

Fatal accident during the construction of the East Kent Railway bridge at Rochester

Times, Mon 13 Aug 1855, p 8

FATAL ACCIDENT AT THE NEW RAILWAY BRIDGE, ROCHESTER.

ROCHESTER, Saturday Evening.

An accident, by which three lives were sacrificed, occurred this morning at the works connected with the railway bridge now erecting across the Medway in this city for the East Kent Railway Company. It will be necessary to explain that Messrs. Fox and Henderson, the contractors for this portion of the works of the line, have been for some months past pushing on the erection of the new bridge, in order that it may be completed at an early date, and simultaneously with some other portions of the railway. Accordingly, a large number of workmen have been employed in preparing the foundations of the bridge below the bed of the river for some time past. At the time of the accident a body of labourers and others were at work near the spot which will form the centre arch of the Strood pier, and it was here that the accident took place. The plan adopted for laying the foundation of the piers is to sink large iron cylinders, of about nine feet in diameter, and of great weight and thickness; several of these are sunk at spots selected, and these are braced together, forming a long, upright, hollow pile. The water is then pumped out, and workmen proceed down the inside to the bed of the river, where the soil is excavated to a great depth, the cylinders sinking with their own weight. The interior is then filled with concrete mixed with gravel, &c.; the whole forming a solid bed for the masonry.

This morning a number of workmen were employed in this description of work under the superintendence of Mr. Winder, the manager of the whole. For the purpose of saving labour, a large steam-engine has been erected on piles in the centre of the river, which pumps the water out of the cylinders. There is also a large diving-bell, weighing several tons, used. The men had made the descent in safety, and had sent up several "journeys" of soil, when, from some unexplained cause, the bottoms came out of the buckets, and the whole suddenly fell down inside the cylinders, carrying in their fall the stages inside, and also the bell, the whole mass weighing several tons.

At the time of the accident there were two men working inside, and, from the immense weight which fell on them, their deaths must have been instantaneous. Their names are Thomas Colvill and James Carter. One man who was working with the bell, named George Humphries, was also killed. The escape of some other men was most marvellous, one of them having a narrow escape by grasping at the upper staging.

As soon as the accident became known a number of men

were employed in removing the fallen staging, buckets, &c., but, owing to the great depth of the cylinders, and also the heavy mass thrown down, it was several hours before either of the bodies could be rescued. The first brought to the surface was that of Humphries, frightfully injured. The most active exertions have been made all day to recover the bodies of the other men, but up to this evening the men employed have only succeeded in removing a very small portion of the weight under which they are buried. What makes this labour the more difficult is, that the buckets were "weighted" with several hundred-weights.

An inquest will be held on the body of Humphries on Monday, when the cause of the accident will be fully investigated.

An accident also occurred to one of the large bells used on the Rochester side this morning, owing to the breakage of some portions of the connecting parts, but, fortunately, no person was hurt, although the bell is greatly injured.

The ceremony of turning the first sod of the East Kent Railway took place on Saturday at a field beneath Fort Pitt, Chatham, in the presence of Lord Sondes, Sir W. Cubitt, and other gentlemen, and the works are to be carried on vigorously. The accident of the morning, however, cast a gloom over the otherwise interesting ceremony.

South Eastern Gazette, Tue 14 Aug 1855, p 5

ROCHESTER AND CHATHAM.

DREADFUL ACCIDENT AT THE EAST KENT RAILWAY BRIDGE -- THREE LIVES LOST.

On Saturday morning last a distressing accident, by which three persons were instantaneously killed, occurred at the railway bridge now being built across the Medway at Rochester, for the East Kent Railway Company.

The particulars connected with this calamitous occurrence, so far as we have been able to ascertain, are these: -- The railway company, being anxious to have the bridge, which will connect the Strood with the Rochester portion of the line, completed as early as possible, have had the works prosecuted with great vigour, but, owing to the nature of the river at the spot selected, and other causes, this has been a work of almost insurmountable difficulty. For the purpose of forming the necessary piers, from which the arches will spring, large cast-iron cylinders, each about 9 feet in length and 8 feet in diameter, and weighing several tons, are used, which, when sunk at the requisite spots and the water pumped out, form a kind of well, in which the men work. Several of these have been sunk in various parts, and although the works connected with undertakings of this description are obviously attended with great risk, no accident of any very serious nature has happened till the present one. The spot where the accident occurred is near the middle of the river, which is called by the

workmen the centre arch of the Strood-pier. At this place seven cylinders have been sunk and fastened together in an exceedingly strong manner, the whole forming a kind of well upwards of 60 feet in depth. The water is pumped out by a steam engine, which also pumps air into the cylinders to the men employed at the bottom. Two stages, or landings, are placed at interval in the cylinders, and these are attended to by men employed for that purpose.

