

William Joseph Carter

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NEWPORT MINISTER'S SUDDEN DEATH

THE REV. W.J. CARTER

The Rev. William Joseph Carter, aged 62, of 109 Castle Road, Newport, who has been Minister of the Newport Unitarian Church since 1951, died suddenly on Friday week, while returning from a fortnight's holiday in Normandy. He and his wife boarded the s.s. Normandie at Le Havre on Thursday night. Mr. Carter suffered a severe heart attack and when she awoke on Friday morning about an hour before the vessel was scheduled to arrive at Southampton Docks, Mrs. Carter discovered that her husband was dead.

A native of Tortworth, Gloucester, Mr. Carter was the son of a farm worker and was born blind, but through perseverance and exceptional gifts he had a remarkable career. At the age of six he commenced special education at the Royal School for the Blind, Bristol. He became one of the first blind persons to operate Braille shorthand (then a recent invention). By the time he had reached the age of 11 he had taught himself Esperanto and this was the beginning of a correspondence which led him to a deep understanding of international affairs. Because of the reputation he had gained in these two subjects, money was raised to send him to Oxford, where he entered St. Edmund Hall. He intended to read English but the principal persuaded him to read classics instead, despite the fact that few of the books required were available in Braille and he could not afford a reader in Greek. The National Institute for the Blind gave his needs priority, but some of the books were not available in Braille when he took his finals. He was successful and in 1922 became a student for the Unitarian Ministry at Manchester College, Oxford, of whose Old Students' Association he had since been an active member. He won several awards of the Council of the Verse Speaking Association in London.

In 1925 he began a 13-year ministry at Nantwich. He founded a play-reading circle there, which later launched an acting section, now known as the Nantwich Players. He was a member of the Nantwich Public Library Committee. In 1938 he moved to Birkenhead, where his church was bombed twice. As a result he was forced to abandon the traditional services in favour of an Adult School. In 1943 he went to Carlisle, and eight years later he came to the Island. His charm, simplicity and sincerity gained him many friends and his devotion to duty was greatly admired.

He was a member of the Island Esperanto Group. During the war he worked for the Common Wealth movement and it was through this he met Miss F.A. Jones, of Wallasey, who became his wife in 1944. He will be sadly missed by the children of the district, all of whom he knew by name. He was a member of the Writers' Circle, Workers' Educational Association, Anglo-French Society and the Newport Ministers' Fraternal, and was a committee member of the Southern Unitarian Association and the I.W. Society for the Blind. Since he came to the Island he had been leader of the Barton Brotherhood, who held weekly meetings in the church schoolroom. He is survived by his wife.

THE FUNERAL

A large and representative congregation attended the Unitarian Church on Wednesday for the funeral service, conducted by the Rev. L. Redfern, of Bournemouth, assisted by the Rev. L. Baker Short of Swansea, and the Rev. J. R. Sturges, of Portsmouth. The hymns "I cannot think of them as

dead” and “Abide with me” were sung. Two of Mr. Carter’s favourite poems were read by Mr. Short and Mr. Redfern. Mr. Short paid tribute to Mr. Carter’s life. Mr. W. G. James was the organist.

The family mourners were Mrs. Carter (widow), Mrs. E. Lissiman and Miss N. Carter (sisters) and Miss D. Riley.

Other Unitarian ministers present were the Revs. J. Dumble, Poole, and H. Crabtree, Hampshire. The Rev. Dr. W. H. Mildon (minister of the Quay Street Methodist Church, Newport) and the Rev. W. R. Stokes (minister of the Newport Congregational Church) also attended. Representatives present included those from the Southampton and Portsmouth Unitarian churches, Southern Unitarian Association, the Women’s League, Barton Brotherhood, Esperanto Group, I.W. Society for the Blind, Writers’ Circle, Anglo-French Society, Arts Association and the Workers’ Educational Association.

The floral tributes included those from the Portsmouth, Southampton and Birkenhead Unitarian churches, committee and congregation of the Newport Unitarian Church and from the Women’s League of the church, I.W. Society for the Blind, Southern Unitarian Association, Barton Brotherhood, members of the Nantwich Play Reading Circle and from children of Winston and Linden Roads, Newport.

Mr. Short took the committal at the graveside in Carisbrooke Cemetery. The arrangements were made by Messrs. O. C. Hamilton and Son.

A memorial service will be conducted by Mr. Sturges at the Newport Unitarian Church to-morrow, at 4.30 p.m.

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