

**William John Charles Warne**

**Isle of Wight County Press  
27 August 1960**

**CARISBROOKE SOLDIER FOUND SHOT**

**BORROWED FARMER'S GUN TO GO PIGEON SHOOTING**

John Warne, aged 23, of 129 High Street, Carisbrooke, a National Serviceman, stationed with R.E.M.E., Aldershot, was found shot dead in a withy bed near the village on Tuesday. Warne was due to complete his national service on September 2<sup>nd</sup>. The eldest son in a family of nine children, he was spending his leave at his home. After lunch on Tuesday he visited Great Park Farm, Carisbrooke, and borrowed a double-barrel shotgun and cartridges from the farmer, Mr. W. A. Curtis, with the object of pigeon shooting. On Tuesday evening, when he had not returned, Mr. Curtis organized a search party. The body was found about 300 yards from the farm. There were gunshot wounds in the head. An inquest was held at the Guildhall, Newport, yesterday.

**Isle of Wight County Press  
3 September 1960**

**PIGEON SHOOTING TRAGEDY**

**Accidental Death Verdict On Carisbrooke Soldier**

A verdict of accidental death was returned at an inquest at the Guildhall, Newport, on Friday week, on William Charles John Warne (23), of 129 High Street, Carisbrooke. Warne was found shot dead in a copse on Monday week.

The Deputy Coroner (Mr. H. H. Johnson) sat with a jury and Mr. F. C. Allee represented Miss Anne Whillier. Mr. W. T. Jones, M.B.E., was foreman of the jury.

William Thomas Warne, garage hand, said that his son was a serving soldier and due to be demobilised in a week's time. His son was home on week-end leave.

**HEARD TWO SHOTS**

John Bienek, farm worker, of 2 Great Park Cottage, Carisbrooke, said he was employed by Mr. Curtis at Great Park Farm. He had known John Warne since he was a child, and was expecting him to go pigeon shooting on August 22<sup>nd</sup>. Witness had borrowed a gun from Mr. Curtis for Warne, who arrived about lunch-time and they went to the farm. Warne said something about buying a box of cartridges. Witness got on with his work in the farmyard. About a quarter of an hour later he heard two shots. Witness later went to work at Brook. He arrived home about 9 p.m. and his wife said that Warne's cycle was still outside.

When he found that the gun had not been returned he went to look for Warne. It was almost dark when he found him. He was lying on his side, his face in the grass. The gun was pointing at his head and his right hand was on the stock. The muzzle of the gun was only inches from his head. He could see no injuries at that time. When the body was moved, a pigeon was found under it.

Warne was quite competent with a gun. He was a cheerful young man; one of the finest friends witness had known. Warne did not speak of being worried, but mentioned some letters which he laughed about and said he had to get rid of. Witness gained the impression that they were from a girl friend.

### **GUN POINTED AT MOUTH**

Sheila May Curtis, Great Park Farm, Carisbrooke, said that the gun was pointing straight to Warne's mouth. The stock was in his hand. She moved the gun because she did not know whether he was dead or alive. With Chief Inspector P.W. Baldwin as a model she demonstrated how the gun was held.

Dr. H. H. Broadhead, Cypress Road, Newport, said that the body was at the farm when he examined it. There were various fractures of the skull, but there was no exit wound. There was no external evidence of injury to the skull. The clothing was not torn or disarranged.

Dr. Mervyn Ashley Woodhouse, acting pathologist, spoke of gross damage to the inner bone structure of the head and to the brain. The muzzle would have had to be about 1 1/2 inches inside the mouth to justify the injuries.

### **GUNSMITH'S EVIDENCE**

Charles Hedley Heal, gunsmith, of Serena, Sandford, Godshill, a member of the British Gunmakers' Association, said the gun was in perfect working order. The trigger pressures were 4 1/4 and 7 lb. The latter was heavy and would need very deliberate pressure. A sudden bump would not set it off. The cartridge outwardly appeared normal but two pricks on the packing wad showed that it had been tampered with. There were normally 202 pellets. He estimated that the charge, to achieve the injuries described without complete penetration, would have to be reduced by about a half. The marks in the wad were made with a knife and nail file. Witness added "all the evidence proves to me that he put the gun in his mouth".

Anne Whillier, Goldings, Bowcombe Road, Carisbrooke, aged 22, said that she and John had talked about getting engaged. They corresponded regularly. She did not consider him nervous. He was a shy person. He wrote that he was coming on leave. She went with him to Carisbrooke Show and after a trip to Blackgang, he saw her home. She saw him on Sunday, spending the afternoon and evening together. He spoke of plans for the following weekend. On Monday he telephoned that he had obtained the job he was after at J. S. White and Co. but had some trouble with the union and was going back in the afternoon. He did not tell witness what the trouble was, but did not seem very worried about it. He promised to telephone at about 12.30 p.m. He wanted her to leave her job when he came out of the army.

Mrs. Warne said that her son was not moody and she knew of nothing worrying him. He did not take her fully into his confidence. She knew nothing of letters he was alleged to want to get rid of.

### **EXHAUSTIVE POLICE ENQUIRIES**

P.C. R. L. Rowsell said that there were 14 unspent cartridges in the box, and five in Warne's pocket. Four spent ones were on the ground. There was a live and a discharged cartridge in the gun. Extensive inquiries showed that he was perfectly happy in his army life and held in high regard and that he was happy in his private life.

The jury returned a verdict that Warne died from gunshot wounds and that the injury may have been accidentally caused.

### **THE FUNERAL**

The funeral service, conducted by the vicar of Carisbrooke (the Rev. J. Souttar), was held at Carisbrooke cemetery chapel on Saturday, when representatives from Mr. Warne's unit of the R.E.M.E. (Aldershot) were present.

The mourners were Mr. and Mrs. Warne (father and mother), Mr. and Mrs. C. Chambers, Mr. and Mrs. Upton, and Mr. B. Mew (brothers-in-law and sisters), Mr. N. Warne (brother), Mr. and Mrs. C. Cooper (grandparents), Miss A. Whillier (fiance), Mr. J. Stay, Mr. Beinick, Mrs. C. Wells, Mr. and Mrs. G. Whillier, Mrs. C. Cant, Mrs. Wells, Mr. and Mrs. F. Elliott, Mrs. Whillier, Mr. and Mrs. A. Warne, Messrs. K. and P. Warne, and the Misses J. and R. Warne. Messrs. R. G. W. Reed made the arrangements.

*Transcription by Ian Roach and Tony Barton for the Friends of Newport & Carisbrooke Cemeteries © 2021/2024*  
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