At the time of the accident there were four men at work inside the cylinders, namely, George Humphries, Thomas Covill (who has generally passed by the cognomen of "Cambridge,") a man named Carter, and also a negro man, a labourer on the works. Covill and Carter were at work at the bottom digging out the loose mud and soil from the bed of the river, and preparing the foundation for the solid masonry, concrete, &c. The earth is drawn up from the bottom by means of a long series of cast iron buckets fastened together, the whole forming several tons, which are raised by a "crab." Humphries and the other man were stationed on the top staging, their duty being to guide the buckets into the air-tight tubes, and also to pass the signals to the men at the top. At about 10 o'clock on Saturday morning, as the buckets filled with the earth were being drawn up, and when near the surface, the side of one of them, near the top, gave way, and the other side being torn asunder, the whole of those below were hurled to the bottom of the cylinders, in their progress carrying away the stagings. Covill and Carter, as we have stated, were at the bottom, and they were killed instantly, as the weight which fell on them is estimated at several tons. Humphries was carried down with the stage, and his death was probably caused by falling so great a distance. The negro, when he saw the lower buckets giving way, had the presence of mind to grasp at the top buckets, and thus saved his life, although he was bruised by the falling mass.

The buckets, when falling, forced the others upwards with terrible violence, and the cylinders were filled with water almost in a moment, so great was the rush. Mr. Mills, the company's engineer, and Mr. Winder, the manager, were on the spot, and used every exertion in giving directions for the removal of the falling mass and clearing the cylinders, to enable them to reach the bodies of the unfortunate men. After working about two hours the body of Humphries was discovered, about 12 o'clock, and taken on shore.

Throughout the day the workmen continued working to reach the remaining bodies, but without effect. Unfortunately, about 10 o'clock on Saturday night, the steam engine broke down, and, although men were engaged all night in repairing it, this was not finished till 5 o'clock on Sunday morning. The work in removing and dragging up the buckets and staging was then resumed, and at a few minutes before 8 the body of Covill was reached, and after three more hours' labour that of Carter was also discovered. On being brought to the surface they presented a fearful sight, and there is no doubt that death must have ensued in a moment. We believe that each of the unfortunate men

has left a wife and family.

Shortly after the above melancholy accident had happened a serious accident occurred to the large diving-bell in use on the Rochester side, but happily no person received any injury.

The inquest on the bodies of the three unfortunate men was held yesterday (Monday,) at the Guildhall, before J. Lewis, Esq., coroner, and a respectable jury, of whom Mr. Thomas, ironfounder, was foreman. Mr. Bassett, solicitor, attended to watch the proceedings on the part of the relatives of the deceased. The view of the bodies, and inspection of the cylinders and place where the accident occurred, occupied about an hour, when the examination of witnesses was commenced, and was proceeding when our reporter's account was forwarded.

Times, Tue 14 Aug 1855, p 12

THE FATAL ACCIDENT AT THE RAILWAY BRIDGE, ROCHESTER.

ROCHESTER, Monday Evening.

The inquest on the bodies of the three unfortunate men who were killed at the dreadful accident which took place at the new railway bridge on Saturday last was held at the Guildhall in this city, before Mr. James Lewis, the city coroner, and, after a protracted inquiry, was brought to a conclusion this evening.

The jury, having been briefly addressed by the coroner, went to view the bodies, after which they proceeded to inspect the locality of the accident, and also the cylinders, buckets, and what portion of the iron staging could be seen. In this they were occupied about an hour, when they returned to the Guildhall, and the following evidence was taken: --

Henry Johnson said, he was a labourer employed at the railway bridge, and had worked there one week only. He had never before been accustomed to that description of work. His duty was to turn the winch at the top of the cylinders where the work was going on for the foundation of the bridge. Three men always worked it, but there were only two there when the accident happened. There were four men below at work in the cylinders. A signal is given from below, when the buckets were required to be raised. They heard the signal and immediately began to wind up. The buckets are fastened one above the other, and are about 18 inches deep. Witness had worked down in the cylinder for several hours. When the buckets were about halfway through the cylinder they heard a noise as of buckets falling, and then they stopped winding. He was quite sure no signal was given to stop winding. It was very dark and they could not see below. In about two or three minutes after the accident had happened one of the four men crawled up out of the cylinder, and told them that all the men below were killed. There had been no accident

since he had been there before this.

