

THE LIMERICK

FATALITY AT LIMERICK TERMINUS.

A very sad accident occurred at the Limerick Railway Station about ten o'clock on Saturday night by which a man named John Cheevers, aged 28 lost his life. The circumstances of the distressing occurrence, so far as they could be ascertained, are detailed in the report of the inquest.

THE INQUEST.

An inquest was held yesterday into the death of the young man Cheevers who was accidentally killed at the railway station on Saturday night. The deceased was a native of Cork, and the evidence at the inquiry did not make it altogether clear how he met his death. The Coroner, Mr. M. J. DeCoursey, solr., opened the proceedings.

Head Constable Moore appeared for the Crown, and Mr. Moran, solr., appeared for the friends of the deceased.

The following were sworn on the jury—James Carew (foreman), Michael Lane, John Judge, Thomas Burke, Michael Kennedy, Thomas Treacy, Timothy Coffey, Thomas Hayes, Michael Walsh, Richard Lunn, John Deegan, and Cernellus Devane.

The jury having been sworn, Mr. Moran suggested they should proceed to view the scene of the fatality.

The suggestion was agreed to, and on resuming evidence was given.

Joseph Cheevers, No. 20 Madden's Buildings, Cork, said deceased, John Cheevers, was his son. He was in the employment of the Great Southern and Western Railway Company as a porter. Deceased was aged 28 and unmarried. He was nine months in the service of the company. Witness came in this morning and was shown by Mr. Wilson, the manager, where the accident occurred. Witness had two girls and a boy. One of the girls worked. Deceased used to give witness 3s to 5s weekly.

George Wilson deposed he was agent for the Company at Limerick. Witness knew deceased since he came to the Company. Deceased was a very steady respectable man as far as witness knew. Cheevers assisted at shunting since he arrived. He asked for it. He was an old loco fireman—13 years, and left that department, rejoining as porter. His experience in the loco department would eminently fit him for a shunter. Cheevers was a particularly good handy shunter. The position is always filled from the porters. There is no special training. Of course the gets experience gradually. There is no Board of Trade rule specifying time for training. The hours of duty were 9 a.m. to 9 p.m., but on Saturday another shunter fell sick, and Cheevers took up his duties. That was how he was on until 10 o'clock on Saturday night. There were meal hours, an hour for dinner, given between 9 a.m. and 9 p.m.

Head Constable Moore—Did you hear anything about a request from deceased to be relieved?

Witness—No, the head porter said he was asked that. No request was made to him or witness. Witness only heard the rumour. The witness said he knew the yard where the deceased was engaged shunting. This was a long train, 45 waggons, at which Cheevers was killed. It was a quite usual number of waggons for a mixed train. They sometimes carried 80 waggons.

Head Constable Moore—Any alteration in the number of years?

The witness—If anything they are more in shunters. There is no rule to have two shunters on a long train.

Head Constable Moore—What light was at the spot at the time, remembering the cabin light was obscured.

The witness—All the lights at the right hand side were lighted. The light was moderate, not too good nor bad. The shunter would have a hand lamp. The light at the other side of where the accident occurred would have been better as the train would not have intervened.

Head Constable Moore—The driver of the engine would tell us he stood on the side board of the locomotive. Is there any rule against that?

The Witness—There is no rule to that effect. It is the usual thing for the shunter to stand on the side board when shunting was going on.

By Mr. Moran—On this occasion Cheevers would be under the control of the yardman and do as he was told.

Had he ever shunted at that place at night before?

The witness was unable to say if he ever shunted there before at night. The wages of the deceased were those of an ordinary porter. His wages were 16s. a week. As a recognised shunter he would commence at 19s. The shunters were paid 21s., although they had men who worked for less.

Mr. Moran—I dare say a great deal less if you could get them.

Cross-examination resumed—The cross road the jury saw was not a dangerous one. He never heard of the attention of the directors being called to the place. He could not say how many lamps were in the yard, but indeed there were more than three.

Asked was not this place more or less blocked by the carriages allowed to remain there,

The witness said there were carriages allowed to remain there for a time. He could not say when the lamps about the place were cleaned, but would get information. Sheehan the man in charge of the yard was the yardman or shunter. As far as witness knew the accident occurred after 9.52 p.m. He should say Cheevers took the sick man's place by directions. He did not know if there was any change made a year and a half ago with regard to the shunting operations. There were the same number of shunters employed. Rourke was the shunter who fell sick, and for whom Cheevers was acting.

James McElligott said he was fireman of the pilot engine, No. 221, which was always used for shunting. The Kerry goods train arrived here at 9.55 p.m. on Saturday last, and witness and the driver, Edward O'Donnell, took the engine up to the Goods Store to shunt it. Cheevers was on the engine with them. He stood on the foot plate and hooked on the engine to the waggons. Witness spoke with him and saw him do the work. Cheevers was perfectly sober and his lamp and shunting pole were in his hand. The pole is 6 feet in length with a hook at the end of it to lift up the couplings. He told them to go ahead, and then Cheevers stepped up on the step of the engine. The driver started, and Cheevers was on the step for twelve or fifteen yards until he dropped off the step of the engine.

The Coroner—Did you see him?

The Witness—Yes, he got a proper footing.

By H.C. Moore—No stumbling or staggering. The shunting pole did not catch or trip him. He did not walk away immediately after dropping off. He stepped off in the ordinary way and with the engine. Witness had him in view until the waggons obscured him. As soon as they went over the points, or thought they did so, the driver stopped. When the driver knows where he is he stops without a signal.

That is the general practice. A driver to go over a point, and without signal when he thinks cleared them. The driver would see there was a signal to stop or not. At the points the engine rested for minutes when they got the signal after backing some eight waggons were stopped, and a man came with a lamp, and the driver getting was told that John Cheevers had fallen. Witness was four years fireman with the company. The fatality occurred at 10 p.m. not altogether what one would call a moon. He could not say if there was moon or not, but if the lamp light was seen it was a matter of opinion.

The Coroner—Did you consider that enough for the operations of shunting? The witness did not answer.

Head Constable Moore said the reason why an employe should not be shunting and the jury could form their opinion.

Head Constable Moore said it would be sorry to have the witness's opinion as to what caused the man's death.

The witness—Cheevers was going along and got out of the points, and he must have tripped when walking forward.

The Coroner—Over what? Did he fall on the track?

The Witness—Yes.

Mr. Moran said the witness should say Cheevers must have been tripped by the engine.

The witness said that was so. The engine started, Cheevers was standing on the waggons, but was clear of them. He did not strike the witness as being in a dangerous position.

By Mr. Moran—Witness did not see Cheevers was in a position to see the lamp, and it might be obscured by a passing train. He had not seen Cheevers shunting at that place before.

Denis Dwyer, signal man, deposed that the body after the shunting operation crossed over road, and close to the down track.