PEACOCK, Christopher James 24 July 1917

Designation	Accident Location	Accident Due to
Fireman	Boyerine	Locomotive derailed

Christopher Peacock was 25 years of age when he was fatally injured in the derailment of his locomotive caused by a wash away at a flooded culvert. Christopher was trapped in the locomotive cab by wagons and timber. He received scald and crushing injuries and died when the weight was taken off him. Christopher lived with his parents at Katanning. Christopher is interred at Katanning Cemetery with his older brother, Ralph, who was killed in action at Pozier exactly one year previously.

Family Notice
PEACOCK. On Tuesday, 25th July, 1917, in railway disaster at Boyerine Christopher James (of Loco. Department, Katanning), third son of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas W. Peacock, of Cranbrook, aged 25 years and. 10 months.

Source: *Trove/Great Southern Herald (Katanning) Saturday 28 July 1917 Page 2.*

CORONER'S INQUEST
The adjourned coroner's inquest was held in the Katanning Court House, before Mr. W. J. Rogers, Acting Coroner, and a jury comprising Messrs. R.G.Tree, M. Pamment, and J. Barkley, concerning the death of Christopher James Peacock. Mr. E G. Bagshaw appeared on behalf of the Engine Drivers' Union, Mr. H. J. Creswell for Commissioner of Railways and Mr. A. D. Smith for relatives of deceased.

L. A. Starr, sworn, stated he was driver of No. 2 goods train to Narrogin. He left Katanning about. 5 o'clock in the morning of 24th July, with deceased, C. .T. Peacock, as fireman and G. W. Turner as guard. All went well until the train had passed Woodanilling and was approaching the culvert Known as Salt Creek, near Boyerine. He noticed a hole washed out on the Wagin side of the culvert, and just as the nose of the Cowcatcher came on to the culvert he noticed a hole in the road. When the weight of the engine came on the washout the engine settled down in the hole. He felt coal falling on his head and got out on the side of the engine, after which he had no distinct recollection of what happened.

Being questioned, he said it was dark and just breaking daylight when he arrived at the culvert. He had been on the track for 15 or 16 years, and did not know the place as being a dangerous one. He was on the lookout for washaways and was travelling at reduced speed. George Walter Turner, sworn, said he was guard on the train in question, which consisted of coach, 20 loaded trucks, 2 empties, engine and brake van. Everything went smoothly until past Woodanilling. When nearing Salt Creek he received a severe shock in the Van. He jumped out of the van and went along the train to see if any passengers were injured. Saw the engine had sunk down into the culvert, There was water on both sides of the line, and nearly up to the level of the embankment on both sides. He proceeded to the wreck and found the tender right down in the hole, with the engine tilted up in front, and trucks piled up on top. He climbed over the debris and found Driver Starr sitting on the embankment, who said, after a short conversation, that he would go on to Boyerine for assistance, and told witness to try and help Chris, meaning the fireman, He called out to the fireman who answered, I am here, but could not see him, the sound coming from the cabin of the engine. At this time a passenger by the name of Ghas. Shaw came up and said he would go on to Boyerine for assistance. He then went round to the other side of the engine and commenced clearing away the wreckage to get at Peacock. The engine was in about 10 or 12 feet, of water. He had to go back to the van for an axe and saw. Whilst there he told another 'passenger named Todd to go to

Woodanilling for assistance. When he got back to the engine he commenced working to remove the debris. A fettler from Boyerine came up and assisted him. After removing a quantity of coal, he found that timber was pinning Peacock to the hand brake. He was working in water up to his waist and in steam. He felt faint and called for assistance. Fettler Harris took his place, as there was room for one only to work at a time. He then started working on top of the cab and knocked a plate off, and could see where the fireman was. The fireman was then partly released, and about 10 minutes after they got him out. As soon as the weight was taken off him he expired. It was between 30 and 40 minutes from the time of the accident until he was released. Water was running through the culvert at about 15 miles an hour. The train was travelling about 15 miles an hour. He had been running on that section for 20 months. The speed allowed on that section is 35 miles an hour. He had not seen the water so high before at this place. The hole was about 10 yards wide. In answer to questions, he stated the water was nearly up to the top of the ballast when he saw it, Shaw started to walk to Wagin, and he told him if a doctor had not been sent along to send one out at once. Shaw knew the deceased was practically dead. First assistance arrived about 12 o'clock. Medical assistance arrived between 12 noon and 1 p.m. from Wagin.

James Walsh, sworn, said he was an employee of the Railway Department, and that his work was to run the length between Katanning and Barton, He left Katanning about 7 a.m. on Monday, 23rd July, and examined the line between the two places. Everything was correct. At Salt Creek there was a foot of water running through the culvert. He left Barton next morning on the return trip, and , arrived at Wagin about 8,15 a.m. The station master told him he had heard there had been accident at the bridge, near Boyerine. In about 10 minutes he proceeded on his trip, and just before reaching Lime Lake met Trooper Shaw and repairer Donough walking. They told him of the accident. He returned to Wagin and told the station master, the time then being about 11.20 a.m . The engine, train and doctor were ready, and the station master was waiting for instructions. It was after 12 o'clock when they left. Witness piloting the train to the breakdown. In answer to questions, he stated the delay in sending relief was due to non-arrival of instructions.

Robert Steven Harris, fettler, residing at Boyerine, gave corroborative evidence. In answer to questions, he said two trains had passed over the spot between midnight arid the time of accident. He took a message to Woodanilling, and arrived about 8.30 to 9 o'clock. He piloted the first train from Woodanilling to the scene of the accident. There was no doctor on board.

Frank Wilkinson Mather, sworn, said he was fitter in charge of the loco branch at Katanning. He heard of the accident at about 7.45 a.m. and later went to the scene of the accident, arriving about 11.55 a.m. In answer to questions he stated the message he received at 7:45 a.m., was that a washaway had occurred at Boyerine, and the fireman was slightly hurt. At about 10.30 a.m. he received a verbal message to say Peacock was dead. The engine was ready to go away at 8 o'clock. He did not know the driver was injured until he arrived at the accident, nor the full seriousness of the accident until he got there. There was no doctor at Katanning station.

Alf. Martyn, constable, gave evidence that he proceeded by train to the accident and took charge of deceased. He stated the culvert was 14 feet wide and 10 feet deep, and is now being extended.

James Sullivan, ganger, residing at Boyerine, sworn, said he had been patrolling the length on the night of the accident and left the spot about 2 a.m., when the water was 4 or 5 feet from top of the bank.

CORONER'S VERDICT

After hearing the evidence the Coroner brought in the verdict that the deceased C. J. Peacock had met his death through scalding and being pinned by timbers as the result of accident to the train caused by a wash away due to unprecedented rains. The acting coroner, in giving the finding of the court, stated that during the hearing of the evidence, the delay in obtaining medical assistance had been referred to, and that there appeared to have been some lack of regulation routine on the part pf the guard at the time of the accident. The guard should have sent appeals for assistance in writing, but no one could blame an official for allowing his humane sentiments to cause him to make a technical breach of regulations. In this instance the guard Turner appeared to have given priority to his endeavor to assist the deceased and had sent verbal messages, but under the circumstances this is hardly blameworthy. It is to be hoped that should such occasion arise in the future, the Railway Department will take steps to have medical assistance promptly available. On behalf of the jury and himself, the acting coroner expressed sympathy with the relatives of the deceased, and expressed the hope that the driver Starr, may soon be fully restored to health and able to resume duty.

Source: *Trove/Tambellup Times (WA) Saturday 8 September 1917 Page 2.*