and 4th Battalion (Territorial Army) during the first world war. Age 23 he died on 13 November 1918 two days after the War ended on the 11th November 1918. His death is recorded at the Cologne Southern Cemetery, Nordrhein-Westfalen, Germany as 'Son of James and Ada Burson, of Whitehall Lane, Rudford, Glos.'

Ada received £40 17s 7d from Army register of Soldiers effects including War Grant of £5 on the 1st January 1920

| | | | | | | | | |
|------|------------------|---------|-------|--------|--------------|--------|---------------------|------|
| 1903 | 1903 | Amelia | James | | Cottage Farm | | | 1903 |
| 1903 | Feb: 4 | Frances | Ada | Busson | Eastington | Carter | R. Charles S. Jones | |
| 1902 | 23 rd | | Annie | | | | Kear | |
| | No. 2864. | | | | | | | |

A daughter Amelie Francis born on 23rd November 1902 and later married Francis E Weaver, a Roadmaker) living in Newent and then Ruardean in 1939 and passed away in April 1972.

William Allen Tarling mentioned as Station master of Barbers Bridge, a post he held from pre 1911 up until 1923. He was born 1871 Cheltenham, died 1957 Bournemouth.

Edited extract from the Gloucester Journal of Saturday 09 October 1920 and other sources – DMM 2022