

**SHERIFFDOM OF SOUTH STRATHCLYDE DUMFRIES AND GALLOWAY AT
DUMFRIES**

[2021] FAI 21

DUM-B102-20

DETERMINATION

BY

SHERIFF BRIAN A MOHAN

**UNDER THE INQUIRIES INTO FATAL ACCIDENTS AND SUDDEN DEATHS ETC
(SCOTLAND) ACT 2016**

into the death of

NATASHA CLAIRE AUDREY GALPIN

Dumfries, 23 March 2021

Introduction

[1] This fatal accident inquiry, held under the Inquiries into Fatal Accidents and Sudden Deaths etc. (Scotland) Act 2016, took place at Dumfries Sheriff Court on 3 and 4 March 2021. Natasha Galpin died during the course of her employment when she was thrown from a racehorse while taking it on a training run.

Determination

[2] In terms of the 2016 Act Section 26(2):

(a) When and where the death occurred

Natasha Claire Audrey Galpin died at 1746 hours on 16 January 2019 at the Queen Elizabeth University Hospital, Glasgow.

(b) When and where any accident resulting in the death occurred

The accident which resulted in Ms Galpin's death occurred at 0825 hours on 15 January 2019 at the grass circuit at the Hetlandhill Stables, Dumfries DG14 4JX.

(c) The cause or causes of the death

Ms Galpin died of intracerebral haemorrhage due to a head injury which was the result of a fall from a horse.

(d) The cause or causes of any accident resulting in the death

The accident was caused when the horse which Ms Galpin was riding suffered from a sudden rupture of the carotid artery, the likely cause of which was mycotic infection of the arterial wall. This event resulted in the horse collapsing while it was running, resulting in its rider Ms Galpin being thrown off and striking the ground head first.

(e) Any precautions which could reasonably have been taken and which might realistically have avoided the accident or the death

There are no precautions which could reasonably have been taken and which might realistically have avoided the accident or Natasha's death.

(f) Any defects in any system of working which contributed to the death or accident resulting in the death

There were no defects in the system of working which contributed to the death or the accident resulting in the death.

(g) Any other facts which are relevant to the circumstances of the death

There are no other facts and circumstances which are relevant to the death of Natasha Galpin.

Recommendations

[3] I make no recommendations arising from this inquiry.

Findings in fact

[4] The following facts were admitted or proved:

1. On 25 April 2017 Natasha Galpin commenced employment with Iain Jardine Racing Limited on a part time basis. She was employed as a “work rider”.
On 21 June 2017 when Ms Galpin’s employment with the same company became full time, and she was employed as a “stable lass”.
2. Ms Galpin’s general duties included cleaning the stables, assisting with feeding and watering horses, general day to day care and management of horses, assisting with the smooth running of the yard and riding horses for exercise purposes.

3. Ms Galpin was an experienced horse rider; she started riding horses when aged 6. She competed to a high standard and had previously won the Scottish Championships for eventing.
4. Iain Jardine Racing Limited operates as a racehorse stables from Hetlandhill Stables, Dumfries, DG41 4JX, and this was Ms Galpin's primary place of employment whilst working for them.
5. The yard is leased on a British Horseracing Authority approved basis and is a purpose-designed facility.
6. On 29 December 2018, Ms Galpin fell whilst riding a horse (named Lulu) at work. An accident report form was completed relating to this incident.
7. As a result of the aforementioned incident, Ms Galpin attended the Accident and Emergency Department of Dumfries and Galloway Royal Infirmary where she was examined by Dr David Pedley. Ms Galpin was noted to have a 6cm laceration behind her right ear which was treated with seven sutures. There were no focal neurological signs and she had normal range of motion in her head and neck. There was no bleeding within her ear canal and there were no signs of serious head injury.
8. As a result of the aforementioned incident, Ms Galpin was advised not to drive for a period of 3 days and not to ride a horse for a period of 1 week.
9. Ms Galpin returned to work on 1 January 2019 on light duties, however did not resume her riding duties until 8 January 2019.

