

Rimutaka Incline Tragedy 11 September 1880

Deaths of four children and thirteen adults injured

The 4.8km Rimutaka Incline at Kaitoke Upper Hutt was built in 1871 as part of the Wellington to Wairarapa rail route. It was the most elevated section of the rail route and construction of the incline across the rugged Rimutaka Ranges required a bold engineering solution. A mountain railway was chosen as a temporary solution over a more expensive rail tunnel and the Rimutaka Incline was built using English engineer John Fell's drive friction system it was the third and last system ever to be built using this system and as such is of considerable technical significance.

Tragedy struck on the morning of 11 September 1880 when the Greytown train to Wellington was passing over the mountains. That days Evening Post and other New Zealand newspaper recounted the event that transpired.

Evening Post newspaper 11 September 1880

[From Our Own Correspondent] Featherston, This Day - A dreadful accident has occurred to the Featherston train on the way to Wellington at Siberia, half-way up the incline. Two carriages and one van were wrecked. Three children were killed two named Ida Pharazyn and Nicholas, both of Featherston, and one named Quin, of Greytown. Several passengers were seriously hurt, but their names are not known.

(Reference Papers past website Evening Post newspaper 11 September 1880)

Death of four [4] children

0-John QUIN married Ellen UNKNOWN

#John Quin was the proprietor of Greytown Arms Hotel and previously the Te Aro Hotel in Wellington

0-1- Joseph QUIN born 1871 New Zealand

#Joseph QUIN born 1871 New Zealand reference RGO NZ birth registration 1871 folio website 1871/20416 parents Ellen and John Quin

0-2- Mary QUIN born 1873 New Zealand

#Mary QUIN born 1873 New Zealand reference RGO NZ birth registration 1873 folio website 1873/23130 parents Ellen and John Quin

0-3- John QUIN born 1875 New Zealand

#John QUIN born 1875 New Zealand reference RGO NZ birth registration 1875 folio website 1875/8094 parents Ellen and John Quin

0-4- **William QUIN** born 1877 New Zealand died 1880 New Zealand

#William Quin born 1877 NZ reference RGO NZ birth registration 1877 folio website 1877/3967 parents Ellen and John Quin

#William Quin died 1880 age 3 born about 1877 reference RGO NZ death registration 1880 folio website 1880/1867

0-5- Ellen QUIN born 1880 New Zealand

#Ellen QUIN born 1880 New Zealand reference RGO NZ birth registration 1880 folio website 1880/1264 parents Ellen and John Quin

0-6- James William QUIN born 1882 New Zealand

#James William QUIN born 1882 New Zealand reference RGO NZ birth registration 1882 folio website 1882/15104 parents Ellen and John Quin

0- Charles J PHARAZYN

- 0-1- **Ida Jessie PHARAZYN** (twin) born about 1869 died 1880 New Zealand
#Ida Jessie Pharazyn (twin) daughter of Charles J Pharazyn junior and granddaughter of Hon C J Pharazyn reference newspaper articles
#Ida Jessica Pharazyn died 1880 age 11 born about 1869 reference RGO NZ death registration 1880 folio website 1880/1866
#Death – Pharazyn – On the 11th instant killed by the Railway Accident on the Rimutaka Incline, Ida Jessie one of the twin daughters of C Pharazyn of Longwood Featherston aged 11 years and three months reference Papers past website Wairarapa Standard newspaper 14 September 1880
#Ida Jessica Pharazyn aged 11 years & 3 months and Francis John Nicholas aged 6 years & 7 months, who were killed instantly by the railway accident on the Rimutaka Incline 11 September 1880 Also Stanley George Nicholas died from injuries all buried Featherston cemetery Wairarapa
- 0-2- Ella Grace PHARAZYN (twin) born about 1869 died 1945 New Zealand married 1890 NZ Charles Chapman ELGAR
#Ella Pharazyn (twin) daughter of Charles Pharazyn reference newspaper articles was reported as injured and later died but this is wrong as there is no trace of a death registration in 1880
#Ella Grace Pharazyn married 1890 NZ Charles Chapman Elgar reference RGO NZ marriage registration 1890/3593
#Ella Grace Elgar died 1945 NZ reference RGO NZ death registration 1945 folio website 1945/24353 age 76 born about 1869
#Ella Margaret Pharazyn died 12 July 1904 age 33 years born about 1871 buried Featherston cemetery Wairarapa & burial record Ella Margaret Pharazyn died 13 July 1904 age 33 years wife of C B Pharazyn Featherstone
- 0- John Edward NICHOLAS married 20 March 1873 Bothwell Tasmania Australia Mary Jane Meikle BROWN
#John Edward Nicholas married 20 March 1873 Bothwell Tasmania Australia Jane Mary Brown reference register number 2
- 0-1- **Francis John (Frank) NICHOLAS** born 25 February 1874 Hobart Tasmania Australia
#John Francis Nicholas born 25 February 1874 Hobart Tasmania Australia parents Mary Jane Meikle and John Edward Nicholas reference register 299 & microfilm 1368239
#Francis John (Frank) Nicholas was the eldest son of J E Nicholas of Featherston reference newspaper report
#Francis John Nicholas died 1880 age 7 born about 1873 reference RGO NZ death registration 1880 folio website 1880/1865
#Death – Nicholas – Also at the same time and place Francis eldest son of J E Nicholas of Featherston reference Papers past website Wairarapa Standard 14 September 1880
#Ida Jessica Pharazyn aged 11 years & 3 months and Francis John Nicholas aged 6 years & 7 months, who were killed instantly by the railway accident on the Rimutaka Incline 11 September 1880 Also Stanley George Nicholas died from injuries all buried Featherston cemetery Wairarapa
- 0-2- **Stanley George NICHOLAS** born about 1875 died 1880 New Zealand
#Stanley Nicholas died 1880 age 5 born about 1875 reference RGO NZ death registration 1880 folio website 1880/3112
#Ida Jessica Pharazyn aged 11 years & 3 months and Francis John Nicholas aged 6 years & 7 months, who were killed instantly by the railway accident on the Rimutaka Incline 11 September 1880 Also Stanley George Nicholas died from injuries all buried Featherston cemetery Wairarapa