Robert Howard deposed that he had been working at the bridge for about seven weeks. Sometimes he worked inside the cylinders and sometimes out. Was at work at the winch on Saturday morning with the last witness. He had the whole management of that part of the works, and directed the raising and lifting of the buckets. About 10 o'clock on Saturday morning they were engaged drawing up the buckets, and had lifted them to about a foot from the surface when they heard them fall. The weight of each bucket would be about 2 cwt. They were fastened to each other by means of a "cotter," or pin, which could not work out because of the great weight. Two men were at work half way down, on the iron stage; their duty was to see that the buckets did not foul while passing through into the tubes. There were three apertures in each cylinder -- one for the full buckets, another for the empty ones, and the third for the men to use. The whole depth of the cylinders was 63 feet. The accident was caused by the breaking of one of the iron buckets, which caused the whole to give way, carrying the staging and buckets to the bottom, and killing the three deceased men -- Humphries, Carter, and Cole. Never heard anyone say the mode of working the cylinders was unsafe. The weight of the buckets, exclusive of the stage, would be about three tons. Witness had worked in the cylinders for 12 hours a day for a whole week. All that time he was working under pressure.

John Layton, a man of colour, said, he had been working on the bridge about a fortnight. At the time of the accident he was at work inside the cylinder on the stage, with George Humphreys, one of the deceased. Their duty was to guide the buckets, and to give signals. While they were steadying a bucket through the opening, they suddenly heard a crack above them, and the whole of the buckets came down. There were more than 20 buckets altogether. In their fall they struck down the staging, and knocked Humphries, the other man, to the bottom. Witness saved his life by jumping to the empty buckets, up which he clambered. He afterwards went down and found that the handle of one of the buckets had broken, which caused it to come away from the spindle. He went down voluntarily to that description of work, although he did not like it. There were weights all round the staging to keep it down.

By Mr. Bassett, who attended on the part of the relatives of the deceased men. -- On Thursday one of the handles of the buckets broke off.

Thomas Broom deposed to finding the bodies of the deceased men, Humphries on Saturday, and Carter and Cole on Sunday.

Mr. W. J. Mills, resident engineer of the railway company, deposed, that the foundations were being built on what is termed the pneumatic method, which is quite a modern invention. Up to this occurrence no accident had occurred. He believed this was the first bridge where the system of working by a continuous chain of buckets had been used. It was perfectly safe. Each bucket, with its

contents, weighed about 2 cwt. The weight of the whole rested on the top pin. The pins were capable of sustaining a weight of four or five tons. He had no doubt, from the examination he had made, that the accident was caused by the side of one of the buckets giving way. The weight of the staging, which was loaded with weights to keep the cylinder down, was about five tons. The staging was examined from time to time. He did not consider that mode of working dangerous.

Mr. T. Winder, manager of the works for Messrs. Fox and Henderson, gave similar evidence, and considered that everything was perfectly safe, and the accident caused by the breaking of the side of the iron buckets, which were made of iron of 3-16ths of an inch in thickness, and riveted with 7-16 rivets.

The learned Coroner then addressed the jury, who retired to consider their verdict, and, after being absent a long time, returned a verdict of "Accidental Death," with a recommendation to alter the present cylinders.

South Eastern Gazette, Tue 21 Aug 1855, p 6

THE FATAL ACCIDENT AT ROCHESTER BRIDGE.

The inquest on the bodies of three men, named George Humphries, Robert Carter, and James Cole, who were killed at the dreadful accident which took place at the new railway bridge, Rochester, on the 11th inst., whilst at work in the cylinders, was held at the Guildhall, on Monday, before James Lewis, Esq., the city coroner, and after occupying upwards of ten hours was brought to a conclusion late that evening.

The Coroner, after the jury had been sworn, addressed them in a brief manner, observing that the unfortunate accident which had occurred had aroused a very great deal of attention, and had led to much surmise with regard to the circumstances which had resulted in the deaths of the three workmen. For his own part, he knew but little about the accident, except what he had heard generally spoken of, and that, he had no doubt, was the case with most of the jury. The investigation they were entering upon demanded the fullest and most impartial attention, and he would entreat them to hear the evidence that might be offered with minds unbiassed and impartial, and to sift the evidence calmly and oarefully. At the present stage he thought there was no nesessity for him to go into the legal question, as he should probably have occasion to do that after they had heard the evidence of the witnesses. Their first duty would be to view the bodies of the deceased, after which it would be desirable for the jury to inspect the spot where the accident happened, when they would return and examine the witnesses.

