

19 Finch Brothers: killed in a road accident in 1928

In researching this memorial stone I had to look very closely at newspapers from 1928 & 1929. It became clear that motor cycle accidents and consequent deaths were a common occurrence. Pillion passengers appeared particularly at risk. Helmets were not compulsory until 1973, though the victims in this case died of other injuries. In the days before antibiotics operations were more dangerous than today.



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IN LOVING MEMORY OF
JAMES FINCH
HUSBAND OF ISABELLA PARK FINCH
DIED AUG 14TH 1928 AGED 28 YEARS
AND OF JOHN THOMAS FINCH
DIED AUG 17TH 1928 AGED 25 YEARS
THE BELOVED SONS OF
JAMES AND MARY ANN FINCH
THEY DIED FROM INJURIES RECEIVED IN
MOTOR ACCIDENT ON THE COAST ROAD

The events:

As may be expected, the North Western Daily Mail (NWD) covered the story fully. On Friday Aug 24th 1928 they reported: **Bardsea Road Accident. Inquest resumed on Brothers Finch. Thomas Booth charged with manslaughter.**

Before Coroner F. W. Poole and a jury, of which Mr. Albert Barnes was the foreman, the adjourned inquest was held this morning at Ulverston Police Court, concerning the deaths of the brothers, James Finch (28), married, of 14 The Strand, Barrow, and John Thos. Finch (25) single, of 32, McClintock-street, Barrow, who, along with two other brothers, Tom Booth, (21), of Pretty Wood, Heap Bridge, near Bury, and Wm. Booth, of Canal Foot, Ulverston, were involved in a motor-cycling collision on the Bardsea-road, near Ulverston, on Sunday the 12th inst. James Finch succumbed to his injuries at the Ulverston Cottage Hospital on the 14th inst, and John Thos Finch died at the same institution on the 17th inst.

Mr. Frank Jackson appeared for Thos. Booth, and Supt. Crapper was also in attendance.

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Miss Cornforth, assistant matron of the Ulverston Cottage Hospital, said about 7.10pm on the 12th inst., she was present when Jas. Finch and John Thos. Finch were admitted. The latter was suffering from a fractured right leg and right arm, and Jas. Finch from a very badly fractured right leg. Both these men were operated upon immediately by Dr. Howman, and were left in his charge, and being serious cases, were afforded special attention.

EXCESSIVE SPEED

William Sawrey, a leather worker, 45, Soutergate, Ulverston said that about 6.30pm on Sunday 12th August, he was walking in the direction of Bardsea, on the right hand side of the road. When passing the cemetery gates a motor-cycle travelling in the direction of Bardsea passed him at an excessive speed. He could not estimate the speed, but would say about 40 miles an hour. On this machine were two male persons, and as they flashed past him, he noticed that they were about two yards from the offside kerb, their wrong side of the road. The road in front was clear. He watched them travel on the wrong side of the road for a distance of about 100 yards, and as they were taking the bend beyond the cemetery the machine was still on the wrong side. The took the bend on the wrong side, and at a very high speed, and passed out of his sight. Almost immediately he heard a crash, and a cry of 'Oh', followed by loud moaning. Witness left his wife and ran to the bend in the road where he found two men lying on the cemetery side of the road close to the gutter. A motor-cycle was lying beside them. Further on he noticed the motor-cycle he believed had passed him, also lying on the cemetery side of the road within a few yards of the kerb and the two riders lying near the footpath close to the machine. There was a space of 30 or 40 feet between the two groups In his opinion the accident was due to the motor-cycle which passed him being driven on the wrong side of the road.

This amounts to half the column inches from August 24th. Wm. Booth suffered from 'severe concussion of the brain', and remained unconscious for about a week, but was by now getting better.

P.T.O.

On Thursday August 30th committal proceedings took place at Ulverston Police Court, and the NWDM again reported at length. Various witnesses reported information consistent with Mr Sawrey's account.

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P.C. Worth saw Thomas Booth at the hospital. Booth said, 'About 6.30pm on the 12th, I was driving my motor-cycle along Bardsea Road in the direction of Bardsea, with my brother William riding pillion, on my own side of the road, at a moderate speed. When nearing the Toll Bar, I noticed another motor-cyclist, with pillion rider, coming in the opposite direction, on their own side of the road, at a moderate speed. On nearing this motor-cycle my back wheel skidded, and I was unable to avoid colliding with the other motorcycle.

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Thos. Booth pleaded 'Not Guilty', and was committed to trial at the next Assizes at Lancaster, bail being allowed in accused's surety of £50 and another surety of £50.

The trial took place on Friday October 26th in Lancaster, and the NWDM reported more succinctly on the Saturday::

THE COAST ROAD SMASH: MANSLAUGHTER CHARGE AT THE ASSIZES

Thomas Booth, dyer, of Bury, was sent to 12 months' imprisonment at Lancaster Assizes on Friday, for the manslaughter of James Finch, aged 28, and John Thomas Finch, aged 25, two Barrow brothers, who were on a motorcycle with which Booth, driving a motor-cycle with his brother on the pillion, collided on August 12th on the Bardsea new coastal road, Ulverston.

For the prosecution it was said that Booth rounded a corner at 40 miles an hour on the wrong side of the road and collided with the motor-cycle ridden by the Finch brothers, who were thrown violently against a wall. They were so terribly injured that they died within a few days.

Booth said that as he approached the corner he slowed down and sounded his horn. As he took the corner he suddenly saw the Finch brothers, but his machine skidded and he knew nothing more until he felt a bump. He denied that he was speeding. He did not apply his brakes he said, because he did not see the two men soon enough.

Mr. Justice Humphreys said that nothing could be more dangerous than dashing round the corner on the wrong side of the road, which was the beginning and end of a case of wicked negligence.

Where is the grave?

Low down in the Cemetery, close to the baby graves.

From the Devonshire Road entrance, turn left and get to the lowest path along the bottom of the cemetery. At the second 'roundabout', turn right and it is on the right, below some large bushes.