

George French

1871 census, Ashby Cross Road, Parkstone, Dorset (*possibly*)

Ann French	Head	62	Laundress	Kinson, Dorset
Clara French	Daughter	22	Assistant Laundress	Parkstone, Dorset
George French	Son	20	Pottery Labourer	Parkstone, Dorset
Charles H Rabbitts	Lodger	30	Pottery Labourer	Christchurch Hampshire
William Hopkins	Lodger	25	Farm Labourer	Charlton, Dorset
Frank Hansford	Lodger	15	Farm Labourer	Parkstone, Dorset

Isle of Wight Observer 2 October 1875

FATAL ACCIDENT ON THE RAILWAY.

An inquest was held by the Deputy Coroner (E. F. Blake, Esq.), at the Falcon Inn, on Wednesday morning, upon the body of George French, a native of Poole, a labourer upon the Ryde and Newport line, the circumstances attending whose death are detailed in the evidence below. After the jury (of which Mr. William Johnson was the foreman) had viewed the body, the first witness called was

Edward Richards, who deposed - I live at Weeks', near Ryde, and am a labourer. I knew the deceased by sight, and by seeing him at work on the Ryde and Newport line. He has been the horse driver to the wagons. This accident happened on Monday morning last. Deceased was at Round House Bank, near Newport, about 9 o'clock, driving one horse, and a wagon, which was full of earth. Deceased was running on the rail by the side of his horse, when his foot slipped and he fell, and the wagon went over his left thigh and his left arm. The horse was trotting at the time. We ran at once and picked him up, put him on a door, and took him to the crossing at Fairlee. Deceased spoke, and said "Kill me out of the way; I shan't be here any more." I gave him some brandy, but he could only drink a small drop, We did not send for a doctor, but brought him off directly to the Infirmary, in a light cart. The reason, in my opinion, that the foot of the deceased slipped was that it had been raining, and the rail was greasy. He was quite sober at the time. I spoke to him a minute before. The only words he spoke were, "Write home to my poor old mother."

William Fleming deposed - I live at Rosemary-lane, near Ryde, and am a labourer on the line. I have known the deceased about 12 months. We have both been working on the line. His work has been principally trip-driving. On Monday last I was at the Round House Hill, about 9 o'clock. I saw the accident happen. I saw deceased driving a horse and wagon along the rails. His foot slipped, and he fell across the rails on his face, and the wagon went over his arm and thigh. I ran and picked deceased up. He asked me to write home to his poor old mother. He did not say what caused him to slip. There was clay between the rails, and as it had been raining it was slippery. The wagon did not knock him down. We were going to take him to the hospital at Newport, but they turned back and brought him to Ryde. I don't know why.

By a Juryman.- He was running outside the metals on the clay. He had hold of the reins. It is usual for the horse to gallop. The wagon was going towards Ryde, and he was on the right side of the horse, and it was his left arm and leg which were injured.

James Eastman (who seemed much affected) deposed that he lived at Newport, and had worked on the line as a labourer for the last 18 months. The deceased was on the line about six weeks before witness came. They had both been together as horse drivers. Saw deceased start with a wagon and horse about half-past 9. The wagon was full of earth. Witness picked him up and deceased said "It is a done job, Jim, isn't it?" and all his cries were to write to his poor old mother. He was a single man, and his age 25 years. Witness sent for some brandy, and they got a door and put him on it, and got him into a cart. As he was quite conscious, witness said to him, "Where would you like to go- to the Infirmary, at Ryde, or the Hospital at Newport?" He said. "Take me to Ryde." Witness came with him. All he said was that he was "a done man," and that witness was to write to his mother. Witness stayed at the Infirmary till his clothes were taken off, and then left him.

By a Juryman.- I telegraphed for his mother and sister and brother to come. I was 40 ft. from the deceased when he fell. I was watching him carefully just before the accident. I cannot say why. It is dangerous work. I found it difficult to keep my footing on the blue clay.

Mr. John Menham Pletts, house surgeon at the Infirmary, deposed - I was present when deceased was brought in on Monday last, about half past 11. I had him taken up stairs, and helped to undress him. I found his leg and arm were very much crushed, and that there were very large wounds on both. He was conscious, and told me he slipped and the wagon went over him. I found he had lost an immense amount of blood, and I sent for the medical officer for the week, Mr. Alfred Woodward. He came within a quarter of an hour. I gave deceased some milk, as he could take nothing else. Then a consultation was called of all the staff of the Infirmary - Mr. Barrow, myself, Mr. Woodward, and other doctors were there. We decided that it was necessary to remove the leg and arm, as they were too much crushed to mend. Deceased rallied a little, and at 7 o'clock there was another consultation. It was put before him the serious nature of the operation, and at the same time that it was necessary to save his life, and that it would give him a small chance. Deceased said, "Take off my arm, but save the leg, if you can," and left it to us to do so, if necessary. Dr. Davey took off his arm. He bore it better than I expected. He was under chloroform. We proceeded then to take his leg off, but he died immediately after the operation. He never became conscious again. There was no chance of his living, unless the operation had been performed. He died from shock to the system and exhaustion. If he had died from the chloroform the symptoms would have been different.

By the Foreman.- A *post mortem* examination would tell if he died from an overdose of chloroform, but there can be no doubt that he died from exhaustion and shock.

By another Juryman.- I think if immediately after the accident he had been close to a medical man, he would have stood a better chance of recovering, but even then it would have been necessary to take off his leg.

The Coroner, in summing up, said that perhaps it was thought the wagon was going rather fast at the time, but they were obliged to drive it fast in order to be able to tip the wagon. The only mistake was their bringing the deceased to Ryde, instead of carrying him to Newport. But against that they had the evidence of the last witness that the deceased desired to be brought here, and they thought that he was sufficiently capable of deciding. There was no blame to be attached to the men for bringing him here, but of course it was

obvious it would have been best to have taken him to the nearest place - the distance to Newport being only about two miles, the other five or six.

A Juryman.- Yes, it was a long time from 9 to a quarter to 12.

The Coroner said he dare say the poor fellows did all for the best, and they seemed very kind, especially the last witness, who seemed quite affected by it.

P.C. Fry stated that this witness knew deceased well, deceased lodging with him at Newport.

A verdict of "Accidental Death" was returned.

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