Mr. Bassett, solicitor, said he was instructed to attend to watch the inquiry on the part of the relatives and friends of the deceased men.

The Coroner said he should be happy to receive any sug-

gestions which would assist the inquiry. The court was neither an open nor a closed one, and he certainly could not admit of a cross-examination of the witnesses by any person, as if there was a contest between the Crown and any individual. He had no wish to make the enquiry an ex parte one, but at the same time he could not allow Mr. Bassett to examine any of the witnesses, but if that gentleman thought proper to suggest any questions, he (the coroner) would put them.

The jury then went to view the bodies of the deceased, which lay at the Queen's Arms; each appeared to have been much injured, and there was no doubt that their deaths must have been instantaneous. After an examination of the bodies, the jury proceeded to inspect the locality of the accident and the cylinders in which the unfortunate men were at work. They also examined the tubes, air-pipes, buckets, and engine, being assisted in their survey by Mr. Mills, the engineer, and Mr. Winder, the manager. After an absence of about an hour they returned to the Guildhall, when the following evidence was adduced: --

Henry Johnson, of Colchester, was the first witness examined. He said -- I am a labourer employed at the railway bridge, now building across the Medway in this city, and first came to work there a week ago. I had not been accustomed to work at similar structures before I came to Rochester. My duty was to turn the winch at the top of the cylinders where the work is going on for the foundation of the bridge. Four men usually work there, but there were only three when the accident happened. Three

other men were at work inside getting up the earth. Two men were turning the winch, and two putting the empty trucks down. Other men were at work getting the buckets ready filled. A signal is always given us when we are wanted to wind up; the signal is two knocks on the cylinder, which were given, and we distinctly heard them. The buckets are joined to one another by means of the spindle of one of the buckets running into the bar of the next, and are about six inches apart. Each bucket is taken on as soon as it reaches the surface; the buckets are about 18 inches in depth. It is customary to put an iron bar through the handle of the lower bucket while we take away the top one. The buckets go through an iron pipe. I have worked down in the cylinders for four hours. When the men below want us to stop winding, they knock three times. There are holes made in the bar to support the under buckets, and the bar sometimes rested on the top of the cylinders; if the know the men's names who were at work with me on Saturday morning when the accident happened. We heard the signal of the knocks given and drew up the buckets; we had drawn them about half through, when we heard a noise of the buckets falling, and we immediately stopped winding. Did not feel the winch heavier or lighter; could see nothing below whilst we were winding, as the cylinders are all covered over, except where the buckets go up and down. I am quite sure no signal was given us to stop winding. In about two or three minutes after the accident,

one of the men who was working below came up and told us that all the men below were killed. Information of the accident was given and some men went down into the cylinders. Nothing had gone wrong nor happened at that work since I had been there.

Robert Howard, residing in Troy-town, said -- I have been working on the new bridge for seven weeks, sometimes within the cylinders and sometimes out. On Saturday morning I was at work at the winch with the last witness. (This witness contradicted the evidence of the last witness relative to the signals given by the men below, and stated that the signal to draw up was only one knock; he accounted for the witness's ignorance of the signals from the fact that he had not worked there long.) I had the whole charge of the winch at the top and received the signals. When three knocks are made it is for the engine to give more pressure. On the morning of the accident one signal was given to draw up the full buckets, and we heard nothing more till the buckets fell. They were about a foot out of the hole when we stopped drawing. There was no alteration in the power when we were drawing up the buckets; they came up "beautifully" and never better. The weight of each bucket when full would be about one hundred weight and a-half. The buckets are joined to each other by means of a spindle or "cotter." The men fill the buckets at the bottom of the cylinders and then put in the pin. I am quite sure the pin could not work out, for the weight of the buckets would keep it in. Never knew a bucket to break before. When the bucket gave way they all fell. One is the usual number to be working on the stage, but there were two on Saturday. The duty of the men on the stage was to see that the buckets did not foul in their journey up. The stage on which the men stand is about half-way down, and their duty is to give all proper signals.

By the jury -- The stages are all iron, supported on the flanges of the cylinders, and also fixed on iron bars and plates. There are three apertures in the cylinder, one for the full buckets to pass up through, another for the empty ones, and the third is used for the men to go down by. I have worked inside on the stage. The buckets merely want a man to steady them to enable them to come up clear. The men at the bottom call out to those on the stage to tell them when to draw up. The iron stage is very weighty.

