LEARSON, George 23 February 1898

Designation	Accident Location	Accident due to
Ganger	Denmark	Fall from trolley

George Learson was a Ganger on the Millar's timber railway. George died when he fell from and was run over by the per way trolley he was operating in a dangerous manner in contravention of regulations. A coronial inquest concluded that George's death was accidental and was brought about entirely by his own recklessness.

DENMARK FATALITY.
A RECKLESS GANGER, Albany, Feb. 24
An inquiry was held before Mr. J. A. Wright, RM, this afternoon into the cause of the death of Geo. Learson, a ganger, who was killed near Denmark, on Wednesday afternoon.

Thomas Clarke, the driver of the engine at the time of the accident, said that two trucks left the rails about seven miles from Denmark. Failing to get them on again, he uncoupled the engine, and went to Learson's camp, and met the deceased with a trolley load of men, with tools and sleepers. Learson wanted to hang on to the chains of the tender, but the witness said that it was dangerous as the grade was about one in 50. Learson said that he had travelled hundreds of miles in that way. One man held on to the chain at the back of the tender, and another had a stick to prevent the trolley from running into the tender. They travelled three-quarters of a mile at the rate of about five miles per hour, when the guard said, 'They have left us. Old George must have forgotten his bar or something.' They pulled up to look for the trolley, but not seeing it, went back and found the deceased being carried into his tent, he having been hurt in the back, but was sensible. He went to Denmark and brought Mr. Doyle, the postmaster, who belongs to St. John's ambulance corps, but Learson died at about 4.30 p.m. at his camp.

David Wimberidge, guard of the Denmark train at the time of the accident, corroborated the previous witness.

John Washington, repairer of the permanent way, said that when the trolley with the sleepers got to the engine Learson told him to hold on to the chain behind the tender. The witness suggested that a rope should be used, but Learson said that it would be all right. The witness held on for three quarters of a mile, but going uphill he had to let go, and fell forward. The trolley passed over the witness, causing slight bruises to his head. All the men were thrown off the trolley, Learson falling off in front. They picked up Learson, put him on the trolley, and took him back to the camp.

John Butler, permanent-way repairer, gave confirmatory evidence. Ernest Drew, a lad, sent forward by the guard to Learson's camp, said that he was present at the engine when the driver told Learson that it was dangerous to hang on, and did not want him to do it. Learson replied that he had done it a hundred times all right.

In summing up, Mr. Wright pointed out that the deceased was an experienced railway man, but was yet utterly reckless of danger, and did what he must have known was dangerous. To attach a trolley to an engine was absolutely prohibited by the railway regulations.

The jury, without retiring, returned a verdict of accidental death, there being no blame attachable to anyone except the deceased, who held on to the chain at the back of the tender, although told by the driver that it was dangerous to do so.

Source: *Trove/The Inquirer and Commercial News (Perth) Friday 4 March 1898 page 7.*