

Tom Stokes

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Death of Mr. Tom Stokes, of Newport.

BUSINESS MAN, MUSICIAN, AND TRAVELLER.

The death took place suddenly on Wednesday, at 32 Chapel-street, Newport, where he had resided with Mr. and Mrs. W. Toogood for about 20 years, of one of Newport's best known townsmen, in the person of Mr. Tom Stokes, who was in his 81st year. Mr. Stokes was a native of Newport and for some years in its early days he was accountant for the "County Press." Later he carried on business at Nodehill, Newport, as a bookseller and stationer, and retired about 20 years ago, since when, until the disturbed conditions of Europe prevented his journeys, he had made extensive travels on foot on the continent and in North Africa. He frequently contributed to our columns extremely interesting accounts of his travels. In November last he had the misfortune to be knocked down by a car in Newport and sustained serious injury to his ankle which necessitated long treatment at the County Hospital, but he had a remarkably good recovery for so old a patient, and had been able to get about again of late. He was out walking on the day before he died. Mr. Toogood, when taking a cup of tea to his bed-room at about 9 o'clock on Wednesday morning, found that he had passed away in his sleep. The Deputy-Coroner ordered a post-mortem examination which revealed that death was due to natural causes and no inquest was held. In early days Mr. Stokes held a prominent position in the musical life of Newport as the able conductor of the United Temperance Choir which often took part in national competitions at the Crystal Palace. He taught many local vocalists to sing by the tonic sol-fa method and some of his pupils still use this system in assisting local choirs. In 1887 he was presented with a handsome silver-mounted ebony baton, a cheque, and illuminated address in appreciation of his services as conductor of the choir. Largely self-educated, Mr. Stokes had a wide knowledge of the literature and art, not only of his native country but of the countries in which he travelled, and he loved to talk of his experiences in foreign lands, particularly of the kindness which he received at the hands of the ordinary folk, although his conversational activities had been much restricted of late years by deafness. He had been baked in the African sun, snowed up for days on end in Alpine villages, slept in carts and in wildly romantic village inns, and on the dreary heights of the Brocken, where German legend tells of the gatherings of witches. One of his most notable "hikes" stated in October, 1921. He walked from Portsmouth to Newhaven, crossed to Dieppe, walked across France to Marseilles, and thence to Algeria, where he strolled through Tunisia, until turned back from an area where bandits were active and it was considered unsafe for him to go. Returning to France, he continued his journey afoot over the Alps to Strasbourg. Altogether that winter he tramped 2500 miles. On another trip to the continent he walked to Rome, but here his experiences were not so completely happy as usual, as he was robbed of his wallet while attending a church service and he had to borrow money from the British Consul for his return journey.

His first walking tour abroad was made as far back as the 1870's, when, just after the Franco-Prussian war, he saw wrecked buildings and bullet-scarred walls in Paris.

Throughout life Mr. Stokes had been a member of the Newport Congregational Church, and the funeral service will be held there on Monday at 2.30 p.m.

NEWPORT

The Late Mr. Tom Stokes.-The funeral of Mr. Tom Stokes, of 32 Chapel-street, a well known Newportonian, whose death at the age of 80 we announced last week, took place at the Congregational Church on Monday. The Pastor of the church (the Rev. T. E. R. Langridge) officiated and Miss Wendes, at the organ accompanied the hymns "How sweet the Name of Jesus sounds" and "The strife is o'er," and played the Dead March in "Saul" at the close. In a tribute to the deceased gentleman, Mr. Langridge referred to his long association with the Congregational Church. It was as far back as 1886 when he first joined the congregation, and he was the oldest male member on the roll. His enthusiasm and consecrated vigour in working for the church was a happy memory of the older members of the congregation. He was a Sunday-school teacher, a member of the choir and the Door Committee, a collector for missions and auditor of the church accounts, while his enthusiasm for singing brought him into contact with many people belonging to other churches. By his travels and love of the people of other lands he showed in a very practical way his realisation of the fact that God made all men of one blood and that we were all members one of another. They thanked God for his long life of kindly influence for good. The mourners were Mr. and Mrs. W. Toogood, Mrs. and Miss B. Arnold, of Twickenham, Mrs. G. H. Woodmore, and Mrs. Millward. Others attending included Mr. A. G. Harrison (church secretary) and Mrs. Harrison, Mr. and Mrs. J. A. Hayles, Mrs. F. E. Welsh, Miss Cheverton, Miss Williams, Mr. and Mrs. W. Upward, and Messrs. L. Jordan, J.P., W. H. Dann, J.P., J. W. Head, J. Dufton, E. L. Stevens, H. E. Stratton, J. R. Wise, T.C., P. G. Jenkins, J. W. Gibbs (hon. secretary of the Congregational Sunday-school), J. F. Launder, C. Wyatt, W. G. Sibbick, C. J. Cooper, W. G. Rodway, F. Scovell, W. S. North, and W. Nolan. The interment was at Carisbrooke Cemetery. Messrs. O. C. Hamilton and Son made the arrangements.--Following his accident last autumn Mr. Stokes was treated at the County Hospital for a month, and during the remainder of his long illness he was cared for by Mrs. Toogood.

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