

## **OLIVER HENRY HAWKINS. 1888 - 1912.**

Oliver was born 4 October 1888 at Thurstons Barton, Rose Hill, Bristol.

His Parents, George Hawkins and Emma Bowden were married in 1879 in Bristol. The 1881 Census shows them living with 3 children at Thurston's Barton. This was a mixed farming/pottery clay mining area with groups of cottages dotted around. George is described as a Pottery Labourer.

The 1891 Census shows George and Emma with 8 children (including Oliver) now living at 17 Greenbank Road Bristol (the house still exists). George is now described as a Coal Miner - possibly working in the Troopers Hill mining/quarry area east of Bristol. Emma is described as a tailoress and some of the children later follow her into that trade. Possibly, George previously worked at some time in the Welsh Valleys mining area as 3 of the children were born there.

The 1901 Census shows George and Emma with 7 children (including Oliver age 13) now living at 34 Greenbank Road (the house still exists). George is an Excavator. 2 of the daughters are Coat Apprentices.

The 1911 Census finds Oliver living in Tewkesbury at 1 Jeynes Row (the house still exists) and working as a railway porter. His landlord possibly had a railway connection - He is described as a flour porter. There is a rail siding leading through the town to Flour Mills by the river Avon.

The 1912 inquest report shows Oliver moved to Bromsgrove in May 1911 and was living in South Road Aston Fields. His death Occurred on 5 October (the day after his 24th Birthday) at 5.02am. He was knocked down by a banking engine that was reversing from the Lickey Bank the into the station. At the time Oliver was carrying parcels on a pedestrian level crossing that lay between the end of the Platforms and the Finch End Lane road bridge. Oliver's remains returned to the family in Bristol and were interred in Greenbank Cemetery.

## **BROMSGROVE, DROITWICH & REDDITCH WEEKLY MESSENGER, SATURDAY. OCTOBER 12 ,1912.**

On Monday night Mr. A. H. Hebbert (Deputy Coroner) held an inquest at Bromsgrove Station touching the death of Oliver Henry Hawkins (24), a porter at Bromsgrove Station, and living at South Road, Aston Fields, who was knocked down and killed by a bank engine on Saturday morning.

Mr. J. Middleton was foreman of the jury. Mr. Abraham (of the Locomotive Department) and Mr. W. E. Houghton (Assistant Traffic Inspector) represented the Midland Company.

William Richards, Station Master of Bromsgrove Station, deposed that the deceased had been employed at Bromsgrove Station since May, 1911, and was 24 years of age. He came to Bromsgrove from Tewkesbury. On Saturday morning the deceased was carrying the parcels from the down platform to the up platform. It was always understood that while the men were carrying parcels the engine drivers were to be on the look out. The time was 5.2 a.m., and it was dark. There were no special instructions to the drivers of engines running up and down the bank.

-By a Juror: The lamps at the station were all alight.

James Bale, porter, living in South Road, and employed by the Midland Railway since July 15th of this year, stated he was at work with the deceased. Witness went on duty at 4.30. Deceased came on duty at 7.0 o'clock the previous evening. At the time of the accident they were transferring parcels from the down train which was due at Bromsgrove at 4.6. Deceased was going to catch hold of a hamper for the Earl of Plymouth, and carry it across to the other plat-form. Witness shouted to him, " All right." an no sooner were the words out of his mouth than he saw the engine coming down the line, and he shouted to the deceased to look out. The engine was about eight or ten yards from witness when he first saw it, but Hawkins was within four or five feet of it. After the engine had gone by witness saw the deceased on the metals some distance away. The engine must have dragged him along. Witness went to him. He was lying face down-wards, his head in the four foot way and his legs in the six foot way. He pulled him from the metals. A goods train had immediately before gone up the line, and the bank engine which knocked the deceased down had assisted a previous train. Witness had not been warned to look out for the bank engines. They could not hear them when a train was going up the line. Witness did not think the engine driver heard witness shout. The driver stopped his engine, and came back to the deceased. Witness was working under the directions of Hawkins When the up train had gone up they got in the six foot way, and after the passage of two bankers they crossed over. It was the noise of the up train and the smoke from the engine which prevented witness and deceased hearing or seeing the engine sooner. When witness first came to Bromsgrove he was told to take particular care, because this was an unusual Station.

