JACKSON, Joseph Dewer 12 November 1921

Designation	Accident Location	Accident Due to
Shunter	Merredin	Shunting operations

Joseph Jackson was 22 years of age when he was fatally injured while shunting at Merredin. Joseph lived in Merredin and was engaged to Ida at the time of his death. His death led to questions being asked in the state Parliament regarding the issue of safety boots to shunters and the lack of adequate medical facilities at Merredin. Joseph was interred at the Merredin Pioneers Cemetery.

THE CORONIAL ENQUIRY

Before the Acting Coroner (Mr. W. T. Eddy J.P.) and a jury consisting of Messrs. G. Brown, Geo, Hewitt and M. D. Nicholas, the official enquiry into the death of Joseph Jackson was held.

After opening the proceeding's a brief adjournment was made to the scene of the accident, where a minute inspection was made of the rails, points and road.

Returning, the first witness, Dr. Caton Shelmerdine, was called, and deposed that on Friday, November , 11th., he received an urgent call to the Merredin Station Yards, where he found Joseph Jackson in an injured condition. The man had been attended to with first aid and was on his way to the hospital, where he made an examination. Found that there was a compound fracture of the left thigh bone, with considerable flesh injuries, also wounds on the left knee right heel and bruises on back with lacerations in the region of the shoulders. Injured man was suffering from shock and loss of blood. Owing to deficient staff and equipment at the hospital he was only able to dress the wounds and take measures for the relief of pain, in preparation for his transfer immediately to the Perth Public Hospital.

To the Jury ; Fracture was unusually high for that class of injury and the chances of his survival were only slight. Very seldom indeed did anyone recover from such injuries.

Alexander Jackson, deposed; that he accompanied his brother, Joe, by train en-route for the Perth Public Hospital. At Northam, he was taken from the train to the Northam Hospital on medical advice on the morning of the twelfth. He saw the dead body at that Hospital.

To the jury: His brother had made no statement on the way down. The doctor at Northam said he could not possibly allow him to go on to Perth owing to him suffering from shock. Doctor also said he should not have been allowed to travel on the train but should have been treated for shock at Merredin.

Wilfred Harley Webster shunter gave evidence as follows, I remember the night of the 11th. I was on duty in the railway yards at Merredin as assistant shunter to Joe Jackson. An accident occurred at 10:15 they had lifted a rake of trucks from shed road and had proceeded to the East end of the shunting neck for the purpose of marshalling a train. As train went up to east neck I was on last vehicle with Jackson. Witness got off at No. 1 hand point at east end, the train still in motion. Did not notice whether Jackson got off while the train was in motion. Witness set points for No 3 road. The rails that would be moved by this were just along side him . Junior porter, then came with instructions from the Night Station Master. He read instructions as soon as he had jumped off. Then heard noise like lamp falling and he immediately gave a red light to driver and ran towards spot where he had last seen Jackson. Heard, Jackson singing out " Bill, Bill I'm cut up" Saw him lying between centre rails. Witness immediately pulled him clear of tracks and then informed driver of what had happened. Only about ten seconds had elapsed between when he jumped off and heard

lamp fall and he was about thirty yards away. One vehicle had been uncoupled by Jackson. It was necessary to get between trucks to uncouple. Train was stationary when he got to where Jackson was lying, four trucks must have passed over him loaded and unloaded in addition to the one uncoupled. It was possible that Jackson had foot caught in v-rails. Engine was about ten trucks away. There were no lights close by the nearest being over one hundred yards away. Felt no resistance when he pulled Jackson away, I could he was badly injured, I did not notice at the time what condition the boots were in. Saw boot after, he had been placed on stretcher. He rendered first aid to the best of his ability. Sent the junior porter for medical assistance as soon as accident had occurred. Assisted to convey the patient to the hospital. He could express no opinion, but only surmised that he was caught and knocked down after lifting chopper.

To the Coroner : Did not know of any hard and fast rule with regard to wearing elastic-sided boots, but Department had advised same. Train crew were perfectly sober and shunting operations were carried out in the ordinary manner.

To the Jury : He was of the opinion that the yard around points is not suitable for safe working at the site of the accident. Considered that some protection should be made as regards blocking v-rails. Not sufficient light where shunting although sufficient where they had to stow trains. At times there was only one man employed on shunting but he thought that there was a regulation that required two shunters to an engine. Apparently shunter Jackson was cutting off trucks while the train was in motion and was caught. Witness was further cross examined by Superintendant Hickey, mainly on technical matters.

John Nesbit, junior porter, stated that he had just handed Webster some instructions from the Night Station Master at No. l hand points when he heard something fall. Webster gave a red light to the driver and ran toward the engine. Heard Jackson , shout out. Webster then sent him for the doctor, so he immediately ran to the night station master, got his bicycle and obtained medical assistance.

Henry John Cockroft, engine driver, deposed that on the night of the l l th he was in charge of shunting engine on duty in Merredin station yards. At about 10.15 was in East end of shunting neck marshalling a train. Had just lifted a rake of trucks from shed road. Shunters were J. Jackson and W. Webster. Could not definitely say where shunters were. When well up neck when we received red light from Jackson. He then reversed engine and received "hit up" signal. It was usual to then lose sight of shunter after the signal on account of going between trucks to uncouple. Did not see him reappear. Should have reappeared to give further signals, when he did no signal witness applied the brakes. After this heard someone call out "cut to pieces". After stopping got a red light from further down the road. Witness shouted "What ?" and got further answer "Jackson's cut to pieces ". So leaving brakes on and telling fireman to mind the engine, witness went down to investigate. Found Jackson lying with feet towards rails at right angles to the running road. Webster asked for knife and ripped up his trousers. His right boot was off and lying just outside rails on near side of road. Assisted with efforts to relieve him. Injured man was conscious and made no remarks. Shunting operations were carried out in his opinion according to custom, train crew were perfectly sober.

To the Jury, Never had heard complaints re lightingin yard , and shunted in yards much less lighted. Had entered protest, re night work nnd had gone on strike eleven months ago about it.

Stanley Ezra Vickers Taylor, fireman, employed on shunting engine gave corroborative, evidence.

Superintendant Hickey, questioned by the jury, admitted that in some yards the v-rails were blocked, but not in every case. Lights were no worse in Merredin than at other centres and no complaints had ever been received. Elastic sided boots were certainly recommended by, the Commissioner but no

regulation was in force. In his opinion, elastic-sided boots would, have been of no help in the present instance.

The Jury, after considerable deliberation, returned a verdict of accidental death, no blame being attachable to anyone. Three riders were also added, recommending elastic-sided boots, more lights in Merredin Station yard, and the filling or blocking of v-rails.

Source: *Trove/Nungarin Trayning Mail and Kununoppin Advertiser (WA) Saturday 19 November 1921 Page 2.*