By the Coroner -- I have not been down the cylinders since the accident happened. If the buckets caught the stage in their passage, the man would give the signal to stop. I have not been into the cylinders since Monday last, when I went down to the bottom. I have not worked in the cylinders since, because it injured my constitution to do so.

The witness was closely pressed by several of the jury as to whether that was his only reason for declining to work inside, and also what he meant by its being "injurious to his constitution;" but the only reason he could assign was that working under pressure did not agree with him.

By the jury -- The depth of the cylinders is about 63 feet, including the bell at the top. The stage was on the third

cylinder, and about halfway down. Never heard anyone say that that way of working the cylinders was dangerous. There were several iron weights on the stage for the purpose of keeping it steady, and also to keep it down; their weight would be about two or three tons. Another man was at work on the stage with the deceased Humphries, and two other men were below. Cannot say what happened inside, as I was not there to see. We are paid 6s. a-day when we work inside the cylinders, and 4s. per day outside, which is more than we can get by working for the farmers. I never worked on the new city bridge.

By the foreman -- Have worked in the cylinders for 12 hours per day a week right off. It hurts some people more than others. The opinion is that there is no one to blame for the accident.

John Layton, a man of colour, deposed -- I lodge on the Brook, Chatham, and have been working at the bridge for thirteen days only. I first went inside to work on Wednesday last. at six o'clock in the morning. On Thursday I was working below under pressure. On Saturday I was at work on the stage with the deceased Humphries; our duty was to guide the buckets and to give signals. We both had hold of the same bucket, and I gave the signal to draw up. The buckets came clear through the opening, when I suddenly heard a crack above me, and the buckets came down, I think to the number of twenty. When they fell they were half-way in and half-way out of the tube. There were 23 buckets altogether. Whilst the buckets were falling they struck the stage and part of it came down with the weights on it. The buckets struck Humphries and threw him out. They also struck me, but I contrived to save my life, and jumped to an empty bucket after I was struck, and clung to it. I climbed to the top and gave an alarm, and afterwards returned down the cylinder to see what had given way. I found that the handle of one of the buckets had broken, so as to cause it to come away from the spindle. I did not like the work inside the cylinders at first, but Humphries was an experienced man to work with, and I volunteered to go down with him, as he promised to shew me all he could. Humphries had told me that he did not like it, but a man must do something to get a living. I have also heard him say that the weights had no business at all inside the cylinder. I have seen the weights moved, but cannot say how many weights there were. If ever the buckets catch the stage we should guide them through. I cannot say how the handle was broken; it had passed me, but I saw no crack in it.

By the Coroner -- I cannot tell if the buckets are ever inspected; they are fixed to handles, and are very strong.

By Mr. Bassett -- On Thursday afternoon a young man who was in the cylinder for the first time saw one of the buckets broken; that bucket was taken away. I was inside at the time.

By the Coroner -- The three men killed generally worked with me inside. I have often heard men say that it was not safe, because of the weights inside.

To the jury -- The accident was to occur; it was the will

of God, not of man. I have never known the weights to fall, but I have been told that the weights had fallen down in consequence of the buckets slipping. The weights are kept there to sink the cylinders.

By the Coroner -- After the accident had happened, I heard one man calling out, "Oh, oh!" but the lights were extinguished and I could not see who it was.

Thomas Broom said he had been working on the cylinders for the past fortnight. About half-past 11 he was sent for to go into the cylinders, as something had happened. He went immediately under pressure, and by means of the ladders. At the bottom he found Humphreys lying with three weights on his legs and two on his breast. He was quite dead. There was no water in the cylinder then; it had been pumped out. Worked all day in trying to get the others out, but could not, as the engine leaked. The next morning witness entered the cylinders at 5 o'clock, but the syphon pipe was blocked, and they could not get it to run. There were a great many broken buckets at the bottom and one bar of broken iron. At 8 o'clock they got the second man out, and the last at 11 o'clock. Only a portion of the stage was broken; the rest was in its proper state.

By the Coroner -- Some of the weights on the stage were in their usual place. Cole and Carter appeared to have been killed by the weights falling on them. Carter was found behind the syphon pipe with 12 buckets between that and the side of the cylinder. From their appearance they must have been dead before the water got in. The weights at the city bridge were not placed on stages, but were suspended outside the cylinder. He had never worked inside a cylinder where the weights were on stages. Could form no opinion as to the safety of weights placed inside on a stage.

