

Wilfred Spanner

**Isle of Wight County Press
1 November 1958**

AUCTIONEERS' CLERK, METHODIST AND SPORTSMAN

Sudden Death of Mr. Wilfred Spanner, Of Newport

Widespread regret was occasioned in the town and in agricultural circles throughout the Island by the death on Tuesday of Mr. Wilfred Maurice Spanner, aged 76, of 3 Woodbine Villas, Newport, who for over 60 years had been employed by Sir Francis Pittis and Son., auctioneers and valuers, and who had also been prominent as a life-long Methodist and as a football, tennis, and hockey player in his younger days.

Although he officially retired about two years ago, Mr. Spanner had continued to assist Messrs. Pittis on a part-time basis, and his cheery presence will be particularly missed at Newport Market, which he had regularly attended throughout his service with the firm. He was in his place at the Pyle Street Methodist Church on Sunday evening, but after arriving home was taken ill and remained unconscious until his death in the early hours of Tuesday,

Mr. Spanner was educated at the Newport Grammar (now King James I Grammar) School and entered the firm which he was to serve for some 62 years as an office boy at 3s. a week under the late Alderman Francis Pittis, son of Sir Francis Pittis, founder of the firm, who had then just retired. Most of his service was with the late Mr. A. H. Dockrill, who succeeded Alderman Pittis in control of the firm, and his son, Lt.-Col. A. H. Dockrill, T.D. whose untimely death in 1957, followed by that of his father this year, was a great shock to Mr. Spanner, who was greatly attached to both.

During the 1914-18 war, in association with Mr. A. H. Dockrill, Mr. Spanner was in charge of the grading of Island meat cattle, and in the last war he performed similar service in regard to fat pigs under Ministry control. He held an auctioneer's and valuer's license, and, during the war, did a certain amount of selling. He had many memories of the days when payment was made in gold and when he and a colleague used to sit up late at night balancing the takings at farm sales. He will be much missed by his colleagues in the office, where he was at work as late as Saturday, and where he was greatly loved and respected.

A life-long Methodist, Mr. Spanner had been secretary for some 55 years of the Pyle Street Methodist (formerly Wesleyan) Church Sunday-school, and his love for the children was reflected in the care which he lavished on arrangements for their benefit and in his tremendous popularity with them. In the church he had for many years been treasurer to the trustees, chapel steward, and sidesman, with a ready welcome for all who worshipped there.

He was very keen on sport and played for the old Methodist football team in his younger days as well as being a good tennis player in the local Methodist Tennis Club. He was one of the earliest members of the Newport Victoria Sports Club, for whom he also played tennis, and on one occasion when the club provided the royal entourage for Newport Carnival in the 1930's he played King Carnival to the queen of Miss Edna Nidd (now Mrs. Oliver). He had supported the Newport F.C. for many years and was a vice-president. He will also be remembered as a prominent member for many years of the Newport Gleemen, the male voice choir who were deservedly popular for their contributions to entertainment in all parts of the Island between the wars.

Mr. Spanner was also well known as a Forester and served for some years as secretary of the Newport Court from about 1948, relinquishing the office about two years ago, when he went into partial retirement.

He gave service to the nation in two wars, being a member of the I.W. Volunteer Training Corps, who undertook local guard and similar duties during the 1914-18 war, and as an A.R.P. warden attached to the Mount Joy 1 post during the last war.

Mr. Spanner was a widower; his late wife was Miss Laura Snellgrove, daughter of the late Mr. A. J. Snellgrove, of Newport. He leaves no family. The funeral took place yesterday afternoon, when a service was held at the Newport Pyle Street Methodist Church.

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FUNERAL OF MR. W. M. SPANNER

Glowing Tribute to "Uncle Wilf"

A large and representative congregation attended the funeral of Mr. Wilfred Maurice Spanner, of 3 Woodbine Villas, Newport, at the Victoria Methodist Church, Pyle Street, on Friday week. It included principals and members of the firm by which Mr. Spanner had been employed and other firms with which he was associated for so many years, sporting and social organizations in which he had taken an interest,, and many members of the church to which he had devoted his life.

