

Henry Alfred Shipway Harris, died 27 June 1870

Waranga Chronicle

June and July 1870

An accident occurred on Monday last, on Balaclava Hill, by which a man named Henry Harris, lost his life. He descended the shaft to the top level, got out there to get some candles, and awaited for the return cage to go to the bottom level, when the cage came down he got on to the top, and descended to the bottom level, and was in the act of getting off the cage, when it started up again, and he was crashed between the sets of timber and the cage, when up to the third set he then fell to the bottom, some 15 or 16 feet on to the top of his head; he was immediately picked up, put into the cage and conveyed to the surface but was found to be quite dead. Dr. Heily was sent for as fast as horse flesh could travel, but of course medical art was of no use. The body is now awaiting an inquest, when the particulars of the whole affair will be elicited. This is the first fatal accident that has occurred on the Balaclava Hill, during the fifteen years it has been working.

CORONER'S INQUEST.

A Coroner's inquest was held before the coroner, (R. W. Shadforth, Esq.,) at Whroo, on Wednesday, 29th inst., to take evidence as to the cause of death of W. A. Shipway Harris, who was killed in the Balaclava Hill Gold Mining company's claim on Monday, 27th inst., the following was the evidence taken.

David Robertson, sworn said—I am a miner working for the company, on Monday 27th inst., deceased went down with me in the cage to the top level, I then got out and went to work, he also got out, I do not know what for, when I got out I did not give any signal.

George Smith, miner, sworn, said—I remember Monday, I left the surface in the first cage after dinner, we stopped at the first level when four men got out. I and Kelly went to the bottom level where we got out, the usual signal was given when the four men got out to lower.

To a juryman—when there are men to go up you knock 4 times, the (illegible) knocks was not necessary, it is only when you are all right and have closed the cage.

To Mr Lewis (who appeared on behalf of the company), I have always knocked when I have done with the cage.

Examination continued, I was standing about 9 feet from the shaft, deceased sitting on the top of the cage with (illegible) resting on the top rail. Easy to judge that was when he arrived at the (illegible)

To a juryman—after the cage had been down a short time it began to ascend, and one of the men ran to the knocker, knocked twice, the cage still ascending, deceased raised the first set of timber then ran to the shaft and saw Harris down the opposite compartment.

Lawrence Manning, sworn, said I (illegible) down the shaft from the surface, deceased got on at the top level, when we got to the bottom two of us got out, and after about two minutes the cage began to called out to Harris, who was on the to hold in and sit still, had he done that he would have gone up without injury,..... the knocker for the engineer toengine, deceased passed the first timber all right immediately after I heard a crash and I saw deceased was dropped about 25 feet, we gave no signal for the cage to ascend two men were in the cage when it ascended, it remainedbottom 300 feet about the usual time, deceased nearly met with an accident a few days ago.

Alfred Temple, sworn, said—when the cage began to rise Harris was sitting on the top of..... seeing his danger, I called out to knock whenrose twenty-five feet, when I heard him say 'O Lord,' and the next instant I heard.....and his body fell over into the opposite shaft...., deceased had plenty of time to get off the cage..... remained at the bottom about three minutes..... was no notice given for the cage to be.... I have known men to neglect giving the signal when they got to the bottom.

J. V. Heily, sworn, said —I am a duly appointed medical practitioner, I have made a post mortem examination on the body, he sustained anfracture of the back of the skull, his neck was broken and also his ribs, and backbone, the injuries sustained would cause death at once.

Edwd. Ferguson, sworn, said—sometimes...and at other times all, the men got out at level, and when the cage goes to the bottom..... is often no one in it to give the signal, at the time of the accident the cage arose as usual feet, and no signal being given, I put on..... engine gave two and half revolutions, signal was given to lower, which wasas possible the signal was then given to and the deceased was brought to the surface.

A verdict of accidental death was returned.

(Waranga Chronicle, 30 June, 1870)

WHROO. [FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.]

The remains of Henry Alfred Shipway Harris — the poor fellow, who was killed on the Balaclava Hill, on the 27th, ult., were followed to its last resting place by all the workmen. The funeral moved from the Balaclava Inn, at half past eleven o'clock. A number of his friends from Rushworth were also present to do honour to one who had so suddenly been taken away.

In passing let us hope that in future the men will be more careful in using the signals. The code of rules, are short and simple, and if proper attention is paid all danger might be averted.

(Waranga Chronicle, 7 July, 1870)

The plaque in the cemetery gives the age for Mr Harris as 35 years.