10. On 15 January 2019 at around 08.25, Ms Galpin was riding a half mile grass training circuit together with three of her colleagues when the horse she was riding (Eagle Crag) collapsed. The horse was seen to suffer from a loss of power, taking a number of strides before falling to the ground. Ms Galpin was observed to fall to the ground head first where she thereafter lay motionless. Colleagues placed her in the recovery position and an ambulance was called.
11. The Scottish Ambulance Service received an emergency call in respect of Ms Galpin at 08.36 on 15 January 2019. An ambulance was dispatched and arrived on scene at 08.54. Upon arrival Ms Galpin was observed to be having seizures with paramedics forming the opinion that she had suffered a massive brain injury.
12. Paramedics on scene requested an Air Ambulance at 0859 hours and an Air Ambulance took off from Glasgow Airport at 0918 hours. The standard flight time from Glasgow Airport to the scene is around 45 minutes. On average the ambulance crew would take around 20 minutes landing and loading the patient onto the helicopter. A further 55 minutes would be required to convey the patient to the Queen Elizabeth University Hospital (QEUH) in Glasgow and move them from the landing pad to Accident and Emergency.
13. Paramedics on scene received an update from the Air Ambulance Doctor by radio noting that the Air Ambulance was 20 minutes away and due to the urgency of the case took the decision to convey Ms Galpin by road to

Dumfries and Galloway Royal Infirmary which has a blue light journey time of around 15 minutes.

14. Upon arrival at Dumfries and Galloway Royal Infirmary, Ms Galpin was immediately assessed by the trauma team. She was agitated, had a reduced consciousness level and had clear signs of head trauma and potential brain injury. A CT scan was carried out which demonstrated an intra-cerebral bleed to the left side of her brain. Her care and management was discussed with the Neurosurgical team based at the Queen Elizabeth University Hospital in Glasgow and a decision was made to convey Ms Galpin to Glasgow by emergency road ambulance.
15. Whilst Ms Galpin was being conveyed to Glasgow her left pupil dilated and she was given diuretic therapy. Ms Galpin was admitted to the Neurosurgical Intensive Treatment Unit and was assessed by a Neurosurgical Consultant, Dr Roddy O'Kane. He noted that Ms Galpin had reacting pupils, was hypertensive and was intubated, sedated and ventilated. A further CT scan was carried out which revealed that there had been no change from the first CT scan. This showed that Ms Galpin had a large haematoma in the basal ganglia. It was concluded that intervention would be unsuccessful and following Ms Galpin's pupils beginning to fix, discussions were had with Ms Galpin's parents and boyfriend where it was agreed that Ms Galpin would be kept comfortable without further medical intervention.

16. At 1746 hours on 16 January 2019 at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Glasgow, Ms Galpin's ventilator was withdrawn and she was pronounced dead.
17. A Post Mortem was carried out by Dr Marjorie Turner on 23 January 2019 at the Queen Elizabeth University Hospital where cause of death was noted as being 1a) Intracerebral haemorrhage due to 1b) Head injury due to 1c) Fall from a horse.
18. There was no evidence of any existing injury relating to the earlier fall on 29 December 2018 and as such this incident was not medically related to the death.
19. All riders at Iain Jardine Racing Limited are required to wear a body protector and helmet when riding horses. During both incidents Ms Galpin was wearing a body protector and industry standard safety helmet. At the time of the fatal accident Ms Galpin was wearing a new SNELL E2001 skull cap which is certified for competition by the International Federation of Equestrian Sports.
20. Iain Jardine Racing Limited stables are subject to yearly British Horseracing Authority inspections. There were no concerns about the safety conditions at Hetlandhill Stables.
21. A Post Mortem was carried out on the horse (Eagle Crag) that Ms Galpin was riding on 15 January 2019. The Post Mortem was carried out by Dr Andrew Miller of Ark Vet Centre, Lockerbie. This is a vet and vet centre

routinely used by Iain Jardine Racing Limited. The cause of death was noted as being a rupture of the carotid artery, the likely cause of which was mycotic infection of the arterial wall.

