

## Frances Ellen Barnes

### 1911 census – Coneyboro', Howard Road, Lake, Shanklin, I of W

Edward Butler Ruttledge	Head	66	Retired Surz Lieut Colonel, Indian Army Pensioner	Faringdon, Berkshire
Alice Ruttledge	Wife	54		Glasgow, Lanarkshire
Emily Ruttledge	Sister	63	Private Means	Faringdon, Berkshire,
<b>Frances Barnes</b>	<b>Servant</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>Cook</b>	<b>South Arreton, Isle of Wight</b>
Louisa Barnes	Servant	23	House Parlour Maid	South Arreton, Isle of Wight

## PORTSMOUTH EVENING NEWS Saturday October 18 1913

### SHANKLIN MYSTERY

#### COOK'S REMARKABLE DEATH

#### DOCTORS PUZZLED, AND INQUEST ADJOURNED FOR ANALYSIS

Mr. Francis A. Joyce (Deputy Coroner for the Island) conducted an inquest at Everton House, Shanklin, yesterday afternoon, touching the death of Frances Ellen Barnes, aged 27 years, who had been employed as cook at the house for the past two years, and who died on Tuesday afternoon under extraordinary circumstances.

Dr. John Cowper said that he was called to see the deceased at eight o'clock on Monday morning. He found her profoundly unconscious and breathing very heavily and slowly. Her face was a deep purple, and she had practically no pulse at the wrist. After half a minute there was no pulse at all, and the breathing ceased. Witness, thinking she had died, immediately applied artificial respiration, and the patient began to breathe. He injected Strychnine and continued the artificial respiration until her breathing had improved sufficiently to enable him to send for his partner, Dr. Hammond, who came within a few minutes. Together they continued the artificial respiration for four hours and the patient improved greatly. He made further enquiries of those in the house, and found that when deceased was first found it had been discovered that she had a band of calico round her neck, and that this had been removed with difficulty. It was not tied in a knot, but it had left a very decided mark on the neck. Her hands were clasped over her breast, and it was possible that she might have been clasping the ends of this band and become unconscious. He also found that the deceased had suffered from toothache, that she had been to church on the Sunday night, and had returned home rather earlier than expected, had gone to bed without any supper, and that the light in her room had been seen to go out at 11.30. The mark on the neck extended continuously, and so tight was it that small effusions of blood had been produced, indicative of the severe pressure which had been applied. Thinking that possibly deceased had been poisoned, Dr. Cowper added that he three times injected Strychnine, and also one hundredth of a grain of digitalise. Deceased recovered somewhat under the effect of artificial respiration. He also emptied the stomach, and later administered some strong coffee and egg and milk. He saw her several times throughout Monday afternoon and evening, as late as eleven o'clock on Monday night, also during Tuesday morning and at two in the afternoon. She died shortly after four o'clock on the same

afternoon, and her death occasioned great surprise to him. When he found her, he noticed that her eyes were widely dilated, and she looked round the room even after she recovered somewhat, with a wild frightened look. He had a trained nurse with her during Tuesday, and without any warning, about four o'clock the deceased heaved one deep sigh and died. On Wednesday he made a post mortem examination, in the company of Dr. Hammond, but had found nothing to account for death. He admitted that it had occurred to him that her condition was perhaps due to the band round her neck. Still, he was not satisfied from a medical point of view as to the cause of death, because it was extraordinary that a person should have the constriction removed and then live for more than thirty hours. It was a unique case in his experience.

Dr. Hammond endorsed Dr. Cowper's evidence in every particular, merely adding that oxygen was given on Monday for a considerable time to assist deceased's breathing.

Rose May, a children's nurse in the employ of Mr. Thos. Dashwood, on a visit to "Everton." Gave evidence as to being called by Miss Dashwood to the cook's bedroom. Her breathing was very torturous. She found deceased's feet were warm, she put a cold flannel on her forehead, and then turned back the bedclothes, and loosened the deceased's nightdress. She had some difficulty in unfastening the buttons, and having done this she noticed the band of calico round her neck. She immediately pulled this away, though it required an effort as the band was tight. She noticed that immediately after the band had been removed deceased improved in colour. She had known deceased for two years, and always found her of a very cheerful disposition, always willing and happy.

