

Albert Whitewood

Isle of Wight County Press – 14 June 1952

STEAM ROLLER DRIVER'S SUICIDE

A CARISBROOKE TRAGEDY

An inquest was conducted by the Coroner (Mr. R. E. A. Webster) at the County Hall on Wednesday on Albert Whitewood, aged 61, of 55 Alvington Road, Carisbrooke, who died in tragic circumstances on Tuesday.

Dr. A. A. Heathcote, of Newport, said he was called to Whitewood's home at 6.55 a.m. on Tuesday and saw the body lying in a small orchard next door. Whitewood appeared to have been dead for less than three hours, and witness ascribed death to asphyxia due to strangulation. Whitewood had been a patient of his since 1948, and had been attended for various minor ailments, the last occasion being in April.

Mabel Victoria Whitewood, the widow, said they were married in 1948. Her husband enjoyed good health and was last attended by the doctor for a poisoned toe. Her married life was not altogether happy, as her husband was apt to become moody and quarrelsome. There had been several occasions after domestic quarrels when he had threatened to hang himself, but witness had not taken the threats seriously and had told him not to be silly. Her husband appeared normal when they went to bed on Monday at about 11 p.m. Witness awoke at about 3.30 a.m. on Tuesday and found that her husband was occupying most of the bed. She said "Do you want all the bed?" He then went downstairs. He had done this before and would stay downstairs for half an hour or so. On this occasion he did not appear to be in a temper. She rose at 6 a.m. and went down stairs to get his breakfast, but he was not in the house, and on making a search she found him hanging in the orchard next door, and called P.C. Lewis.

HANGING FROM APPLE TREE

P.C. Frank Thomas Lewis said he received a message at 6.45 a.m. and reached Whitewood's home at about 6.55 a.m. He found him hanging from an apple tree in an orchard at the top of the garden of No. 53 Alvington Road, and cut him down. There were marks indicating that the deceased had climbed over the ivy-covered hedge between his garden and the orchard. Witness made a search of the house and deceased's personal belongings, but found no note, or anything to throw any light on the occurrence.

The Coroner recorded a verdict that Whitewood took his own life while the balance of his mind was disturbed.

A STEAM PLOUGHING PIONEER

Mr. Whitewood, who had lived in the district all his life, was known throughout the Island as one of the few remaining drivers of steam-rollers and tractors. He received his early training with steam traction when steam ploughing was introduced into the Island between 30 and 40 years ago, and he worked as a tractor driver for Mr. Faithfull, of Barnsley Farm, Ryde, before being employed for about 12 years by Messrs. Cheek Bros., of Chale Abbey, on contract work. He was a familiar figure as his veteran roller trundled to various parts of the Island, and was affectionately known, particularly amongst the County Council road staff, by the nickname "Banjo." About six months ago, when his steam roller became no longer economical to run, he left Messrs. Cheek Bros.' employ and had latterly been working for the Westridge Construction Co., of Ryde.

The funeral took place yesterday (Friday), a service at Carisbrooke Cemetery being conducted by the Rev. H. Harrison.

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