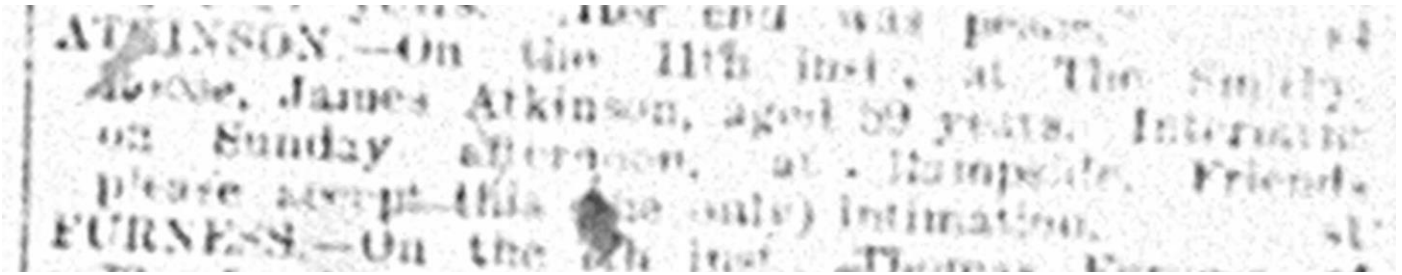


7 James Atkinson from Roose Smithy, shot dead 11 December 1902



IN LOVING MEMORY OF
JAMES ATKINSON
OF ROOSE SMITHY
WHO DIED DEC. 11TH 1902,
AGED 59 YEARS
ALSO **MARY ANN**, WIFE OF THE ABOVE
WHO DIED NOV. 19TH, 1919,
AGED 75 YEARS
ALSO **HENRY**, THEIR SON
WHO DIED AT JEPPESTOWN, S.A. APRIL 4TH 1918
AGED 48 YEARS

The death notice in the *Barrow News* 13 December 1902 (above) gives no hint as to the tragedy of James' death.

Elsewhere in the same issue the Inquest was reported:

A ROOSE TRAGEDY **INQUEST AND VERDICT**

On Friday, Coroner Poole held an inquest at the Roose smithy, into the circumstances attending the death of Mr. James Atkinson, master blacksmith, who met with a very tragic death on Thursday. The unfortunate gentleman went out with a gun shortly after noon for the purpose of shooting rats and a few minutes afterwards he was found lying in the yard at the back of the smithy, bleeding from a wound in the head, his gun having gone off accidentally, the contents being discharged behind the right ear. Dr. Thompson was immediately summoned but on his arrival life was extinct. The firearm was an old-fashioned muzzle-loading one, and death must have been almost instantaneous. Mr. John Bolton was foreman of the jury. Evidence of identification was given by Mr. Thomas Atkinson, son of the deceased.

John Caskell, a young man employed at the smithy, gave evidence to the effect that there were rats about the smithy, and these came to where hens were fed. About a quarter past twelve, on Thursday, his master took a gun out of the smithy. He charged it, but witness did not see him do so. Deceased said he was going to shoot rats and would return soon. About two minutes afterwards, witness heard the gun go off. He did not go to see what it was, because he thought that his master had fired at a rat. Mrs. Atkinson then knocked for dinner, and witness went out to look for his master, and found him lying in the yard. He was bleeding from a wound, and witness gave an alarm. Deceased appeared to be dead and was not moved until the police came. He did not see Mr. Atkinson carrying the gun.

Police-constable W. Ed(m)ondson stated that he heard of the occurrence about ten minutes past one o'clock, and on coming to the place, found the deceased lying just inside the iron door, leading from the yard into the smithy. His feet were towards the door at about two feet distant. He was on his left side, with the right hand on the floor and the other partly under his head. He did not appear to have stirred at all. The gun had been moved and was lying up against the shed. Witness knew deceased was in the habit of carrying his gun behind him with the muzzle upwards. He was shot at the back of the head behind the right ear. The shot was in an upward direction, but had not gone through the head. The skull was fractured.

John Ralph Harrison stated that he heard of the accident about twenty minutes past twelve o'clock. He went to the place and found deceased lying with the gun over his right shoe, with the muzzle pointing towards the body. The door was swinging open, and there was a slight wind yesterday. Deceased used to grip hold of the gun behind his back with the muzzle pointing towards his head. He did not know whether deceased carried it at full cock.

Several months ago deceased had told him that the gun had gone off once before. He said that he had been pestered with a cat which came after his chickens, that he was carrying his gun in the manner described by witness, and that it went off.

This concluded the evidence. The Coroner said he had seen and examined the gun. It was an old muzzle-loading gun, and, in the hands of a careful man, was not unsafe. Such a gun when at full cock would go off with about half the power of a gun of the present time. It was a most dangerous thing to carry in such a way, more particularly as it had gone off on a previous occasion. He thought it was quite plain that deceased was carrying the gun in the manner described at full cock. Probably in passing through the door, either he himself or the door touched the trigger. There was no doubt that the gun went off accidentally and deceased received the injuries which caused his death. He had no doubt in directing them to find that this was accidental; it was a very sad thing, and it showed that great care should be exercised by persons carrying firearms. There was no suspicion whatsoever of suicide in the case, and therefore he thought that they could already find that the gun went off accidentally, and that deceased died from the injuries received.

A verdict was returned accordingly.