-By a Juryman: He had never regarded the work as dangerous, and it was more dangerous to wheel the parcels with the barrow across the level crossing. When he last looked at the signals they were at danger.

William Morris, driver of the engine, who went on duty at 3.0 o'clock on Saturday morning, said he was driving a six-wheeled coupled tank engine. He was running from Blackwell to Bromsgrove, bunker first. On entering Bromsgrove Station he was on the look out to see if the road was clear, but he did not see the two porters transferring parcels. His mind was not quite clear as to whether he sounded his whistle or not; they did it so systematically that he

would not like to swear he did so upon this particular occasion. He was looking at the level crossing at the time. He heard neither of the men shout. He felt a considerable jump of the engine, and he stopped at once. He examined his engine, thinking something had gone wrong with that, and on looking up the line he saw what turned out to be the deceased. He went to the spot with his hand lamp. He sent his mate to the shed for assistance, and to inform the signalman in charge of the. signal box. Bale came up soon after he got there. The lamps on the down platform were not lighted, with the exception of one. Witness had been at the station for 29 years. It was unusual to transfer parcels at this hour, and it was generally much earlier, between three and four o'clock.

The Coroner: But the other witnesses have told us they came on the 4.6 train

Witness: Well, I was not expecting them.

Mr. Houghton explained that the train had been put twenty minutes later from Birmingham this month.

Dr. Hawkins, who saw the deceased about 5.45, stated the stomach was most frightfully mutilated. and the back was broken. Death was instantaneous with such injuries.

The Coroner said the jury would experience no difficulty in returning a verdict of " Accidental death." Another point to be considered, however, was whether further precautions could be taken to render the discharge of the porters' duties in transferring parcels less hazardous than at present. One would have thought that there might have been placed a red light near the spot, which would indicate to the drivers that someone was in the way.

A Juryman stated that the present level crossing was over five lots of metals, and the porters in carrying the parcels had to cross three lots. He suggested the company should be asked to make an exit from the down platform into Finch End Lane, near the bridge, and so avoid the necessity of crossing the line with parcels and goods.

Another juryman said the station was a death-Trap to the men.

The Coroner remarked supposing an exit was made where suggested, no one would use because it would be such a long way round.

A juryman considered it would be used for parcels and goods.

The Coroner said it might ease the thing, but it would not obviate the necessity of transferring most of the parcels by the porters.

Another juryman suggested the construction of a lift, and another a subway.

Mr. Houghton pointed out the signals were on for the engine to pass two minutes before the accident. No doubt the men were standing on the down line waiting for the up train to pass, and it was one of those cases where the deceased stopped to let an up train go by and was cut down by the down engine. As regarded the outlet into Finch End Road, he was afraid they would get no one to use it if it were possible. If they made an entrance it would have to be by using steps, and that would not be convenient for parcels traffic. Lifts were in use only at large stations. There was not

one between Birmingham and Worcester, and there was not one even at Bristol. However much they protected men, if a man did not protect himself by using great care it was impossible to prevent loss of life.

The jury returned a verdict of " Accidental death," and added a rider suggesting that the company should be requested to place a man on duty while parcels were being transferred during the night to warn porters of approaching trains.

**THE TEWKESBURY REGISTER, SATURDAY, OCTOBER 12, 1912**  
**TEWKESBURY RAILWAY EMPLOYEE KILLED AT BROMSGROVE.**

Mr. A. E. Hebbert on Monday conducted an inquest upon the body of Oliver Henry Hawkins, 24, a porter employed by the Midland Railway Company at Bromsgrove Station, and who was until recently on the staff at Tewksbury.

Deceased was transferring parcels from the down platform across the line to the booking office. He was about to carry a hamper when a bank engine ran into the station and knocked him down.

A witness named Bale, who was assisting the deceased, said he did not see the engine until it was four or five feet from deceased, and he shouted to Hawkins, but he had no time to get out of the way.

The driver of the engine said he saw neither of the porters.

The Coroner suggested that a red light should be placed on the line when the porters were at work.

The jury returned a verdict of " Accidental death," and added a rider suggesting that the Company should be requested to place a man on duty to watch for trains while parcels were being transferred.