

Charles Henry 'Fred' Biles

19 April 1868 – 14 Sept. 1943

Section Y/249 Mount Joy cemetery

by Sam Biles

Fred, as he was known, was a well-known dealer (in anything but mainly cattle and horses) and pig farmer born in 1868. His parents were Mark Biles (28.1.1840 – 19.11.1870 P/199 Mount Joy) and Fanny Elizabeth Biles nee Drudge (1845-1907 E/16 St Pauls). They lived at Gunville West, Carisbrooke. When Fred was barely 2 his father was killed in a gravel digging accident on St Georges Down Newport. He was undermining some gravel 'when the super-incumbent mass collapsed upon him'. When they dug him out they found one of his thighs was broken and he was 'quite dead'. There was an inquest in the Barley Mow at Shide and the jurors held a whip round for his widow. Fanny was pregnant and she named her second son Mark William after his late father and (probably out of necessity) soon remarried (St John's, Newport) in 1874 a man called James West. They went on to have 5 children, all born in Newport. Joseph 1874, Sarah-Jane 1876, James Samuel 1879, Fanny Elizabeth 1881 and Frederick James 1883. It appears that Fred did not get on with his stepfather.

He married (1) MINNIE ELLEN WISEMAN (1872 -1901 G/223 Mount Joy) in 1893 at St Thomas', Newport, Isle of Wight, daughter of HENRY and JANE WISEMAN They had 4 children:

- i. LESLIE BILES, b. 1895, Newport, Isle of Wight. – he later emigrated to Canada
- ii. MARJORY BILES, b. 1897, Newport, Isle of Wight d. 1986
- iii. HAROLD BILES, b. 1899, Newport, Isle of Wight. d 1961
- iv. LYDIA (Minnie) BILES, b. Nov 1900, Possibly born in London as on 1901 census the place of birth has been changed from IOW to London. d.1990

They lived in Albert Street in Newport and sadly on 27th March 1901 Minnie died of throat cancer, she is buried at Mount Joy Cemetery G/223 where the inscription on her grave reads: In Loving Remembrance of MINNIE ELLEN THE BELOVED WIFE OF CHARLES HENRY BILES WHO DEPARTED THIS LIFE MARCH 27TH 1901 AGED 30 YEARS.ALL TEARS ARE VAIN, WE CANNOT NOW RECALL THEE, GONE IS THY LOVING VOICE, THY KINDLY SMILE; GONE FROM THE HOME, WHERE WE SO DEARLY LOVED THEE WHERE NONE AGAIN CAN EVER FILL THY PLACE. FOR EVER WITH THE LORD.

In 1902 Fred re-married to MARY SUSAN MOON (1.10.69- 8.1.1936 Y/249 Mount Joy) who, family lore says, was his housekeeper - she was the daughter of JAMES MOON (1843 St Germans - ?1894? St Germans) – a butcher and Caroline Lower (1845 Liskeard - December 1870 St Germans). She had been born 1869 in Trerulefoot, St Germans, Cornwall. Fred went on to have a second family with Mary:

- v. DOUGLAS James BILES, b. 1902, Newport, Isle of Wight.
- vi. HORACE HENRY 'Donald' BILES, b. 1903, Newport, Isle of Wight. (Mount Joy Y/273)
- vii. DAISY BILES, b. 1905, Newport, Isle of Wight.

Fred & Mary moved from Albert Street in Newport to 17 Union Street and then bought Trafalgar Cottage, 13A Union Street, in Newport. He also owned Park Green Farm, Forest Side Newport. He could not write and signed his cheques with an X. He had suffered a stroke in his later years and could

not speak clearly. He spent a lot of time in the summer house at Trafalgar Cottage where he would roll sweets from their wrappers into his mouth. His grandson David (b. 18.6.1935) recalled stealing a sweet, replacing it with a stone which cracked Fred's dentures when he rolled it into his mouth and bit down on it. He died in 1943 (in WW2) and was buried at Mount Joy cemetery adjacent to his 2nd Wife Mary Susan who had died 7 years earlier in 1936 and next to the grave of his son Horace Henry 'Donald' Biles (b. 1904) who died at Ryde Hospital after being gored by a bull at Week Farm, Ventnor in 1934. Donald was very much the 'apple of his father's eye' and the tragedy of the accident must have hurt him deeply. The two graves are marked by large granite crosses.

Fred appears fairly frequently in the pages of the County Press around the turn of the 19/20th century:

In January 1898 Fred was advertising a black Welsh mare, 15 hh, quiet in saddle and harness, trial allowed, open to vet's examination, enquiries to his house: 7 Albert Road in Newport.

Fred perhaps tested the boundaries a bit in life and he was not afraid of the old brush with the law. There are several occasions when he had crossed the line or become involved in various unfortunate situations. He could perhaps, at least when he was young, have been described as a bit of a chancer.

The County Press reports on August 19, 1898 that one of Fred's bulls was being driven home by his brother William 'Mark' Biles and a Mr. Harvey from Ryde to Newport. The bull tossed Mark but he was unhurt however Harvey was thrown and a horn pierced him beneath his chin requiring him to be hospitalised.

In December 1898 Fred advertised a £1 reward for the return of two cows - one red and one red and white - which had strayed from his field at Hunnyhill.

In June 1900 Fred was prosecuted for having an unlicensed slaughter house in Scarrott's Lane. A couple of months later his feud with his hated stepfather James West resurrected itself. Fred took him to court for destroying his linen dealers coat which he had sent to his mother (now James' wife) for washing. His step-sister Elizabeth saw her father James get hold of it so she went for her brother and upon returning found the coat torn to pieces on the floor. West denied tearing up the coat, which Fred had paid a guinea for, saying that he had chucked the coat outdoors as 'he would not have Biles's coat in his room'. He said Fred had declared that if Elizabeth would swear that West had torn the coat then he would 'keep her and her mother as long as they lived'. Fred denied this. The court found against West and fined him but Fred only got 10 shillings damages - half what he had claimed for.

