SMILLIE, Hugh 12 February 1912

Designation	Accident Location	Accident Due to
Navvy	Naraling	Run over by ballast wagons

Hugh Smillie was only 17 years of age when he was run over and killed by ballast wagons at naraling. Hugh's father was seriously injured in the same accident. Hugh lived in Geraldton with his parents and he was interred in the Wesleyan section of the Geraldton Cemetery. In newspaper reports of the accident his surname was consistently stated as being "Smilie", this is incorrect. *MM December 2016.*

FATAL ACCIDENT.
AT RAILWAY CONSTRUCTION WORKS NEAR NARALING.
ONE MAN KILLED AND THREE INJURED.
Yesterday . afternoon a telephone message was received from Naraling stating that a terrible accident had occurred at noon on the railway construction works nine miles north of the place mentioned, and that one man had been killed and three injured. The railway superintendent (Mr. Wakeley) and the stationmaster (Mr. La Roche) immediately took steps to ensure a quick through trip of the special train bearing the injured men, and also the poor fellow who had been killed. The special, consisting of an engine and two trucks (in one of which were the three injured men and in the other the body of him who had been killed), made a quick trip to Geraldton, arriving here at 3.30 p.m. It was met, by Dr. Hungerford, and Sergeant Thomas and several police constables, who, after the doctor bad made an examination of the injured men, conveyed them on a stretcher to a lorry which was in waiting, and they were immediately taken to the hospital, the body of the dead man being subsequently taken to the morgue.

Inquiry elicited the information that the casualties from the accident were : —

Hugh Smilie, jun., killed.
Hugh Smilie, sen., injuries to his arms.
F. Kidd, injuries to his leg.
S. Vian, injuries to his feet.

From what we have been able to glean concerning the accident, it appears that at dinner time yesterday a full rake of trucks (seven), to which was attached an engine, was standing in the ballast pit, and the engine blew a whistle to announce the dinner hour. The day being a particularly hot one, some six or seven of the men got under the trucks to gain the benefit of their shade whilst having their meal. In accordance with the usual custom, the engine was uncoupled from the trucks for the purpose of going some distance away to take, on fresh water and to enable the engine driver to get his dinner. On being uncoupled, the trucks came back slightly from the engine, with the result that the wheels of a truck passed over Smilie's head and killed him instantly, the other three men receiving injuries as stated. A fifth man had his toes grazed, but did not sustain serious injury, and remained at the camp.

From Dr. MacMorran (who, owing to Dr. Hungerford's temporary absence in Perth has charge of the hospital) we learnt today that all the patients are doing as well as can be expected. Smilie sustained a compound fracture to the right upper arm. His injury is regarded as serious. Kidd sustained a nasty cut under one knee, and a scalding on the back of his neck, presumably caused by the boiling water in the billycan being knocked over and falling on him. Vian had one foot badly bruised, the wheel evidently passing over the top of the instep. All these men also sustained nasty bruises.

The elder Smilie is 47 years of age, and his son, who was killed, was 17. They only arrived from England about three months ago, and were regarded as fine specimens of emigrants, both being hard working men.

Vian, who is 54 years of age, came to Australia 35 years ago. He is a married man, his wife residing at the construction works.

Kidd came to Australia from Yorkshire two years ago, and is only 20 years of age.

The funeral of young Smilie took place this afternoon, the Rev. J. E. Stone conducting the service at the Wesleyan cemetery.

Source: *Trove/Geraldton Guardian (WA) Tuesday 13 February 1912 Page 3.*

Author's Note: *The surname of the deceased Hugh* ***Smillie*** *and his father Hugh sen., have been misreported in this and other accounts of the accident.MM December 2016.*

Death of Hugh Smilie.
VERDICT OF THE JURY.
NO BLAME ATTACHABLE TO ANYONE.
Yesterday before the Coroner (Mr. Raymond Gee, R.M.) and a jury the adjourned inquest concerning the recent death of Hugh Smilie at the railway construction works at Naraling, was resumed and concluded.

In summing up the Coroner said there could be no difficulty in arriving at a decision in regard to the manner in which Smilie came by his death. The evidence left no room for doubt in regard to that point. There remained the question to what extent, if any, blame was attachable to any person or persons. At one time it seethed as if the driver, fireman, and guard of the train might each be held blameable in the matter. As evidence, proceeded, however, it dissipated that possibility and he could not see how any of these men could incur any blame, and consequently there was no blame attachable to the Railway Department. Then there was the case "of the ganger, John Dempsey, and the foreman of the whole job, Rupert Charles Mudge. Dempsev, in his evidence, stated that he had never seen anyone sitting under the trucks. According to other evidence it was plain that it was the common practice for the men to go under the trucks. It was probably so common that the officials did not take any notice of it, or think it necessary to warn the men. If Mudge moved the trucks without authority from anyone, it might have been a serious thing for him. It might have laid him open under some circumstances to a trial for manslaughter. If the practice of sitting under the trucks was so prevalent, the jury, while returning a verdict of accidental death would be quite justified in adding a rider that the supervision of the men at the ballast pit had been grossly neglected.

After a retirement of about ten minutes, the jury returned into court with a verdict of accidental death, no blame being attachable to anyone. A rider was added that the Public Works Department be asked to put up notices in places where required, warning men against the danger of sitting under trucks under such circumstances as were disclosed by the evidence in this case.

Mr. J. V. Clydesdale watched the Case on behalf of the Crown.

Source: *Trove/Geraldton Express (WA) Friday 15 March 1912 Page 3.*