By the foreman -- Did not consider the present plan so safe as that adopted by Mr. Hughes, of hanging the weights on the outside.

By a juror -- The whole of the buckets rest from the top one, which was not the case in Mr. Hughes's plan. On the city bridge it is customary to draw up only one bucket at a time. The pins by which the buckets were connected together was about the thickness of his little finger.

William Mills were examined by the Coroner -- I am the resident engineer of the East Kent Railway Company; the contractors are Messrs. Fox and Henderson, and they are also the contractors for the foundation of the city bridge. The foundation of both bridges is made by means of cylinders. It is usually called the pneumatic method, and this mode of construction is now used in several instances; it is a modern invention. The works are in a progressive state, and up to this occurrence no injury or damage has been done from this mode of working. This is the first bridge where the system of working by means of a continuous chain of buckets has been tried. It is not cheaper or more expeditious than the plan of single buckets; it has failed in those respects. It is clearly better to have one bucket rather than a great many, but both plans are worked on the pneumatic principle. The buckets

with its contents, weighs about 2 cwt. In the cylinder, at the time of the accident, were 21 full buckets; the weight of the whole rested on the pin of the top bucket. The "cotters" are 7-8ths of an inch deep by 3-8ths thick, and 4 or 5 inches in length. I made a calculation and found that the "cotters" would be capable of holding that weight; and I have further seen them tested to a weight of four tons. They would not be weakened by their use, and were not likely to split or chip. There is greater risk of imperfection in 21 buckets than in one. The handles were made of wrought iron and quite sufficient for the suspended weight. The weight and stage would weigh about five tons, and the stages might be used under either process. On the road bridge the weights are put on the cylinders outside, but I consider that the weights put inside the cylinders were quite as safe, and the stage was sufficient to carry the weights put upon it. I saw one bucket which was said to be the one broken; the handles are always riveted to the sides of the buckets, and these rivets had the appearance as if they had been drawn through and broken off. There are three rivets on each side.

Thomas Winder deposed -- I am the resident manager of the railway bridge works, under Messrs. Fox and Henderson. The steam-engine was not stopped at the time of the accident. If the water had been kept out nothing would

have saved Humphries. I believe there are very efficient men to work the engine. I have not heard whether there was a noise heard in the cylinder late on Thursday night, and that two men were rescued from it by the police.

One of the jury said that he had been informed that such was the fact, owing to the man at the engine being asleep. He should propose to have the person who told him examined presently, as it was a very serious matter.

Examination continued -- The buckets and gear are frequently examined by competent persons. I think this is the first time of using a string of buckets. They have been in use six months without any previous accident. Never heard till to-day that there was any disinclination on the part of the men to work in these cylinders, and if I had considered that mode of working to be dangerous I should have not continued it. Carter, one of the men killed, waited a week on purpose to work in the cylinders. The plan answered but not in a financial point of view, and it was adopted entirely to save accident. In the other plan the men suffered much from the pressure in the cylinders, when five men had to be employed where we now require only three. We have since piled the weights on the top of the cylinders, which we think an improvement. A bucket broke in this same cylinder last Thursday; the others were inspected afterwards. We keep a working engineer, brought up to the business, and it is his duty to see that the buckets and all the ironwork are sound, but especially the buckets.

Several of the jury intimated that they should like to have Superintendent Tuff examined relative to the men being found in the cylinder.

Mr. Tuff then stated that about a month ago, late at

night, two policemen heard great cries of distress proceeding from the cylinders, and on proceeding to the spot found three men who could not get out of the cylinders because of an obstruction. On the police going to the engine they found it stopped, and the engine-driver asleep. There was no doubt that the policeman had saved the men's lives.

Mr. Winder said he had not heard of the circumstance before.

Mr. Mills said he remembered something about it, but it occurred about three months ago, and was not such a serious affair as it had been made.

Mr. Superintendent Tuff was quite positive that it was but a month ago, and was sure that if the police had not been on the spot the men would have been killed.

This being the whole of the evidence, the coroner asked the jury if he should read over the depositions to them.

He would so do if they wished him.

The jury thought there was no necessity for that.

The Coroner having addressed the jury, they retired, and after being absent a short time returned into the hall with the following verdict: -- "We find that deceased came by their deaths by the accidental breaking of an iron handle of a bucket, whilst at work in a cylinder on the Strood pier of the railway bridge. We are also of opinion that the present system of sinking the cylinders is very defective, and would recommend the contractors to amend the same at the earliest possible period."