

James Hunter d 12 May 1920



IN LOVING MEMORY OF
SARAH
BELOVED WIFE OF **THOMAS HUNTER**
WHO DIED NOV 14TH 1918, AGED 49 YEARS
AND OF THE ABOVE **THOMAS HUNTER**,
WHO DIED MAR. 13TH 1930, AGED 67 YEARS
ALSO OF **JAMES (JIMMY)**, THEIR BELOVED SON,
WHO DIED FROM INJURIES RECEIVED AT ROANHEAD
MAY 12TH 1920, AGED 24 YEARS.
AND OF THEIR INFANT **SON WILFRED** DIED 1899.
ALSO OF **JOSEPH HUNTER**
BROTHER OF THE ABOVE **THOMAS HUNTER**,
WHO DIED JUNE 22ND 1933 IN HIS 80TH YEAR.

The *Barrow News* 15 May 1920 reported the inquest into James Hunter's death:

EXPLOSION AT ROANHEAD

FITTER FATALY INJURED

NARROW ESCAPE OF CAPT. KENNEDY

Sitting without a jury, Coroner F. W. Poole held an inquiry at the Ulverston Police Court, on Thursday, concerning the death of James Hunter (24), employed as a fitter at Roanhead Iron Ore Mines, Askam, who had succumbed at the Ulverston Cottage Hospital to internal injury and a fractured thigh, sustained through the explosion of an air compressor at the mines on Monday last. Messrs. Kennedy Bros. were professionally represented by Mr. R. B. Jackson, and Mr. W. Leck, H.M. Inspector of Mines, was also in attendance.

Jno. Jas. Hunter, a cousin of the deceased, employed at the mines as fireman, gave evidence that on Monday he was engaged in getting up steam for the air compressor, whilst the deceased was looking after the compressed air engine. At the time of the accident witness was oiling on the top of the engine bed, when deceased told him to hold the safety valve down in order to get more air into the compressor or receiver. At that time the gauge showed a pressure of 70lb. and when it increased by the holding down of the valve to 73lb the explosion occurred, the ends of the compressor being blown out. Witness hurt his finger ends, and was thrown down by the explosion. When he got up he saw the deceased lying on his back between the rails, about ten yards away. He was badly injured, but was conscious. When witness was on top of the engine bed Captain Hugh Kennedy came along, and was some yards away from the compressor when the explosion occurred.

Replying to Inspector Leck, witness said he had been holding down the safety valve handle for only two or three seconds when the explosion took place.

In answer to Mr. Jackson, witness said when Captain Kennedy came on the scene shortly before the explosion he knelt down in front of the receiver to listen, and told deceased he thought there was a leak there. Deceased replied that it was not there. He thought it was at the drill, which was about ten feet off. Captain Kennedy then went to the drill to try to locate the leak, when the explosion occurred.

Captain Hugh Kennedy, who is in charge of the mine, testified that he did not hear deceased tell the last witness to hold the safety valve down, nor did he see it held down.

The Coroner: It was rather an extraordinary thing for a fitter to do? I cannot understand why he did it. Why he tried to locate the link by increasing the pressure I cannot imagine.

By Inspector Leck (*answer by Captain Kennedy*): The deceased and I did not agree as to the location of the leak. No doubt there was a leak, but it was very hard to detect. Deceased started as an apprentice to work at Roanhead, and when war broke out he went to Barrow for better wages, and I took him on again about Christmas. He was engaged at Vickers for about four years. I have never had occasion to reprimand deceased or anyone else for interfering with safety valves. I would discharge a man immediately if I saw him do such a thing.

The Coroner: It is quite possible he might have thought it was quite safe to increase the pressure? – Probably; he would be working at higher pressures at Vickers.

And would naturally imagine there was plenty of margin in hand with the pressure at 73lbs.? – Yes.

At the close of his evidence Captain Kennedy, on behalf of the firm, expressed deep sympathy with the relatives of the deceased.

John Duke, who has been in the employ of the Kennedy Bros. as engineer for 52 years, said the receiver was 12ft long and 2ft. 1in. inside. The thickness of the plates was ½in, and the thickness of the end plates being ⅜ of an inch. The end had blown out in five pieces.

Inspector Leck: And some must have blown near Captain Kennedy? – Yes; I don't know how he escaped.

The Coroner found that deceased was accidentally killed by the blowing out of the end of the compressor or receiver: that he was entirely responsible for the accident, and that so far as the management was concerned no blame was to be attached.

From *Ancestry* comes the family information that:

In the **1901 Census** living at Soutergate, Kirkby-in-Furness was Joseph Hunter (48) Single, Iron Ore Miner; while next door lived Thomas Hunter (38), Married, Iron Ore Miner; Mary A. Hunter (7) Daughter; James Hunter (5) Son; and Frances Sawrey (33) Single, Sister-in-law. All born in Kirkby Ireleth.

Wife & mother Sarah's absence is explained by the fact that she was in Lancaster Lunatic Asylum, being admitted on 27 July 1899 and remaining there until her death on 14 November 1918. A Wilfred Hunter's birth and death were both registered in Ulverston in Q3 1899, so perhaps these are connected events.

At the time of the **1911 Census**, living at 5, Roanhead Cottages, Askam, were Thomas Hunter (48) Head, Married, Iron Miner, born at Kirkby, Lancs; James Hunter (15) Son, Apprentice to Fitting, born Kirkby, Lancs; Joseph Hunter (57) Single, Brother, Iron Miner, born Kirkby. Lancs; Hannah Bath (33) Widow, Housekeeper, born Dalton, Lancs; and Doris Bath (10) Boarder, School-girl, born Millom, Cumberland.

The **National Probate Calendar (Index of Wills and Administrations) 1920** showed

HUNTER James of 5 Roanhead Cottages Askam-in-Furness, **Lancashire** fitter died 12 May 1920 at the Cottage Hospital Ulverston Lancashire Administration **Lancaster** 28 May to Thomas Hunter Mine Captain. Effects £226 5s