WHITFIELD, Robert 5 October 1923

Designation	Accident Location	Accident Due to
Fettler	Greenbushes, Timber Corp.	Log Train derailed

Robert "Bob" Whitfield was 41 years of age when he was fatally injured in the derailment of wagons loaded with sleepers at Greenbushes. He died some hours later at the Greenbushes hospital. Robert was married and had three children. Robert was a veteran of the Great War 1914-18.

RAILWAY ACCIDENT.
A Fettler Killed.
Greenbushes. Oct. 6.
A shocking accident occurred at Greenbushes on Friday, as a result of which a man named Robert Whitfield lost his life. The deceased, who was in the employ of the Timber Corporation Ltd., as a fettler, had been riding on a timber train, when some of the trucks left the line. The guard jumped clear, but the deceased fell under a truck which was loaded with sleepers, sustaining such frightful injuries that, he succumbed within a few hours in the Greenbushes Hospital. He leaves a -wife and three children. An inquest was opened today and formally adjourned.

Source: *Trove/The West Australian (Perth) Monday 8 October 1923 Page 11.*

FATALITY AT GREENBUSHES.
EVIDENCE AT THE INQUEST.
A DIGGER'S TRAGIC END.
(From Our Correspondent.)
The inquest on the body of Robert Whitfield, who was killed on Friday, 5th inst., was held on the 12th inst. before Mr. D. H. Gibney, Coroner, and Messrs. E. Gray, E. Edwards, and L. Strothers, jury.

Constable Ford deposed that deceased was a married man with three young children. The family were in poor circumstances. Deceased had always been a hardworking and sober man. He was 41 years of age, and a returned soldier.

Sidney Maldon, guard, employed by the Timber Co. Ltd, deposed. On the 5th inst., I was in charge of a log rake, engine, and 12 trucks. I left the mill at 1.45 p.m. and was assisted by the deceased in unloading sleepers. Afterwards I left the railway station and proceeded to No. 9 landing and unloaded chaff. I was riding on a truck with the deceased, only, in front of the train, which proceeded to the end of the line, where there is a slight curve. Our speed was eight miles an hour. The truck we were on left the rails. Deceased and I were sitting on its side, with our legs hanging over. I called twice to deceased, 'Jump, Bob, jump!'. We jumped off together and deceased seemed to fall forward on his face. He jumped forward, in the direction the train was travelling. I tried to swing him clear, but failed. The wheel of the truck that left the rails caught his left leg, and three trucks following appeared to pass over him. When I found him he was lying underneath one truck in the middle of the line, and he said: 'Get the trucks off me.' With the assistance of the engine driver and the navvies I got his body from underneath and found him very badly injured. We conveyed him to the Balingup Road crossing, where he was taken by motor car to Greenbushes Hospital. After the accident the trucks appeared to be in good condition, with the exception of some minor breakages. There were four trucks derailed. I cannot account for the truck I was on leaving the line. It may have been caused by the limb of a tree. The track was in good condition, also the truck. The fact of the truck being empty would not tend to throw it off the line. I have known similar trucks to leave the track after having met with an obstruction. There is no regulation prohibiting an employee riding on trucks. All on the train were sober at time of the accident.

To Mr. Anthony, President of the Timber Workers' Union, who appeared for the widow: I do not think the risk of accident would be greater when trucks were being pushed instead of pulled by the loco. The trucks were closely coupled. The truck on which deceased and I were riding had been off the line before, due, I think, to an obstruction on the line, and I consider it quite safe. I consider the occurrence purely accidental, and there was no negligence on the part of deceased.

Ernest Scott, Government engine driver, employed temporarily by the T.C. Ltd., deposed: On Friday, 5th inst., about 3 p.m., I was in charge of an engine about 10 miles from the railway station, Greenbushes. When I left the railway station the trucks were being pulled and when I left No. 9 landing I propelled them, the speed being about seven miles an hour. The loco, was running without steam on a down grade. The three leading trucks left the line. The fireman called out to stop and I applied the brake. I saw deceased lying under the third truck, between the rails, and helped to extricate him.

John W. McKernan (fireman), gave corroborative evidence.

Dr. Benson, medical practitioner, Greenbushes, testified to the nature of deceased's injuries. The body was taken very expeditiously to the hospital after the accident, and all those who rendered first-aid so carefully should be commended for their assistance.

The jury found that deceased, Robert Whitfield, met his death as the result of an accident on October 5, no blame being attachable to anyone. They added as a rider, "We commend Sidney Maldon and all other helpers for their promptitude and care in conveying deceased to hospital".

Source: *Trove/The Bunbury Herald and Blackwood Express (WA) Monday 22 October 1923 Page 2.*