BELL, John Edward 9 April 1915

Designation	Accident Location	Accident Due to
Fettler	White Peak	Per Way Trolley Train Collision

John Bell was 30 years of age when he died as the result of his trike being struck by a train. John's use of the trolley after dark was not authorised. He died some hours after the accident in Geraldton Hospital. John lived at White Peak with his wife and he is interred in the Anglican Section of Geraldton Cemetery.

FATAL DISREGARD OF REGULATIONS.
INTERESTING EVIDENCE
The inquiry into the circumstances attending the death of John Edward Bell, aged 30 years, a fettler, who met with a fatal accident on the railway near White Peak on April 9 was held yesterday morning. Mr F M Roberts, Acting District Superintendent, was present on behalf of the Railway Department.

Joseph Beaver, newspaper carrier gave evidence of identification, stating he had known the deceased four or five years.

Dr Hungerford said deceased was admitted to the hospital at 11.30 p,m on the night of Friday, April 9th. He was informed he had been run over by a train. Both collar bones were broken, as were a number of ribs on the right side. There were numerous abrasions on the body and limbs. An artificial plate of upper teeth had escaped injury. He died without regaining consciousness shortly before four o'clock the following morning. The injuries, together with shock and concussion, were the cause of death.

By Sergi Thomas: The deceased smelled of rum. He was told that a bottle half full of liquor had been found by him.

Johun Olsen, farmer, of Oakagee, said he came to Geraldton on Friday, April 9th, accompanied by his seven year old son. He missed the Northampton train, which returned at four o'clock, and went by him Chapman train an hour later, which took him as far as Wokarina. He walked back about three quarters of a mile to where Bell lived. They went inside where they had some tea. Bell offered to take them to the 14 mile on his trike but witness first refused saying they could walk. Bell insisted upon taking them, saying there was no risk. Witness had three bottles of beer, two bottles of rum and one of brandy, which had not been touched when they got to Bells. They had a glass of beer each before they had tea, and no more before they started. Bell and he worked the tricycle. They met the motor tricycle coming from Northampton and they had to take the trike off to let the motor pass. They had no more drink then. Deceased took them about ten chains past the 14 mile post, from which witness had about three quarters of a mile to go. He asked Bell to have a drink and they opened a bottle of rum. Bell had a cork screw and they drank the rum neat from a panikin. Witness had one drink and Bell two. When Bell had his second drink he asked him to join him, but he declined, telling him to put the bottle on the ground. Bell got on the trike and after calling out 'good night' went off. He thought the bottle would be about three quarters full when Bell had his second drink. After Bell had gone he looked for the bottle, and coneluded he had taken it by mistake, but he thought the ride was worth it. Witness had had some drink in Geraldton, but Bell appeared all right when he went to his house. By Mr Briber s : When Bell said there was no risk he understood him to mean there would be no risk of him being reported for using the trike. By the Coroner: He had no idea of the time but it was quite dark when they left Bell's. He did not know that the rule of the railway was against the trike being used.

James Joseph Baxter, said he was driving the 7.55 p,m mixed train from Northampton to Geraldton on April 9 They reached White Peak about 10.30 p m There was a very heavy grade there and the engine was travelling very slowly, and was making as much noise as it was possible. He put his head outside the cab to see if the engine could stand any more, and he noticed what appeared to be a shadow on the line about a dozen yards ahead. Just as he was going to let the engine out his mate called out, 'Whoa, there's a trike on the line.' He immediately put on the brake and shut off steam. He felt no impact, and the engine must have stopped dead in two or three feet. Getting down he found deceased lying across the line and the point of the cowcatcher was just over his breast. The little wheel of the trike was half way up the cowcatcher and the other wheels had been forced off the line. The trike was very little injured. He set back the engine two or three feet to clear the man. The deceased was moaning but was not conscious. Bell was placed on the side of the line. There was a lamp turned over on the tray of the trike, but it was not alight. He could not start the train and had to set it back in order to bring the van opposite the deceased to lift him, and subsequently he had to again set it back in order to get it up the bank. Altogether he climbed the bank three times. He found the bottle of spirits between the rails and locked it in his tool box. The lamp on the trike was quite cold and had not been alight for some time. By the position of where it was the trike had been going towards Geraldton. He thought it was stationary. It was built in such a way that it would not run back down an incline. The trolley's small wheel would leave the line and stop it. The deceased lived within a quarter of a mile of the scene of the accident but nearer Geraldton.

Maurice Kennedy, the guard of the train, also gave evidence.

Ganger Chant in charge of section 136, stated that the rules and regulations expressly prohibited the trikes being taken out except in cases or urgent necessity and then the men had to obtain authority. Bell had been on the railway four years, during which time he had only known him to be twice under the influence of drink. He was of the opinion that deceased was sitting
down by the trike when the train came up.

PC. Fanning said he visited the scene o f the accident on Saturday afternoon before any other trains had passed over the line, in company with Ganger Chant. By the deceased's tracks he could see where he had pushed the trike up the incline, a distance of 275 yards. One of the wheels had left the rail at one place and deceased had lifted it on again and proceeded further when the other wheel left the track. From there it was evident that he had pushed the trike with the wheel still off the track for about ten yards. After reaching the spot where the accident occurred he thought the man had either sat or laid down on the line. He found the Pannikin a hat and a cushion near the spot.

The jury returned a verdict of accidental death with no blame attachable to anyone.

Source: *Trove/Geraldton Guardian (WA) Tuesday 20 April 1915 Page 3.*

FUNERAL NOTICE.
FRIENDS of the late JOHN EDWARD BELL, are respectfully informed that his remains will leave the Victoria Hospital, at 4.30 tomorrow afternoon, for interment in the Anglican Cemetery. Members of the Amalgamated Society of Railway Employees please accept this intimation. G. LESTER, Undertaker.

Source: *Trove/Geraldton Guardian (WA) Saturday 10 April 1915 Page 2.*

PROBATE
John Edward Bell, White Peak, Geraldton to Ada Bell, £297 11s. 10d.

Source: *Trove/The West Australian (Perth) Friday 11 June 1915 Page 6.*

A fatality occurred on the Northampton line on Friday night. Just before he reached White Peak the driver of a mixed I train noticed a dark shadow on the line, and almost immediately the fireman exclaimed that there was a trike on the line. The train, which was travelling at about four miles an hour, was stopped and the driver, getting down, found between the trike and the cowcatcher of the engine. A fettler named John Edward Bell. He I had been injured severely and was removed to Geraldton and admitted to the hospital, where he died on Saturday. His injuries consisted of a couple of broken collar bones, some broken ribs, and severe injuries to his head. The deceased, who was 26 years of age and married, lived about half a mile from the scene of the accident, and what caused him to be on the line at the time is not known. It is believed that the trike was stationary at the time, as the driver of the train did not feel any impact.

Source: *Trove/Western Mail (Perth) Friday 23 April 1915 Page 16.*