MURPHY, William 18 February 1897

Designation	Accident Location	Accident Due to
Guard	Stephenson's Siding	Shunting operations

William Murphy was 30 years of age when he died as the result of being run over by fly shunted wagons. William was a single man. He was interred at Fremantle Cemetery.

RAILWAY FATALITY A GUARD KILLED.

An accident, which resulted in the death of a young man named William Murphy, happened at Stephenson's siding, between the Cottesloe Beach and North Fremantle railway stations, at about 3 o'clock yesterday morning. A goods train from Perth was engaged in shunting operations at the siding, and Murphy, who was the guard in charge, was sitting on the cow-catcher of the engine as the latter eased down with some trucks towards the points where pilot Tracey was standing to switch her out. When the engine and trucks reached the points Tracey could see nothing of Murphy, and he went back a few yards to look for him. He heard someone groaning, and he at once surmised that some thing was wrong. He ran to the spot whence the sounds proceeded, and with the aid of his lamp he discovered Murphy lying on the travel alongside the line. On Tracey asking him what was the matter, the injured man said ' Don't touch me. Tracey recognised that the man was fearfully mangled, as both legs were cut off about the knees. He at once called the driver, Lindsay, and the stoker of the engine, and between them, Murphy, who was suffering intense agony, was lifted into the van and taken on by rail to Fremantle as speedily as possible. On the arrival of the train, at the Port a telephone message was dispatched to Drs. Hope and White, and both medical gentlemen were is attendance at the Government Hospital when the unfortunate man was carried up on a stretcher. The doctors had to place the sufferer under chloroform and amputate both legs close to where they had previously been gashed through. All that could possibly be done for the poor fellow was tried by the doctors and nurses at the hospital, but it was apparent from the first that the case was a hopeless one. Murphy had been injured on various parts of the body, and this, with the shock caused by the severance of the legs, had been too much for him. He gradually sank, until at about a quarter past 12 o'clock yesterday afternoon he succumbed to his injuries.

A report on the accident goes to show that Murphy was doing what is known in railway parlance as 'fly shunting.' He brought a ' rake ' of trucks along the straight line behind the engine at a smart pace. When nearing the points for the siding be threw off the couplings from his position on the cow-catcher, and the engine then steamed forward rapidly so as to clear the points before the latter had been turned to run the moving trucks on to the side line. As Murphy uncoupled the trucks and the engine shot forward he jumped to the ground. He landed, however, on a stone which caused him to fall across the rails, with the result already stated. The deceased, was a man of 30 years of age, and he was a native of South Australia, where for five years he served on the Government railways. In July last he came to Western Australia, and he was at once engaged as a railway guard While he occupied this position he proved himself to be a highly competent and careful man. He made many friends both in the service and outside, and the sad news of his untimely death has caused a wide spread feeling of sorrow. The deceased, who was a single man, has left behind him in South Australia a number of relatives. As a mark of respect to their late comrade the railway employees at Fremantle and the stations in the vicinity have arranged to attend in a body at the funeral, which is to take place at 5 o'clock this evening, when the remains will be taken to the Fremantle Cemetery for interment.

The district coroner (Dr. Lovegrove) was acquainted with the facts surrounding the death yesterday afternoon, and he decided to open an inquest in connection therewith at 2.30 p.m. today.

The chief traffic manager (Mr. John T. Short) received a report on the occurrence yesterday. It would appear that the unfortunate guard met with nothing but misfortune on Wednesday afternoon, or the day before the accident. He was in charge of the trucks that became derailed near Cottesloe in the afternoon, and only a few hours later another truck on a train that he was in charge of became derailed at Claremont. Murphy had that morning applied to be transferred to the goldfields, and his request was being considered. But for the mishap at Claremont the poor fellow would have taken charge of a country goods train which left Fremantle early on Wednesday evening. He was regarded as a capable official.

Source: *Trove/The Inquirer and Commercial News (Perth) Friday 26 February 1897 Page 2.*

THE DEATH OF GUARD MURPHY.
CONCLUSION OF THE INQUEST.
At the Fremantle Courthouse, yesterday afternoon, the coronial inquiry into the circumstances attending the death of the railway guard, William Murphy, on Thursday, February 18, was concluded, before Dr. T. H. Lovegrove.

Walter Lindsay, an engine driver, said that early on the morning of the day named, he took a goods train from Perth towards Fremantle. Murphy was guard, and, on account of something being wrong with the electrical signal system, a pilot man named George Tracy was also with the train. At Stephenson's Siding, three miles from Fremantle, Murphy told witness to "fly-shunt" three trucks loaded with timber. "Fly-shunting" meant that the engine whilst coupled to the trucks ran ahead with them, the connection being broken by the shunter whilst the train was an motion. Murphy rode on the cowcatcher of the engine in order to uncouple three trucks. The engine was running tail first and was pulling, not pushing, the trucks. Murphy unfastened the trucks, and called out "right," which was the signal for the locomotive to steam ahead more rapidly than the trucks were travelling, so that while the engine continued along the main line, the trucks might be turned by the points man into the siding. Tracy, the pilot, acted as points man. Witness next saw Murphy lying on the ground near the main line, and five yards from the points. He said, " Walter, I am done for now. My legs are cut off." " Fly Shunting" was frequently done by the railway men, although the departmental regulations strictly forbade it being carried on. The orders were that a long rope should be used between the engine and the trucks, so that the latter could be slowly pulled along a siding whilst the locomotive itself was proceeding along the main track. There was such a rope at Stephenson's Siding. There should have been a brakeman on the train, but the pilotman made up the proper complement of hands. The regulations prohibited employees riding on cowcatchers for any purpose, it was more expeditious to " fly shunt," than to use the rope.

Dr. J. W. Hope said that when Murphy was admitted to the Fremantle hospital, his two legs were crushed below the knees, and had to "be amputated He had a scalp wound and abrasions on the left shoulder and buttock. He died soon after midday. A post mortem examination showed that the man's liver and the left kidney were terribly burst. It would appear that he bad been crushed, but there were no external marks of such a thing having happened. He may have fallen heavily, and so ruptured the organs.

George Tracy stated that, at Murphy's request, he stood at the points, so that the "fly-shunt " might be performed. Witness knew that "fly-shunting" was not allowed, and he drew Murphy's attention to the fact. Murphy replied that he didn't want to stop there all night. The three trucks which were shunted ran foul of the main line. Witness stopped them, and went to tell Murphy, when he found him lying injured on the ground.

John Simpson, a railway guard, of Perth, said that the deceased, who was a native of South Australia, was a single man, of about 30 years of age.

J. W. Eastwood, locomotive fireman, also gave evidence.

The Coroner said that the engine-driver Lindsay had assisted in doing what he was distinctly commanded not to do, namely, "fly-shunt." Murphy was in charge of the train, but Lindsay, knowing the rules, should have objected to the irregular action which the deceased determined upon. He directed the jury to return a verdict of manslaughter against Lindsay.

The jury returned the following verdict:
"That William Murphy was accidentally killed at Stephenson's Siding on 15 February whilst "fly-shunting" trucks on that date which is strictly prohibited by the general instructions of the Railway Department, and we wish to censure the conduct of the engine-driver, Walter Lindsay, in "fly shunting " trucks there."

Source: *Trove/The West Australian (Perth) Wednesday 24 February 1897 Page 6.*