22. The horse Eagle Crag was purchased by Iain Jardine Racing Limited on 7 November 2018 for 21,000 Euros. It had received an examination on 13 November 2018 by Dr Andrew Miller. Dr Miller also believes that he carried out an Endoscope Examination of Eagle Crag around 27 December 2018, with no abnormalities detected. No outcome of the examination was noted in Dr Miller's records. The horse raced at a meeting at Kelso on 29 December 2018 and was fit to compete at that time.
23. The expert medical opinion of Dr Roddy O'Kane (the surgeon who treated Ms Galpin at QEUH) was that, due to the severity of the trauma she sustained as a result of the fall, Ms Galpin would not have survived regardless of the hospital to which she was conveyed or the method by which she was transported.

NOTE

Legal framework for hearing

[1] This inquiry was held under section 1 of the 2016 Act. The inquiry procedure is governed by the Act of Sederunt (Fatal Accident Inquiry Rules) 2017; the preliminary hearings and the hearing on evidence were conducted in accordance with its provisions. Given the restrictions consequent to the covid-19 pandemic the callings of the case were

a mixture of face to face and virtual court hearings (telephone and Webex). I am grateful for the co-operation of the parties in ensuring that they made use of such electronic facilities because this enabled the inquiry to be concluded at a time when many other hearings have had to await the easing of national “lockdown” measures.

[2] In terms of sections 1(3) and (4) of the 2016 Act, the purpose of an inquiry of this nature is to:

- (a) establish the circumstances of the death, and
- (b) consider what steps (if any) might be taken to prevent other deaths in similar circumstances.

The purpose of the inquiry is not to establish civil or criminal liability.

[3] In terms of sections 26 (1), (2) and (4) of the 2016 Act, the sheriff must as soon as possible after the conclusion of the evidence and submissions in the inquiry, make a determination setting out findings as to:

- (a) when and where the death occurred,
- (b) when and where any accident resulting in the death occurred,
- (c) the cause or causes of the death,
- (d) the cause or causes of any accident resulting in the death,
- (e) any precautions which
 - (i) could reasonably have been taken, and
 - (ii) had they been taken, might realistically have resulted in the death, or any accident resulting in the death, being avoided,

(f) any defects in any system of working which contributed to the death or any accident resulting in the death, and

(g) any other facts which are relevant to the circumstances of the death.

[4] The sheriff must also, in terms of section 26 (1)(b) and (4), set out such recommendations (if any) as the sheriff considers appropriate as to

(a) the taking of reasonable precautions,

(b) the making of improvements to any system of working,

(c) the introduction of a system of working, and

(d) the taking of any other steps,

which might realistically prevent other deaths in similar circumstances.

Areas of investigation

[5] In light of the background to this matter, there were various areas which became the subject of investigations by the parties who had an interest in and were represented at the hearing in this case. Those parties were the Crown and Procurator Fiscal's Office (whose role is to bring an application for a fatal accident inquiry to the court in relevant circumstances), the family of Natasha (her parents), and her employers (Iain Jardine Racing Limited). Investigations took place over the course of several months before the hearing on evidence. Where relevant, the results of those enquiries were incorporated in the joint minute of agreement. For the sake of completeness, however, and because all of the evidence in the case was agreed between the parties after their enquiries were

completed, I consider that it is appropriate to confirm the areas which were the subject of such investigations:

1. The health history of the horse (Eagle Crag) which Natasha was riding at the time of the accident.
2. The training regime for racehorses at the stables.
3. Natasha Galpin's own health, and her competence and experience as a rider.
4. The work systems at Iain Jardine Racing Limited, so far as they related to the activities in which Natasha was engaged on the day and at the time of the accident.
5. The safety equipment provided to Natasha for training rides (including safety helmet).
6. The weather conditions on the day of the accident.
7. The state of the ground on which the horse collapsed.
8. The state of the animal on the day, as found in a post mortem examination.
9. The reaction of the emergency services to the call for assistance.
10. The medical treatment received by Natasha in the aftermath of the accident.
11. Whether the paramedics on scene should have awaited the arrival of an air ambulance to transport Natasha directly to QEUH, rather than 'blue-lighting' her to DGRI first.

