

Accidents on Lindale Hill

Lindale Hill has always been a dangerous place and many lives have been lost on it. The following article is a brief summary of a few of the newspaper reports.



Two accidents reported in the Kendal Mercury in 1842 and 1849 were the result of women being thrown from their carts whilst on Lindale Hill. In 1842, Mrs Orr of the Crown Inn, Cartmel died several days after being thrown from her cart. She had stopped to adjust her cloak and as she stood up the horse moved forward and she fell out onto the road, banging her head. Mrs Hutchinson was luckier as she survived. The report of her accident in 1849 stated that her horse had stumbled whilst pulling her cart down Lindale Hill.

Carriages being pulled up the hill had their load lightened as the men were required to alight and walk up the hill, leaving the ladies in the carriage. The men were encouraged to look back and enjoy the view despite the hill being very steep and being about a mile long. There were occasional reports of men being hurt as they alighted.

By the early 20th century cycles, motorbikes and cars were involved in crashes caused by going too fast and either being unable to negotiate a severe bend at the top of the hill or because of poor maintenance. The death of a sidecar passenger in 1913 occurred in the dark when the motorcyclist lost his way and failed to appreciate the steepness of the hill. The pair were returning to Wigan after attending a football match at Barrow. In 1922 a car overturned when its rear axle broke. Fortunately the six passengers were uninjured. In 1925 a cyclist was fined 20s for riding a bike down Lindale Hill 'to the common danger'. He knocked down a pedestrian and both the cyclist and the pedestrian were hurt. The bike had no brakes or bell.

The Authorities recognised how dangerous the hill was and a road widening scheme costing £6741 was agreed in 1930. At the same time the double corner near to Castlehead Lodge was also to be widened at a cost of £4624. However before the scheme was implemented a lady from Millom died in July 1932 when her son's car ran into a wall. The following month it was reported that the work had started on the agreed schemes.

However more deaths occurred and at a coroner's inquest in 1935 into the death of a cyclist who had been thrown off his bike into the path of an oncoming car when he braked hard and skidded, the Coroner reprimanded the Authorities who had purchased several cottages on the bend for not having demolished them immediately to improve

the view on the bend. It had no effect because twelve months later a coach driver was fined for dangerous driving following the death of three of his passengers when his coach had crashed into the same cottages. Again it was pointed out that the steepness of the hill was not apparent until turning the corner where the cottages were. I understand that soon after this the cottages were finally demolished.

Finally it was not always about vehicles losing control on going down the hill. In 1940 a motorcyclist crashed into a car but escaped uninjured. He had been increasing his speed to get up the hill but on a bend crossed the central line and hit the car coming down the hill. A report of the Co-op store at the bottom of the hill being badly damaged by a lorry hitting it was probably a common occurrence as the road narrowed markedly at the point where it went past the Commercial or Lindale Inn and the shop. If something was coming down the hill, too fast, where else would a vehicle end up in trying to avoid the crash?

To end on a lighter note it has been said that whenever there was an accident the locals put on their best clothes and stood outside their houses. Photographers who came to take pictures of the accident were very willing to supplement their income taking family portraits of the locals.

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