

Margaret Ruth Morris

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SUICIDE FROM DEPRESSION AT NEWPORT.

The Unrestricted Sale of Lysol.

How depression unhinged the mind of a happily married woman was related to the Deputy-Coroner for the Island (Francis A. Joyce, Esq.) at the High-street Methodist School, Ryde, on Tuesday. He was holding an inquiry into the death of Mrs. Margaret Ruth Morris, aged 33, wife of Mr. Frederick George Morris, dairyman, of 40 Shide-road, Newport, who died at the County Hospital on Sunday from the effects of lysol poisoning. P.S. Barber, of Newport, represented the police.

The husband said that on Saturday his wife went to Medina-avenue shopping. They retired to bed at 10.15 p.m. His wife then seemed a little brighter than usual. On Sunday he got up at 5.10 and went to his work at 5.30, his wife being still asleep. While delivering milk at 7.20 his sister-in-law told him that his wife was ill, and he found her in bed unconscious. He tried to give her milk and castor oil and went for a doctor. Dr. Bruce arrived within about five minutes and later ordered his wife's removal to the County Hospital. Afterwards witness found the empty bottle of lysol, produced, in the washstand cupboard by the side of the bed, and on the wash-stand was a glass containing lysol.—Asked by the Coroner if there had been any quarrel the husband replied "No. I think I can say without exception that I don't know of a happier married couple than my wife and myself. We have been married 10 years and never had a quarrel". Witness stated that in 1934 his wife had mental trouble. She had a blister on her head which turned septic, and went to the County Hospital for an operation. In October she had influenza, followed by a sort of brain fever, and was removed to the County Mental Hospital in December, remaining there for seven months. She returned home in July, and on October 17th contracted a heavy cold and had a breakdown which made her very depressed and quiet. Lysol would not generally be used in the house; the last time it was used to his knowledge was six years ago.

The Coroner said it ought not to be possible for anyone, irrespective of requirements, to be able to purchase Lysol so easily. It was a common method of destruction in the Island; there had been three cases of it in the last few months. It was a very bad selection, as it usually occasioned a great deal of torture to the persons taking it.

Robert Percy Jackman, market gardener, of 42 Shide-road, Newport, told the Coroner that on going to his daughter's house he found her in bed, breathing very badly, and detected a smell of disinfectant. He found a glass containing lysol on the wash-stand.—By the Coroner: His daughter and her husband had lived next door to him since their marriage and he had never heard of any unpleasantness at all.

Dr. Albert Hamilton Bruce, of Newport, said that when he arrived deceased was in an unconscious condition and there were burns on the tongue, mouth, and throat, consistent with her having taken lysol.

Dr. Helen Bruce Sutherland, of Ryde, said she was acting for the house surgeon at the County Hospital. She saw deceased about 10 minutes after her admission, when she was unconscious, from which she never recovered. She died at 1.20 the same day from the effects of poisoning.

P.C. Hartnell said he made inquiries at the chemists to try to discover when the bottle of lysol was purchased, but the manager informed him that so many bottles were sold that he could not tell when or to whom they were sold.

The Coroner said the facts were very simple in that sad case. He expressed sincere sympathy with the husband. There appeared to have been no reason for deceased's act, although they had the history of a former mental breakdown. He was quite satisfied that the husband did all he could and that Dr. Bruce rendered speedy assistance. He recorded a verdict that deceased committed suicide by lysol poisoning, being in an unsound state of mind at the time.

Mrs. Morris was well known in the Newport district as a talented soprano singer and as a member of the Quay-street United Methodist Church Choir. Until her health first broke down she often appeared at concerts and, on recovery, resumed her public singing. She sang a solo at the harvest festival at the Methodist Church in September. Her tragic end has aroused deep sympathy with those bereaved, particularly with her husband, a well known member of the Carisbrooke Rifle Club, and with his two little sons.

There was a large gathering of relatives and friends at the funeral service on Thursday at the Quay-street Methodist Church. The Rev. J. Higman, who officiated, referred to the deceased's loyalty and devotion to her loved ones and the church, her bright Christian character, and her rich gift of song. Mr. W. G. Bartlett (organist) played Handel's "Largo" and Mendelssohn's "O rest in the Lord", and some of Mrs. Morris's' fellow choristers led the singing of the hymns "O love that wilt not let me go" and "Abide with me".

The chief mourners were the bereaved husband, Mr. and Mrs. A. Wyatt (brother-in-law and sister), Mr. and Mrs. W. G. B. Weeks (brother-in-law and sister-in-law), Mr. R. Brown (cousin), Mr. A. E. Jackman (uncle), Mrs. W. Sheath (aunt), Messrs. W. O. and A. Morris (Pan), Messrs. H. and R. Morris (Eastleigh), Mrs. S. Woodland, and Mrs. Bartlem. Her parents and sister (Mrs. W. Urry) were unable to attend.

There were nearly 70 floral tributes, including those from the Quay-street Methodist Church Choir; the Quay-street Methodist Sewing Party; the Carisbrooke Rifle Club; the Newport and District Dairymen's Association; the employees at Pan Farm; and neighbours in College-road. Messrs. H. and F. Damp made the arrangements.

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