

Jack Fisher d 19 February 1972 on Helvellyn



The remembrance plaque is on the wall, not far from the North Lodge entrance. It reads:

IN LOVING MEMORY
OF
JACK FISHER
ACCIDENTLY (SIC) KILLED
ON HELVELLYN
19TH FEB. 1972

Jack Fisher was one of five fatalities on the weekend of 19/20 February 1972. Three schoolboys from Dulwich College were killed on Snowdon (now Yr Wyddfa); a man was killed in a ravine fall in the North York Moors,

and Jack Fisher died in the Lake District. Deep snow and ice were reported. So many deaths attracted national news coverage. *The Wolverhampton Express and Star* - Monday 21 February 1972 had **Five Killed on Mountains and Moors**, at the end of which it reported On Saturday Mr. Jack Fisher (36), of Barrow-in-Furness, fell 1000ft. to his death from Striding Edge on the summit of 3,000ft. Helvellyn in the Lake District.

Barrow's *North Western Evening News* 21 February 1972 reported:

Barrow man dies in fall

A Barrow design engineer fell 1000ft to his death on Helvellyn in the Lake District at the weekend.

Mr. Jack Fisher, of Victoria Avenue, was climbing the peak with two companions when he fell towards Red Tarn from Striding Edge, near the summit.

His body was recovered on Saturday night by Patterdale Mountain Rescue team after another climber raised the alarm.

It is believed he stepped on hard packed ice and snow.

Mr. Fisher was a design engineer with Vickers Shipbuilders.

Mr. Fisher's companions were Mr. Keith Allan (sic) of Barrow, and Mr. Neville Colligan of Coniston.

Lucky escape

At almost the same place on Striding Edge a 16-year-old adventure Scout had a lucky escape yesterday.

Kevin McDonald, of Arnside Crescent, Feniscowles, near Blackburn, fell 600ft. He had a broken leg, a broken wrist and cuts and bruises.

Dr. James Ogilvie, leader of the Patterdale mountain rescue team said it was "pure luck" that Kevin was not more seriously injured, and was fortunate not to have hit a rock as he plunged down an ice gully.

The following day's edition of the same newspaper reported on the inquest:

BRIEF LAPSE MAY HAVE LED TO CLIMBER'S DEATH

A CLIMBER plunged 700 feet to his death on the snowy slopes of Helvellyn on Saturday probably because he suffered a momentary lapse of concentration caused by the exhilaration of completing a difficult ascent.

This theory for the death of John Bretherton Fisher, a mechanical engineer, of 84 Victoria Avenue, Barrow, was given at the inquest in Appleby yesterday.

Keith Allen, a project engineer, of 4 Keswick Avenue, Barrow, told the North Westmorland coroner (Mr. William Scorer) that he and Mr. Neville Collagan, also of Barrow (sic), accompanied Mr. Fisher on a 1½-hour snow climb up a gully from Nethermost Cove to the summit plateau of Helvellyn (3,118ft.)

Lost Axe

They walked along the summit plateau to a point opposite Striding Edge. Mr. Fisher, who was an experienced climber and properly equipped with crampons (spikes strapped to boots) and ice-axe, commenced a descent down a snow slope.

"After a few feet he slipped and began to slide down the slope", Mr. Allen said. "He was attempting to arrest his fall with an ice-axe but he lost it after about 30 ft. He carried on falling down the slope until he disappeared out of sight over some rocks in the direction of Red Tarn."

Mr Collagan climbed down after Mr Fisher while Mr Allen instructed some other climbers who were nearby to go as fast as they could for the mountain rescue team.

"Mr Fisher had fallen to the very bottom of the crag to within 30 ft. of the edge of Red Tarn," he said. Other climbers gathered, and mouth to mouth resuscitation and cardiac massage were attempted, but after half an hour it was obvious he was dead.

Asked by the coroner why he thought Mr Fisher slipped, Mr. Allen said he believed it was the sort of accident which occasionally happened to climbers after a fairly difficult climb.

"When you get to the top you feel exhilaration," he said. "It was a nice day and Jack had led the last pitch, and I think that as he began the descent his concentration lapsed for a moment. It was a momentary lapse of concentration on a descent which was comparatively easy to an experienced person."

His father

Dr James Ogilvie, Leader of the Patterdale Mountain Rescue Team, whose members assisted to carry Mr Fisher's body down the fell, said death was due to multiple injuries. From his questioning of witnesses he formed the opinion that he died during or very soon after the fall.

The dead man's father, Mr John Oswald Fisher, of Victoria Avenue, Barrow, said he believed his son was an experienced climber.

Recording a verdict of accidental death, the coroner said the accident could have happened because, for just a fraction in time, Mr Fisher failed to concentrate entirely on what he was doing.

Innocent look

He went on: "This slope on Striding Edge has over the years claimed several victims during both the summer and the winter months, and it can not be stressed too much that some of these slopes that look innocent are, in fact, very dangerous."

He expressed appreciation of Mr Fisher's two companions, who were prepared to face the climb down after seeing their companion slip.

He thanked the mountain rescue team who were only too ready and willing to turn out at all times of day and night and in all conditions when anybody on the fells got into difficulties.

Before mobile phones, the wait for help must have been much longer. Even though he was experienced and well-equipped, the fells still claimed Mr Fisher's life.

John Oswald Fisher married Mary Bretherton q3 1931 in Barrow.

In the **1939 Register** living at 103 & 105 Abbey Road, the Kirkside Hotel, Barrow, were Robert Bretherton (DoB 11 July 1876), House Carpenter; Mary Bretherton (DoB 7 December 1874) Unpaid Domestic Duties; Margaret Bretherton (DoB 23 June 1908) Unpaid Domestic Duties; Mary Fisher (DoB 29 August 1906) Unpaid Domestic Duties; *redacted record*; John B. Fisher (DoB 16 February 1934) At School. There are at least five guests, plus another reacted record.

There was another child born in 1936: Anthony Peter Bretherton, who is likely to be one of the redacted records.

The **National Probate Calendar (Index of Wills and Administrations) 1972** had:

FISHER John Bretherton of 84 Victoria Av Barrow-in-Furness died 19 February 1972 Administration Liverpool 2 May. £11652.