Evidence was also given by Kate Jones, housemaid, who first called the cook on Monday morning, finding that she had not been downstairs when witness arrived, and by Miss Dashwood, who corroborated Miss May's evidence. The Coroner said it was only fair to the doctors that the contents of the stomach should be analysed.

The inquiry was accordingly adjourned until the 31<sup>st</sup> inst.

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**ISLE OF WIGHT TIMES THURSDAY November 6 1913**

**SHANKLIN COOK'S DEATH.**

The adjourned inquest into the circumstances connected with the death of Frances Ellen Barnes, a cook employed by Miss Dashwood, at Everton House, Shanklin, was held on Friday afternoon by Mr Francis A. Joyce (Deputy Coroner).

It be remembered that at the initial inquiry held a fortnight ago the medical witnesses (Drs. Cowper and Hammond) were not satisfied as to the cause of death. An important point in the case was the fact that a bandage of calico was found tightly bound round the deceased's throat, but the extraordinary feature of the case was that the patient so far recovered as to live for 33 hours after the constriction was

removed. The inquiry was adjourned in order that an analytical examination might be made of the contents of the stomach.

Mr C. F. Hiscock now appeared for the relatives of the deceased, and Mrs. Barnes, of Newport, was also in attendance.

Mr John Cowper, recalled, produced the report of the analysis is made by Messrs

Angell and Angell, county analysts, of Southampton. This stated, "We have made an exhaustive toxicological examination of the stomach washings submitted by you. We find nothing of a poisonous nature, and nothing which in the least degree can be looked upon as a cause of death. "

The Coroner asked Dr. Cowper whether, in the face of that report he wished to supplement the evidence which he gave on a previous occasion.

Dr Cowper replied that he only desired to justify his position.

The Coroner said that was not necessary. He quite appreciated the attitude which Dr Cowper had taken up. It was evident that the doctor was not satisfied as to the cause of death, and it was his bounden duty to report to the Coroner, so that investigations might be made. The remarkable fact in the case was that if death was due to suffocation, or to shock, the patient remained alive for thirty-three hours after what had evidently caused this had been removed. There was no example of such a death in medical jurisprudence.

Dr. Cowper said in the face of these remarks he had nothing to add to his evidence.

Answering Mr Hiscock, Dr Cowper said he remembered seeing deceased's mother on the day the girl was found, but he did not remember whether she referred to vinegar being on the calico found on the deceased's neck. There was certainly vinegar in the room. He saw some in a saucer, and he thought from inquiries he had made, that the deceased must have put it there herself. It would not be an unusual thing for a person to put a bandage stepped in vinegar, round her neck. The deceased never spoke after she was discovered, but on the Tuesday she looked round the room and gave one the impression of a person having been removed during sleep or unconsciousness, and waking up surprised at her fresh surroundings. This would rather negative the suggestion that death was due to suffocation.

Florence Meach, parlour maid at Everton House, said she knew the deceased suffered from neuralgia on the Sunday prior to her death. When she came home from church that night she told witness that it was with great difficulty that she sat in church, as it seemed that the top of her head would lift off and that her head went round "like a whirligig." She bade deceased good-night at 10.10, and gave her some iodine for her tooth-ache. She had never known her to put a calico bandage round her neck before. The bottle of vinegar was not in her bedroom when she went to bed, so the deceased must have gone down-stairs for it. It was the vinegar usually kept in the kitchen.

The Coroner having summed up, the jury returned a unanimous verdict that death was due to exhaustion following partial suffocation, probably the result of an accident.— Sympathy was expressed with the relatives of the deceased in their bereavement, the foreman conveying the jury's intimation, with which the Coroner associated himself.

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