0-3- Female NICHOLAS

#Francis John (Frank) Nicholas sister was also injured in the accident reference newspaper articles

Injured

Mr Alfred Benjamin JACKSON

#Alfred Benjamin JACKSON saddler residential Greytown 1880-1881 Wairarapa Electoral Roll

Mr R Hare Masterton

#Robert HARE settler freehold Masterton land Rengitumau section 35, 381 acres 1880-1881 Wairarapa Electoral Roll

Others injured or who were passengers in front carriage

W Donald

W McKenzie

J Gooch

R Riddick

#Robert RIDDICK carpenter residential Featherston 1880-1881 Wairarapa Electoral Roll

Alfred or J Blakesley

#Alfred BLAKESLEY settler residential Taratahi 1880-1881 Wairarapa Electoral Roll

Mr Montgomery

H R Berthickson

T or M Madden

P Herbert Hickson

A B Jackson

Catherine Philips

Mrs Turnbull

Mrs Pye

Miss Ella Grace Pharazyn of Featherston (twin sister died)

Miss Nicholas of Featherston (two brothers died)

Evening Post newspaper 11 September 1880

Terrible Railway Accident - Train blown over the Rimutaka - Shortly After 11 o'clock this morning the appalling news was received in town of the most dreadful railway accident which has yet occurred on any railway in this colony. Unhappily, too, it has happened on the Wellington railway, and as we write the fate of a number of Wellington people is still uncertain. Briefly the facts stand thus - A whole passenger train has been blown bodily over a precipice on the Rimutaka. Up to 1 o'clock this afternoon only the most meagre information had been received of this terrible disaster, but from the short formal telegram received by the Minister for Public Works we gather the following particulars. The train leaving Greytown at 8.30 this morning, started in due course, and proceeded without mishap to Cross Creek, the station at the foot of the Rimutaka Incline, where the ordinary locomotive is detached, and one of the Fell engines put on to push the train up the 2½ miles of 1 in 15 ascent to the Summit. The plan now adopted is for the luggage van and passenger carriages to be placed in front, then the Fell engine, next any goods waggons there may be, and lastly the Fell brake-van, which works on the middle rail. In this case it is not known whether there were any goods waggons, but there were two passenger carriages and a luggage van in front, the engine in the middle, and the Fell brake-van bringing up the rear, as usual. It is necessary to bear these details in mind to understand the nature of the mishap. The train started on its laborious ascent up the steep gradient, and had travelled as far as a part of the line generally known as "Siberia," from the piercingly cold blasts of wind which seem almost constantly to sweep down the mountain

gullies which converge at that point. Here a strong NW gale was found to be blowing across the track, and suddenly a terrific gust struck the train. The consequences were most disastrous. The two passenger carriages, which are stated to have been full of passengers, and also the luggage van, were hurled bodily off the line and over the edge of the precipice, which at that point is nearly 100 feet in depth. The three vehicles fell with a fearful crash to the bottom, and were seen lying, a wreck of smashed timber and ironwork, at the bottom of this fearful declivity. Fortunately the couplings broke, and liberated the falling train, otherwise the engine and brake-van must have followed, and then hardly a soul might have escaped to tell the tale or seek assistance. As it happened, the engine remained on the rails, and the driver and fireman stayed to render what aid they could to the wounded, while the brake-van, being uncoupled, ran down the incline by its own momentum, under the charge of the guard, to Cross Creek, where a hasty telegram was sent to the General Manager, reporting the disaster, and asking for immediate assistance. A special train was instantly got ready, and messengers despatched in all directions for surgeons. The "special" left at 11.30 consisting of an engine, carriage, and brake-van, taking Mr Lawson, Commissioner of Railways, Mr Ashcroft, General Manager, and Drs Diver, Gillon, Tripe, and Kesteven. It was expected to reach the scene of the disaster by 1 o'clock

(Reference Papers past website Evening Post newspaper 11 September 1880)

The newspapers were full of information so when I have more time I will add other details to this document.
