

Frederick Cecil Gurney Gurney-Champion

Isle of Wight County Press - 18 June 1949

A NEWPORT SOLICITOR'S DEATH.

Mr. F. C. G. Gurney-Champion

The death on Tuesday at his home, Melmerby, Clatterford Road, Carisbrooke, of Mr. Frederick Cecil Gurney Gurney-Champion, has removed a senior and leading member of the Island legal profession, and one who had established an international reputation as a pioneer advocate of legal aid for the poor.

He was the son of Mr. Frederick Sheppard Champion, solicitor, of Brighton, and was born on July 25th, 1870. He was articled to his father and passed his final examination in 1893, gaining first-class honours and the Law Society's prize. He joined his father's law firm and a few years later became senior partner in Champions, Hart, Reade, and Company, who were among the leading solicitors on the South Coast with offices in London, Brighton, and Eastbourne. Overwork brought on ill-health, and on medical advice he retired in 1910 and went for a long holiday, visiting the U.S.A., Canada (where the family had a ranch), North Africa, and several European countries. At the outbreak of war in 1914 he returned to England and assisted food production by farming in the New Forest. He came to the Island in 1926 and took over the practice of the late Edwin Parker at Newport and Freshwater.

Mr. Gurney-Champion was very interested in legal aid for the poor, and shortly before coming to the Island he went to live in Bermondsey Settlement, London, in order to study the question first hand. Acting as a poor man's lawyer, he gave free legal advice at several London Settlements. As a result of his researches he wrote a book, published in 1926, under the title of "Justice and the Poor in England", with a foreword by the late Archbishop of Canterbury (Dr. William Temple) and others. In it he dealt extensively with the question, criticising the deficiencies in the facilities for legal aid, and putting forward suggestions for remedying them. The book was widely and favourably reviewed in this country and America. Mr. Gurney-Champion also organised a petition to Parliament on the subject, and it was a great disappointment to him that nothing was done at that time, but his work has now borne fruit, as a special committee under the chairmanship of Lord Rushcliffe was set up in 1944 to recommend improvements in the legal aid scheme. Mr. Gurney-Champion received a letter from the Lord Chancellor stating that his book had been sent to the committee, and in view of the contents of their report, published in 1945, it seems that most of the reforms which he advocated so strenuously in 1925 will now be adopted.

Mr. Gurney-Champion had a well-deserved reputation for conscientious attention to his clients' interests, and for his determined and tenacious watch over their affairs. In his younger days he frequently appeared in Court as an advocate and it was his proud claim that he never lost a case in which he was engaged. During the war years he carried on his practice in spite of failing health and shortage of staff. Recently he took his son, Mr. Gurney-Champion, and Mr. J. P. Darch, of Shanklin, into partnership, and they will continue the practice.

A devout layman, Mr. Gurney-Champion regularly attended at Carisbrooke Church until illness intervened. For a number of years he read the lessons at the evening service, and was a member of the Church Council. He founded the Newport and Carisbrooke branch of Toc H and later became a builder-member. In his younger days he was a fine football and golf player.

In 1922 he married Miss E. T. Gurney, daughter of the Rev. H. F. S. Gurney, vicar of Stoke St. Gregory, Somerset, who survives him with their two children, Major John S. C. Gurney-Champion, who has recently qualified as a solicitor and followed his father's example by gaining honorary distinction in the Law Society's final examination, and Miss Margaret E. Gurney-Champion, B.A.

The funeral service will take place to-day (Saturday), at 2 p.m., at Carisbrooke Church. It was his request that there should be no mourning.

Isle of Wight County Press - 18 June 1949

THE LATE MR. F. C. G. GURNEY-CHAMPION.

Funeral at Carisbrooke.

The funeral of Mr. Frederick Cecil Gurney Gurney-Champion, a leading member of the Island's legal profession, whose death occurred on Tuesday week at his home, Melmerby, Clatterford Road, Carisbrooke, took place at Carisbrooke Church on Saturday, when, in the absence through illness of the Vicar (the Rev. D. S. McKenzie) the service was conducted by the Rev. L. J. D. Wheatley (vicar of St. Paul's Barton). Mr. E. Abraham (organist) accompanied the hymns "Lead, kindly light" and "Jesu, Lover of my soul", and played "O Rest in the Lord", "He shall feed his flock", "Crossing the bar" and "I know that my Redeemer liveth". In a tribute to Mr. Gurney-Champion, Mr. Wheatley said he knew him intimately, not only as a fellow churchman but in the foundation of Toc H in the district. He was a distinguished lawyer with ethical standards which were of the highest, and he also rendered very valuable service in assisting the poor, which work was now bearing fruit. He did his duty courageously, and if one were to put a quality at the top of the list it would be his sense of duty and thoroughness in everything.

The mourners were Mrs. Gurney-Champion (widow), Miss M. E. Gurney-Champion (daughter), Major J. S. C. Gurney-Champion (son), Dr. S. Gurney Champion (brother), Mrs. E. Mavrogordato (sister), and Mr. J. P. Darch.

The interment was at Carisbrooke Cemetery, the many floral tributes including those from the staff of Messrs. Parker and Gurney-Champion, the I.W. Law Society, and the members of the St. Andrew's Mothers' Union. Messrs. H. and F. Damp made the arrangements.

(only family mourners transcribed)

Transcription by Ian Roach for the Friends of Newport & Carisbrooke Cemeteries © 2021
<https://www.foncc.org.uk>