

Report of Bicester Advertiser, 15 October 1875

Edwin Plant aged 13, a native of Charndon, was drowned near Launton station whilst on his way from Bicester with his father, about 11pm on Saturday. (*probably 9th October*)

Due to the heavy rain, many of the approaches to the village were rendered impassable at places. Several persons travelling by rail to Launton station were unable to proceed further and had to remain there for the night.

The Inquest was held at The Bull Inn, Launton, and jurors viewed the body which was laid in a stable at the inn before hearing the evidence touching the death of the deceased.

Evidence recorded that of James Plant (father), a labourer who lived in Charndon. The deceased Edwin Plant is my son. He is 13 years of age. He has never had his right senses and is subject to fits. I have been at work at Wootton, near Woodstock. The deceased was with me. We were at work at Mr Merry's. I took the boy with me to train him to do a little work. We had been at Wootton five weeks. We started home from Wootton between three and four o'clock on Saturday afternoon last. It is nearly 20 miles from where I worked to Charndon. I came on the road from Bicester. We went up to the Launton railway station and got on the railway intending to walk along it. It was between 10 and 11 o'clock when I got to the station. It rained all the way we went. I did not go up the line because I was stopped. The road was under water about 80 yards from the station. It was up to my knees where my son died. I believe he stumbled in a fit and fell into the water. The body was all covered. I got him out and held him in my arms. The deceased did not speak after I got him out, but he struggled two or three times. I called for Thomas Herring who is night watchman at Launton station, and he came and helped me. I could not see whether he was dead or not when I pulled him out of the water. He seemed as though he was in a fit, and I thought so too. I and Thomas Herring took him to the hut at the station, and I believe the deceased died whilst he was in my arms before we got there. I was quite right myself. I had a little refreshment but was quite capable of taking care of myself. I gave the boy a little beer, but not too much.

James Plant's answers to questions:

By Mr Moulden, superintendent of police: No one refused to draw me any beer.

By the Foreman: I did not think of unfastening the boy's Macintosh.

By Mr Moulden: I shifted his shirt at Bicester. The deceased was very poorly there, but seemed better before we started, and walked very well.

Thomas Herring, of Marsh Gibbon, on oath, said "I am night watchman at Launton station. I know the deceased Plant. He came into my hut about eleven o'clock on the night of Saturday last. The boy was with his father at the time. My hut is on the side of the line. They wanted to go up the line as it would have been nearer for them, and, by so doing he would not have to go through the water where the deceased was drowned. I would not let them go. They sat in my hut about ten minutes and warmed themselves. James Plant, the father, seemed as though he had had too much to drink. They crossed the line, and went down the road, which was under water. They came back again in about a quarter-of-an-hour, and asked to go up the line, when Mr Phillips (stationmaster) told them not to go. They said the road was flooded. They started up the line after Mr Phillips had told them not to, and I went and fetched them back by Mr Phillips's order. Mr Phillips persuaded them to go back to Launton and stop the night, but they started along the road again. It was about half-past twelve when I heard the father call. I was in my hut when he called, and when I opened the door I heard him calling out "Tom", I went down to the water and showed him a light, which I took with

me. He was in the water then and had got the boy in arms. I asked the father how the boy was, and he said he was dead. I went in and fetched the boy out. I asked the father to come out of the water, but he said he could not. He was sitting on the path, which was covered with water. I went and fetched a barrow which we use to carry luggage with, and a young man at Mr Phillips's helped me to bring the deceased to the hut. The boy was quite dead."

The jury expressed themselves satisfied with the evidence given, and returned a verdict to the effect "That the said Edwin Plant by accident, misfortune or possibly a fit, fell into the water, and was thereby suffocated and drowned"