

The 10.35 From King's Cross: Death of a Sailor – By Simon Wilson

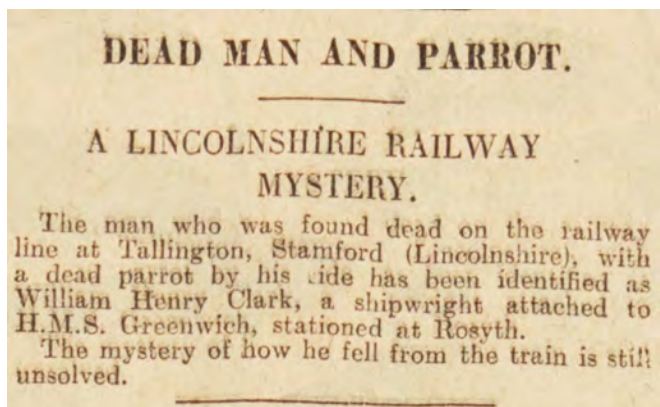
It is 25 April 1930, just after midnight, the fog is thick and, in a scene worthy of a Poirot episode, William Tilley, a sub-ganger of the LNER at Tallington, is gazing at two dead bodies - a sailor and his parrot. They lay in the six-foot way between the two main lines, about a mile and a half north of Tallington Station.



The inquest was held on Monday by the Stamford district Coroner in the Ladies' Waiting Room at Tallington Station (*left*). The deceased was identified by the Reverend Geoffrey Lunt, who had known the deceased approximately two years. The dead man was William Henry Clark, a Shipwright First Class in the Royal Navy and he was on his way back from Portsmouth to HMS *Greenwich* at the dockyard at Rosyth. He was 42 years old and his home address was in Portsmouth but he had not lived there for two years, being legally separated from his wife.

Doctor C G Harper of Market Deeping, having examined the body on Friday afternoon, gave evidence that the deceased had two depressed fractures of the skull, a broken thigh and a number of abrasions. The injuries were consistent with a fall from a moving train. The deceased was of exceptional muscular development, showed no signs of having been in a struggle and did not smell of drink.

Ernest Crick, a carriage examiner for the LNER at Grantham testified that the door mechanism was in perfect working condition.



The question of drink seemed to pre-occupy the Coroner who questioned two other witnesses about this. A ticket collector and a fellow passenger, Robert Bell, both confirmed that although he may have had a drink, he was not drunk.

Not long after midnight, Bell woke to find himself alone in the carriage, with a draught coming from the open carriage door. He pulled the communication cord and stopped

the train; the body being found shortly after. The train would have been travelling at around 58 mph, according to William Tilley.

During the journey, the deceased had slept, and got up twice, using the door into the corridor. After his last trip he had, according to the witness, slept with his head the other way round.

The Coroner's theory was that the deceased had woken and, becoming disorientated, had opened the wrong door, falling from the train to his death. The door was not locked but could only be opened from the outside. The window in the open door had been partly down, so it appeared that was how Clark

had opened the door. The parrot cage had been on the floor in the carriage and he had probably caught it with his foot as he fell from the door. The verdict was “accidental death”.



Clark had already been a time-served shipwright when he joined the Royal Navy as a volunteer in November 1914. He served at various shore establishments in the UK from then until the time of his death. His ability was generally rated “Superior” and his character as “Very Good”. He had been awarded the Long Service and Good Conduct Medal in 1929 and received it in January 1930.

His records show “DD 25.4.30 Killed by fall from train”, DD being the traditional RN notation for Discharged Dead. The register for HMS Greenwich shows place of death as Tallington and the cause as head injuries. He is buried in Clayhall Naval Cemetery at Gosport (*left*).