OLSEN, Niels 24 February 1894

Designation	Accident Location	Accident Due to
Navvy	Capel	Pile driving accident

Neils Olsen's was 31 years of age when he died, on 1 March 1894, seven days after being injured when a pile driver fell over while he was at the top of it with Christian Holm inspecting parts of the machine. He is interred at the Bunbury Pioneers Cemetery.

THE FATAL ACCIDENT AT CAPEL.
CORONER'S INQUEST,
(Before W. H. Timperley. Esq., R.M.,and Messrs. T, E. Spencer (foreman) J. H. Naylor, Ed, Maxted and Jno. Austin, jury.) A coroner's inquiry into the cause of the deaths of Christian Holm and Neils Christian Olsen was held at the Court-house, Bunbury, on Monday last.

Mr. H, E . Parry, executive engineer of the Southern districts, was the first witness called. He stated he was on the ground the day after the accident; the pile driving machine was lying on the ground where it fell; there were three guy ropes, all of which were sound, and not broken, he had photographs taken of the ground, showing the position of the pile driver when it fell, and the trees and stump to which the guys were fastened. The photographs were handed in to the jury.

George Weatherall, a labourer, working for Messrs Smith and Timms, the contractors for the Boyanup-Busselton Railway, sworn, said on the 24th of February the two deceased men Chris. Holm, Neil Christian Olsen and John Holmsen, Isaac Carslen and others, were working about the pile driving machine. ' Holm was on the top of the machine, and Olsen about 8ft lower down. Holmsen was oiling some sheave blocks, and Carlson was inside the frame of the machine. I was standing about six yards from the machine, which was held by two side guys and a back guy. Holm, who was the foreman, called out from the top of the machine to let the back guy go from the stump, to which it was fastened. Holmsen did so. When the guy rope was let go, I saw the machine falling, and called out to take in the slack. Holm also sung out the machine is falling; the machine was then nearly half way to the ground. When the machine fell we all rushed to where the men had fallen. I picked Olsen up from the leaders , he cried out for water, which was immediately brought by.

Mr. Timms Olsen was terribly injured, his face cut, and thigh and elbow broken. We carried him to the shade of a tree. Holmsen and Carlsen picked up Holm and brought him alongside where Olsen was placed. Holm was insensible, his face terribly knocked about, and bleeding at the nose. Both the injured men were shortly afterwards taken to the Bunbury Hospital in Mr. Button's trap. The cause of the accident was the letting go of the back guy the order was given by Holm. Before the accident happened Isaac Carlsen went up the ladder of the machine to fasten on the back guy, and came down and tied the other end of the rope to the stump, there was no back guy on when Carlsen went up.

By the jury: I do not know why Holm gave the order to let the back guy rope go. Holm was a very careful man, and was accustomed to the use of pile driving machines for several years. It is customary to have a back guy to machines. There was a strong wind blowing behind the machine at the time of the accident.

Isaac Carlsen sworn, said, He was employed putting up the pile driver on February 24th. When it was standing it was held by two side guys, which were fastened to the trees. The hoisting tackle was still in its place. After dinner Holm told me to go up the machine, and make the back guy fast, which I did with a round turn on each side of the ladder I came down and fastened the end to the stump, I

also let go the hoisting tackle. The machine was then perfectly safe, and Holm and Olsen went up. I do not know what Holm or Olsen wanted to do on the machine. Holm called out from the top of the machine to John Holmsen to let go the back guy. As soon as the guy was let go the machine commenced falling. I was inside the framing at the time, and I jumped out, the machine falling to the ground immediately. (The witness here described the state the men were in when they were picked up, and their being brought to the Bunbury Hospital!) Holm had a fall of about 48ft., and Olsen about 44ft. The guy rope was let go by the orders of the foreman, Holm. The guy ropes were new and in good order. Holm was in charge, and his orders were supposed to be obeyed. The accident occurred through letting go the guy rope.

John Bennie, sworn, said I knew both the deceased men. I saw them at work putting the pile driving machine together the morning of the day the accident occurred, I saw them in the evening about 8 p.m. in the hospital. Holm was insensible, but Olsen was sensible. I asked him how the accident occurred, and he replied that Holm and him went up the machine to look at the cat head, which was put on the reverse way. Holm went to the top to look at it, and Olsen went to the top landing to look at it underneath. They found they could do nothing with the cat head unless the back guy was let go. Holm called out to Holmsen to let it go, Holmsen made a mistake and went over, to the side guys, when Holm called out again to let the back guy go. As soon as the guy was let go, Olsen saw the machine moving, and told Holm the machine was falling. Olsen then ran out on the leaders, but said there was no chance of escaping by jumping, and he attached no blame to anyone for the accident.

Holm died on February 26th., and Olsen on March 1st.

John Holmsen, sworn said 'I am in the employ of Messrs Smith and Timms. I was at work oiling the blocks near the pile driving machine the day of the accident. Holm called out to me from the top of the machine to let go the back guy rope. I went in the wrong direction, and Holm repeated the order, I then let the guy rope go all but half a turn on the stump, my back was to the machine, I saw the guy line tighten, and looking round to see the cause, I saw the machine falling, the strain on the rope dragged the half turn over the stump, which had a slight leaning towards the machine. Holm and Olsen were countrymen of mine, the former a schoolfellow.

Joseph Timms, one of the contractors for the Boyannp-Busselton railway, stated that Holm and Olsen both had been in his service for a considerable time, the former 4 or 5 years, and the latter about two years. They were most trustworthy men, and Holm had been in charge of pile driving machines for years , he never had better men in his employ; all the gear on the work was sound, and sufficient men were engaged at the machine when the accident occurred. The accident was caused by Holm giving a wrong order.

The jury retired for a few minutes, and returned a verdict of accidental death, adding that no blame whatever could be attached to the men on the works.

Source: *Trove/Bunbury Herald Wednesday 4 March 1894 Page 3.*