[6] It was the agreed position of all of the parties - who, of course, represented different interests at the hearing - that none of these enquiries yielded any information

which would have altered the agreed evidence or the position of the parties, as reflected in the joint minute.

Conclusion

[7] Natasha Galpin (born 26 February 1996) died on 16 January 2019 following an accident at work which had occurred the day before, on 15 January 2019. She was 22 years old.

[8] Natasha had been a keen horse rider since the age of 6. She became proficient and won competitions in “eventing” in her youth. In April 2017 she began working for Iain Jardine Racing Limited, a horse training business at their stables based at Hetlandhill Farm, Carrutherston, Dumfries. Her initial part time position was made full time a few months later and she was employed in a role commonly known as a “stable lass”. Her job involved care of racehorses accommodated and trained by her employer. One of Natasha’s duties was to ride horses for exercise purposes. She became experienced in this area.

[9] On 15 January 2019 Natasha was part of a group of four who were each riding a horse on the grass circuit at her place of work. During the morning they were engaged in exercising horses from the stables in an activity known as the gallops. As its name suggests this involved the horses running, with one person riding each horse.

[10] The horse which Natasha was riding was called Eagle Crag. It was about 7 years old. The horse had come to the stables in November 2018, so had been there for about 2 months. Natasha was familiar with the horse and had a good relationship with it.

Eagle Crag had no known health problems. It had raced at a meeting at Kelso in late December 2018, during the time it was accommodated at the stables where Natasha worked.

[11] On 15 January 2019 Natasha was fit and able to conduct the exercise on the gallops. At about 8.25am on that date Eagle Crag collapsed suddenly while running. Natasha was thrown off the horse and struck the ground head first. Although she was wearing an appropriate helmet and other protective clothing she suffered a catastrophic head and brain injury, and immediately became unconscious. Emergency services were called and she was taken to Dumfries and Galloway Royal Infirmary for intensive neurological treatment. In summary, Natasha never regained consciousness. She was transferred to the Queen Elizabeth University Hospital in Glasgow, but the expert medical opinion was that the brain damage which she had suffered in the fall was untreatable. In consultation with her next of kin she was made comfortable and on 16 January her ventilator was withdrawn, and she was pronounced dead shortly afterwards, during the early evening of that day. She died of an intracerebral haemorrhage.

[12] The horse which Natasha had been riding collapsed because it suffered an immediate rupture of its carotid artery. The horse died immediately at the scene on 15 January 2019 as a result of this rupture.

[13] This fatal accident inquiry was ordered because Natasha Galpin died during the course of her employment. The Crown, Iain Jardine Racing Limited (the business which occupied the stables, trained the horses, and was Natasha's employer) and Ms Galpin's

family were all legally represented in the proceedings. As a result of the careful preparation and discussions in the months before this hearing, all evidence was agreed by joint minute. In addition to those matters contained in the minute of agreed evidence there were a number of other areas which were the focus of enquiries by each of the parties and other organisations (such as the Police Service of Scotland and the Health and Safety Executive). Reference is made above to the focus of those enquiries; none of these raised specific concerns about the background circumstances.

[14] Natasha Galpin's parents are devastated by the loss of their daughter at such a young age. She was on the cusp of adulthood. Her death was sudden, and she died doing something she loved. Natasha died as the result of a tragic, immediate, unforeseen and unforeseeable accident. The riding of horses carries risks, but the evidence demonstrated that there was no foreseeable risk which could have avoided this tragedy, and no step which could have been taken realistically to prevent this.

[15] I would like to express my condolences to the family of Ms Galpin and my thanks for the hard work and detailed preparation of the solicitors who participated at the hearing. My conclusion is that Natasha's death was the result of a tragic, unpreventable accident.