

Lois Annie Brett

1901 census, Cyprus Cottage, Newport Road, Niton

William Brett	Head	62	Retired Labourer	Carisbrooke, Isle of Wight
Ellen Brett	Wife	64		Brighstone, Isle of Wight
Benjamin Brett	Son	29	Labourer	Niton, Isle of Wight
Ellen Brett	Daughter	27		Niton, Isle of Wight
Lois Brett	Daughter	22		Niton, Isle of Wight
John Brett	Grandson	9		Niton, Isle of Wight
Lewis Brett	Grandson	10mth.		Niton, Isle of Wight

Isle of Wight County Press – 5 February 1910

SUICIDE BY POISONING AT NEWPORT.

On Monday afternoon the Acting Deputy Coroner (J. Eldridge, Esq.), held an inquest at the Baptist Lecture-hall, Newport, on the body of Lois Brett, aged 31, a single woman, who had resided with her father at 66 Caesars-road, who was found in a dying condition in her room on Saturday morning, with a glass partly full of carbolic acid on the table near her bed. Mr. W. J. Rugg, T.C., was chosen foreman of the jury. P.S. Hutchin and P.O. Edwards were present to represent the County Constabulary.

WILLIAM BRETT, labourer, of 66 Caesars-road, Newport, father of the deceased, said at about 7.30 on Saturday morning he heard deceased coughing and on going to her bed-room he saw her in bed in a crouching position. She was apparently spitting something out of her mouth. Asked what was the matter, she said "Nothing." He got some water for her, but she did not drink much. He saw the glass (produced) by deceased's bed, and it contained a small quantity of red fluid. Witness called a neighbour and Mrs. Groves ultimately came in and a doctor was sent for. Deceased got worse and died after the doctor had arrived. Deceased acted as his housekeeper. She had been in pretty good health, but had been rather peculiar in her manner – she had strange ways lately – but she had never threatened to do away with herself. Witness saw deceased at about 10.30 on Friday night at supper, but she went off to bed rather suddenly – in an abrupt manner. He did not know of anything which had been troubling her. He did not know there was any disinfectant in the house or that deceased had got any.

ALICE GROVES, married woman, living at 35-Caesars-road, said that at 9.30 on Saturday morning she was called by a neighbour to go to Mr. Brett's house. She found the deceased lying on the bed and she saw the disinfectant in the glass and smelt it and told the last witness deceased had taken poison and that she was dying. A doctor had been sent for, but as he had not arrived witness went for Dr. Thompson, who came immediately. The doctor was with deceased when she died. Witness said that five or six people had been sent for to go to see deceased before, witness was asked to do so, but all the others were unwilling to go. She did not think the people were made to understand what the matter was. It was not represented to her as a serious matter, but only a case of ordinary sickness.

EMILY ELDRIDGE, married woman, of 50 Caesars-road, said she had known deceased for about seven months. She was very quiet and strange in her manner. Sometimes she would go along the road between 10 and 11 at night knocking at people's doors, for mischief, she thought. She did not think

deceased was responsible for her actions at times. On Friday she saw deceased going along the road in a great hurry, and she did not reply to witness when she spoke to her. Every one in the neighbourhood thought that deceased had “come queer” recently ; formerly she was all right.

PHILIP MILLIDGE, chemist, of High-street, Newport, said that about ten days ago deceased came to the shop for carbolic acid. She could not say what she wanted it for, and as she could not give a satisfactory answer why she wanted it, he refused to supply her. She was very strange in her manner. The fluid contained in the glass was carbolic acid.

Dr. THOMPSON said that at about 10.20 on Saturday morning he was called to go to deceased’s home and found her in bed in a state of coma, with very pale face, frothing at the mouth, and with contracted pupils, and on a table near the bed was a considerable quantity of carbolic acid in a glass. She was practically in a moribund condition. He began to use a stomach pump and got down some water, but deceased died within a few minutes. He could not say if the result would have been different if deceased had been medically attended earlier. He had made a post-mortem examination and founded the strongest evidence of excessive carbolic acid poisoning. The immediate cause of death was shock from poisoning. Deceased was in a certain condition, which might have preyed upon her mind and influenced her behaviour. Witness could find no bottle from which the acid was poured. Deceased had probably taken three or four ounces of the acid judging by her internal condition. He should think deceased took the poison shortly before the father spoke to her at 7.30.

The Coroner said the evidence that the deceased had been strange in her manner would seem to point to the fact that she took the poison when temporarily insane. The mystery was where she got the poison; the police could not find that she had purchased any. She might have borrowed some from a neighbour.

Dr. THOMPSON said that he did not think that could have been the case. It was not the carbolic acid which was used for ordinary disinfection purposes, and he did not think it could have been dissolved from tablets.

The FOREMAN said apparently the delay which arose in securing attention to deceased was due to the fact that neither the neighbours nor the doctor who was first approached were made to understand the urgency of the case.

The jury returned a verdict that deceased committed suicide by taking carbolic acid during temporary insanity. They thanked Mrs. Groves and Dr. Thompson for readily responding to the call made upon them and expressed sympathy with the father of the deceased.

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