The service was conducted by the Rev. D. J. Creamer, and the hymns "The Lord's my Shepherd" and "All as God wills" were accompanied by Mr. H. F. Payn (organist). In a tribute, Mr. Creamer said it was fitting that Mr. Spanner should rest for a while within the sacred walls that he loved so much, which meant so much to him, and to which he gave so much of his life, loyalty and labours. They gave thanks to God for a wonderful life.

Those who knew him so much better had mentioned how the death of his wife, about five years ago, had meant to him; that spoke much of a wonderful family relationship. Wilf Spanner had three concerns most at heart, and first and fore-most must be the church and Sunday-school. He gave of his best and was with the church and school all his life, entering as a scholar and soon taking office as Sunday-school secretary—a post he retained to the last day of his life. Mr. Creamer said that the first Sunday he arrived in the circuit the first thing Mr. Spanner did was to show him a booklet issued in 1910 commemorating the centenary of the Sunday-school.

He had a wonderful influence over young people, and was known to many as "Uncle". Young people owed him a tremendous debt, and it spoke highly of him that there was always competition to sit beside him for morning or evening worship in the back pew of the church. Just how many bills were paid out of "Uncle's" pocket for Sunday-school funds no one would ever know.

In the church he was trustees' secretary, chapel steward, and sidesman. Sunday by Sunday he welcomed people warmly and graciously and had a friendly word for them when they left. In the day-to-day routine of the firm by which he was employed all his working life, he was known and respected by the farming community of the Island.

Mr. Creamer said he had been told in the market that any farmer who did business with Mr. Spanner knew that he would be treated fairly and squarely and honestly. He was the secretary of the local Court of Island Foresters 1821, and passed through the chair, had an interest in football, in the Newport Victoria Sports Club, in the Newport Gleemen, the church tennis club, and the war-time Civil Defence.

During the last weekend of his life he was in good spirits. They had a good service on Sunday, and the speaker was glad that the theme of Christian hope was a fitting one, that there had been a Communion service, and also that there had been larger congregations of recent Sundays — a fact which had delighted Mr. Spanner.

The family mourners were Mrs. F. G. Goddard (sister), Mr. R. Spanner (brother), Mr. R. D. Goddard, Mr. and Mrs. J. Johns and Mrs. B. Gentle (brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law), and Mr. L. Spanner, Mr. G. Tyler, Mr. J. Snellgrove, and the Misses E. and D. Gentle and F. Johns (nephews and nieces). Mrs. L. Spanner (niece) was unable to attend.

Organizations and firms represented included the sections of the church in which Mr. Spanner had held posts, the West Wight Circuit, Cowes Methodist churches, Messrs. Way, Riddett and Co., the Farmers' Trading Society, Messrs. Roach, Pittis and Co., Messrs. Flux and Sons, of Wroxall, R. Silcock and Sons, Ltd., of Liverpool, Messrs. Harold Biles, the market staff, the Ancient Order of Foresters and the Court Foresters Isle, Cowes, and the Newport Victoria Sports Club, and the Chillerton and Gatcombe Village Social Committee, of which Mr. Spanner was a former vice-president. Messrs. Francis Pittis and Son, with whom Mr. Spanner was employed for some 62 years, were represented by Mr. G. B. Robinson and Mr. S. S. Ross (partners), Mr. C. W. Barnes and Mr. C. B. Leal (senior staff) and many other members of the staff.

There were 48 floral tributes, including those from the partners of Sir Francis Pittis and Son, the staff of that firm, and Mr. Barnes (Mr. Spanner's colleague for 50 years), the I.W. District of the Ancient Order of Foresters and the local court of Foresters, the Victoria Methodist Church Sunday-school scholars, and the church trustees.

The interment was at Carisbrooke Cemetery by the side of his wife's grave. Mr. W. Wells made the arrangements.

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