Fred's premises in Scarrotts Lane is still owned by the family. It was here that he set up his unlicensed slaughterhouse. In December 1900 the County Press 'punned' a headline "An Alleged 'Offal' Nuisance". The article confirms that Fred was fined for boiling up offal in an uncovered copper causing nuisance to Mr. A T Ivans a mineral water manufacturer next door.

Only a month later, in January 1901 he was prosecuted again for breaking a swine fever order prohibiting the sale of pigs away from his premises. He lost a similar case in March 1902. In May that year he appears to have helped out a Mr. Marsh of Alvington Lodge Farm, Carisbrooke by buying two heifers off him together with a calf and an old sow to help him out as he was going bankrupt. In December 1902 he was again in front of the magistrate for boiling up offal in Scarrotts Lane and find £2. However he cannot have been that badly thought-of as, in July 1903, the workhouse board agreed to his tenancy of its land in Hunnyhill.

In the family papers are the following notes about Fred's early life – which appear to have been dictated (possibly to a family member) and corrected by him perhaps towards the end of his life.

Fred Biles' Memories of his early Life:

Aged 8 (in 1876) I gathered and sold watercress and blackberries, flowers, primroses, daffodils, cowslips, wild heather, marl (and) freestone.

(I) earned and saved £32.00 before 10 years of age (1878) lent the above to father-in-law & lost it all, was beaten and was summoned for defending myself with a stick.

My experience as a boy at Black Mill was cracking chalk for the wash mill and picking flints, also heating water for the men's breakfasts for which I got 3d, my wages was to be 6/- per week but being under 12 years of age I only worked 2 hours. I was sacked by the foreman, his name was Witham. I went home - my mother gave me the top of a loaf with butter in the top, I laid about the roads till night, being afraid of my stepfather, I then went home, I got up at 5:30 a.m. the next morning & went to Froglands & carried water for the threshing machine, from 6:30 a.m. till 5:30 p.m. The farmer asked if anyone wanted any money, I replied "Yes, Sir" - and I drew 6d for the day's work, the farmer's name was Joseph Stark & he asked me to come the next day, but I did not turn up, as I had not finished school. (those were not the days when children were born without the silver spoon in their mouths).

The next day I asked a man for a job & he started me picking the turnips up for the sheep, & raking stones for which he gave me 6/- per week, his name was Mr. Hillier of Plaish Farm, Carisbrooke, afterwards I sold bloaters, salt, chalk, for about 2 years.

One day coming from Shalfleet to Newport I met Mr. Brown of Kitbridge farm with whom I rode to Gunville & he bought the remainder of my fish saying to me "you'll never starve" & "any time you are passing my farm call in & I'll have some more off you."

I called at Kitbridge & saw his wife, she bought 1/- worth. I went out in the field to see Mr. Brown & sold him another 2/- worth (I did not tell him Mrs. Brown had already bought any.)

Two days afterwards he sent his foreman Tom Toogood to go and see Mr. Brown for a job. The next day my stepfather said "Take the B----- away, he's no good." I saw Mr. Brown the same evening & he told me where to go with some sheep, at Freshwater taking a horse & cart to pick up the tired ones, he said its only about 12 miles.

I collected 100 sheep at Kitbridge with my uncle & took them to Freshwater but I did not have to say where I had got them or where I came from, I met a man near Freshwater Church & he asked me if the sheep was for Mr. Coates of Hill Farm, Freshwater & he counted them through a gate & he said "there's 98 there," I said "there is 2 in the cart could not walk Sir, that makes 100".

He took us indoors & asked to feed us with a sparerib of pork, butter and milk (it was the best meal I'd ever had) we came to Shalcombe and bought back 100 lambs to Kitbridge. Mr. Coates gave us 2/- each, I thought I was a millionaire.

Mr. Brown gave us 2/- each so I had 4/- to give to my mother, Mr. Brown gave me a job the next day to take another drove to Westover where Mr. Brown met us (the farmer at Westover was named Cousins) he had me in and gave me a good dinner, his son joined me at dinner, he afterwards went to Canada, I never heard any more of him, I worked for Mr. Brown afterwards

for 2 years at 6/- per week, Mr. Brown killed a lot of lambs, in one year I collected from various farms over 3,000 lambs & assisted in the killing.

For minding sheep in Barrack Field & Yarmouth Road I received 1/- per night extra.

On Good Fridays I sold H X Buns which was extra for me (the commission was 4d on 1/-).

I was knocked down by a beast at Kitbridge & said I would not feed him again. Mr. Brown told me to go. Afterwards Mr. Brown's son gave me a job in his butcher's shop in High Street, Newport at 8/- per week, I was with him 8 years after 6 years he gave me 10/- per week,

A steer knocked me down, I was sent to Ryde Hospital, I was there 11 weeks afterwards going on crutches for a year and 7 months, (my nurse's name was "Strange").

During the time I worked there I had to be in at 10 o'clock or I should be locked out, (I slept in a stable for 12 months on straw), I took the pony's rug to cover me & covered her with a bag.



Fred and Mary with
Back L-to-R, Marjory, Lesley
Middle L-to-R, Douglas,
Donald
Front L-to-R, Harold , Lydia
Ellen 'Minnie'



Fred and Mary with
Frank Lesley Robey (back)
L-to-R: Harold, Marjory and
Lydia Ellen 'Minnie'.



Fred and his wife Mary in
about 1934 with
granddaughter Jean Hilson. In
garden at Trafalgar Cottage