

## Death of Cr. James Byfield

One of the oldest, most valued and most esteemed residents of Northam, in the person of Cr. James Byfield, met with a tragic death yesterday morning between 10 and 11 o'clock. Mr. Byfield was engaged at his farm, at the top of Gordon street, superintending the loading and despatch of chaff. The waggon had been loaded with chaff when Mr. Byfield noticed a mouse run underneath it. Calling to one of the men to hold the horses he lay down in front of the wheel and reached out to catch the mouse. By mischance one of the horses moved forward about a foot, bringing the wheel into contact with Mr. Byfield's body. The wheel did not pass over him, but crushed his ribs, inflicting grave internal injuries. He was at once removed from the ground and conveyed to his home by Mr. R. McPherson—who was on the spot with his chaff-cutting and his employees. Just as he reached his home at the corner of Gordon and Challow street, Mr. Byfield expired.

An inquest was opened by the Coroner (Mr. W. D. Cowan, R.M.), and a jury consisting of Messrs. W. K. Potter, K. Stewart, and W. Sutcliffe. After viewing the body the inquest was adjourned until Tuesday next.

The funeral of the deceased gentleman has been appointed for tomorrow afternoon, leaving his late residence at 3 o'clock.

The late Cr. James Byfield, J.P., was born at Mahogany Creek, near Guildford on April 22, 1849, and was thus in his 65th year. His father, the late Edward Harold Byfield, was one of Western Australia's early pioneers, and his mother also arrived in the State at a very early period of its history, having accompanied the wife of the first Governor (Sir James Stirling) as children's nurse. Under the primitive conditions of the fifties, educational facilities were difficult to obtain, and Mr. Byfield had only a little private tuition to aid the development of his really exceptional in-

tellect. At 15 years of age he was apprenticed to the late Mr. Solomon Cook, a wheelwright and machinist well-known to the early residents of the State. When Mr. James Byfield was only a year old his father purchased for him, at a cost of three guineas, the second block of land that was sold in what is now the town of Northam—a block which Mr. Byfield held up to his death, and which was recently valued at over £2,000. It was probably the possession of this block of land that induced Mr. Byfield, on completing his apprenticeship and reaching man's estate, to come to Northam. He established himself in his trade and was the manufacturer of the first buggy and the first agricultural machinery made in these districts. In the period of nearly fifty years that has elapsed since Mr. Byfield came to Northam, he has been responsible for the erection of a very large proportion of the buildings in the town, and he has assisted many wage-earners and others to build their own homes on the building society principle. During the sixteen years that he carried on his business as wheelwright and manufacturer in Gairdner street, Northam, Mr. Byfield also managed what was then the largest flour mill in the State. This mill, built by the late Mr. Wilding—the father of Mr. Thomas Wilding, of Mookine—was owned by Mr. Gregory and was subsequently purchased from him by Mr. Byfield. In 1888 Mr. Byfield imported from America the first complete roller milling plant ever brought to Western Australia. As a result of the installation of this plant the value of wheat in the district rose 20 per cent., and a great fillip was given to local production. The flour produced at the mill gained a special prize at the Coalgarie Exhibition in 1899 in competition with all the Australian States, and won further distinction at the French Exhibition (1900), and the Glasgow Exhibition of the following year. Subsequently Mr. Byfield sold his mill to Messrs. Thomas and Company, by whom it is still conducted. It was one of the records of

Company, by whom it is now con-  
ducted. It was one of the regrets of  
Mr. Byfield's life that the manufactur-  
ing of agricultural machinery, which he  
had established in Northam, was not  
persisted in, but it is at least due  
to his energy and enterprise that we  
have at the present time the leading  
flour mill in the State. Many years  
ago Mr. Byfield was made the reci-  
pient of a handsome illustrated ad-  
dress by the farmers of the district in  
recognition of his single-handed and  
spirited assistance of the agricultural  
industry from the implement and mill-  
ing standpoints. After selling his  
mill, Mr. Byfield devoted himself par-  
tly to farming and partly to building.  
His farm, adjoining Northam, has long  
been regarded as one of the best con-

ducted properties in the whole of the  
State. His wheat yield has frequently  
exceeded 30 bushels to the acre, and  
in the importation and breeding of  
high-class sheep and other stock he  
has shown the same keen judgment  
and bold enterprise that characterised  
all his operations. He recently erect-  
ed opposite the Post Office, large and  
commodious business premises for Mes-  
srs. W. J. Stewart and Sons, and  
Messrs. J. T. Milner and Co. He was  
superintending the finishing touches to  
the latter building on the day before  
his death.

What the late Hon. George Thross-  
ell did for Northam commercially,  
Mr. James Byfield did for it on the  
industrial side. The two were fast  
friends and co-workers for many  
many years, and although at times  
compelled to strive for conflicting in-  
terests, each had the high admiration  
of the other which could only spring  
from a recognition of sterling quali-  
ties. Very frequently since the death  
of Mr. Throssell has Mr. Byfield made  
both private and public reference to  
the kindly aid and wise counsel ex-  
tended to him by Mr. Throssell on his  
arrival in Northam. Like Mr. Thross-  
ell too, Mr. Byfield always found  
time from his private interests to  
serve the public good. On the crea-  
tion of the Northam municipality in  
1878 he was elected to the office of

of the Northam municipality. In  
1878 he was elected to the office of  
councillor, and from then to the day  
of his death—a period of 37 years—  
he devoted himself uninterruptedly to  
the services of the ratepayers. He ill-  
ed the office of Mayor, and might  
have been re-elected over and over  
again to that position had it not  
been for his distaste for presiding. He  
preferred a seat at the Council table,  
and successive Mayors have reaped  
the benefit of his wide knowledge and  
long experience. At the time of his  
death Mr. Byfield was one of the  
councillors for the Central Ward, and  
the senior member of the Council.  
During the past fortnight many at-  
tempts were made to induce him to  
nominate for the office of Mayor, but  
he could not be persuaded to over-  
come his old dislike for presiding. In  
1894 Mr. Byfield was made a Justice  
of the Peace. He was for many years  
a moving spirit in the Rechabite  
Lodge, and filled many important offi-  
ces in that body. He was an enthu-  
siastic supporter of the Northam Agri-  
cultural Society, and a generous dor-  
nor towards its show funds. He was  
a trustee of Wesley Church, Northam  
in the affairs of which he took an  
active interest, and he was always  
to the front in any charitable move-  
ment. Mr. Byfield was married in  
1872, his wife being the daughter of  
the late Mr. W. Forwagh, of Salt  
River, Northam. He is survived by  
his widow, one son (Mr. Alfred By-  
field, of Northam), and two daughters  
(Mrs. Gladstone, of Tammin, and Miss  
Byfield, of Northam). He also leaves  
several brothers, including Mr. Fred  
Byfield, of Northam, — brother at  
Meadaring, and other relatives in the  
Swan district.

It is a curious and melancholy coin-  
cidence that in the short space of  
four years three men whose names  
will always be associated with the  
building up of the town of Northam,  
three men who were fast friends and  
earnest co-workers—Geo. Throssell,  
John Gregory and James Byfield—  
all have met their deaths by acci-  
dent.