

Stanley Victor Croucher

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ISLAND CONSERVATIVES MOURN POPULAR PRESIDENT

SUDDEN DEATH OF MR. S. V. CROUCHER J.P., T.C., OF NEWPORT

SHIP OWNER, PUBLIC SERVANT AND SPORTSMAN

There was a widespread feeling of public loss and keen regret at the termination of an eminently useful life when it became known on Saturday morning that Mr. Stanley Victor Croucher, J.P., T.C., president of the I.W. Conservative and Unionist Association, chairman of the Juvenile Panel of Newport Magistrates, chairman of the Housing Committee of Newport Town Council, and managing director of the Vectis Shipping Company had died suddenly during the night at his residence, 10 Whitepit Lane, Newport.

Mr. Croucher, who was 56, had not previously been indisposed, and the announcement came as a great shock to his hosts of friends.

On Friday evening he attended the annual dinner of the Ryde Branch of the I.W. Conservative Association and made a typically thoughtful speech. Apparently in excellent health, he drove home with his wife, but soon afterwards complained of pains in his chest. After taking steps to relieve what he thought was an attack of indigestion he retired to bed and shortly afterwards was found to have passed away.

In his earlier days Mr. Croucher was a prominent cricketer as a skilful batsman and wicket-keeper, having been chosen to represent the Island on many occasions, and he had continued to take a keen interest in the game as president of the Newport Cricket Club and as one of the Island representatives on the committee of the Hampshire County Cricket Club.

FAMILY SHIPPING ASSOCIATIONS

Mr. Croucher came of a family which had a long association with shipping interests at Newport Quay. He was the second son of the late Mr. Ernest Croucher and received the latter part of his education at the County Technical (now Secondary Grammar) School at Newport. Leaving school during the 1914-1918 war, he was apprenticed as an engineer to Messrs. Groves and Guttridge, East Cowes, and on concluding his apprenticeship started the Newport Motor Marine and General Engineering Co., at premises at Newport Quay, which he managed until about 1937. Then he and other local business men took over an old-established company which they re-constituted under its original title, the Vectis Shipping Co., and he became managing director. Under his astute control the business has greatly expanded, and the company now owns or controls a fleet of 17 vessels which maintain a regular freight service between Newport, Southampton and Portsmouth, and also a coastwise freight service between the Island and other south coast and several north-east coast ports. Mr. Croucher was consequently well-known in ports all along these coasts and among London shipping agents. The firm built extensive new premises on Seaclose Quay just before the 1939-45 war, and a new transit shed about five years ago. The firm were the first in the Island to own a portable crane. More recently a subsidiary company, Vectis Roadways, had been formed to provide road transport throughout the Island. He was chairman of the Newport Harbour Users Association.

Mr. Croucher was a keen student of politics throughout his adult life, and had rendered yeoman service to the Conservative cause in the Island as a convincing and able speaker. He was chairman of the executive committee of the I.W. Conservative and Unionist Association in 1949, and the following year was elected chairman of the party, a position which he held with enthusiasm and ability until 1954, when he was elected to succeed Lt.-Col. F. Nevill Jennings, C.B.E., M.C., D.L., J.P., as president. He has also represented the association on the Central Council of the Conservative Party, the Wessex Area Committee, and the Council of the National Union of Conservative and Unionist Associations.

VALUABLE PUBLIC SERVICE

Mr. Croucher was elected to the Newport Town Council as a representative of the Mount Joy Ward in November 1945 and had served continuously since. There is little doubt that, had he lived, he would have been deservedly honoured with the mayoralty. His cricketing experience and interest in other games made him an ideal chairman of the Recreational Grounds Committee for some years, and since 1954 he had been an equally able chairman of the Housing Committee. His business experience also stood him in good stead as a member of the General Purpose Committee. He was always sound in debate and his services were highly valued by his colleagues. He represented the council on the Cowes Harbour Commissioners.

In 1949 Mr. Croucher was appointed a Justice of the Peace for the Newport Petty Seasonal Division and he had been most assiduous in his magisterial duties, notable as chairman for nearly three years of the Juvenile Court panel of magistrates.

Since its inception in 1950 he had been a member of the I.W. Valuation Panel. During the last war he was a special constable and the Island emergency information officer for the Ministry of Information.

A PROMINENT CRICKETEER

A man whose name will go down in the annals of Island cricket, Mr. Croucher was a stylish and free-scoring batsman and an able wicket-keeper. He played for the Newport Club for over 20 years and had been the club president since 1948. He was in every representative Island side between 1920 and his retirement from active cricket at about the beginning of the last war, and, among many others, took part in the memorable game at the Victoria Recreation Ground, Newport, in 1923, when an Island team captained by the Hon. Lionel Tennyson defeated Hampshire Club and Ground in a one-day match by 278 runs to 115. Mr. Croucher made 41, which was bracketed with the 41 scored by Dr. R. Jones as the second highest total on the Island side. He captained Newport for about a decade until 1940, scoring several centuries for his side, and at various times was also hon. secretary, hon. treasurer, and vice-chairman of the club. Mr. Croucher was noted for his encouragement of Island cricket generally as chairman for about eight years of the I.W. Club Cricket Association, and he took a keen interest in the county team as a member of the Hampshire C.C.C. committee. He was also to the fore in promoting representative matches between the Island and Hampshire, and events of interest to cricket enthusiasts such as the recent visit to the Island of the South African touring side.

A regular worshipper at Newport Parish Church, Mr. Croucher had previously been associated with the work of his home parish of St. Paul's Barton. For several years shortly after their marriage, he and his wife were superintendents of the St. Paul's Sunday School, following the retirement from those duties of the late Maj. and Mrs. H. J. Way.

Mr. Croucher was prominent in Freemasonry as a Past Master of the Osborne Lodge, East Cowes, and the Albany Mark Lodge, Newport, and held provincial honours.

His unexpected death has aroused deep sympathy with his wife and his son (Mr. Mark Croucher) who was associated with his father in the shipping business.

MAGISTERIAL TRIBUTE

Before the business of the Newport Magistrates' Court on Monday, the Chairman (Mr. E. W. Landon) referred to the sudden passing of one of their most esteemed colleagues—Mr. Stanley Croucher. He said that when the news of his death was received in the town it came as a great shock to those who had known him in business and public life. He was a man who was always prepared to give service to the citizens of the town of which he was a native, and he gave that service in full measure. As a magistrate he upheld the dignity of the Bench, his quiet, unassuming, straightforward manner, was appreciated by all. He was never harsh in his treatment of offenders, or those who brought problems before him. Mr. Croucher gave particularly splendid service on the juvenile panel, of which he was chairman for nearly three years. He was well-known throughout the Island as a great sportsman, his main interest being cricket, especially as a member of the Hampshire and I.W. Cricket Associations. Politically, he also gave unstinting service, and his passing would not be easy to fill.

The Clerk of the Court (Mr. E. Band), endorsing the chairman's remarks, appreciated the assistance which had personally been given by Mr. Croucher to his office. In his handling of juvenile offenders he had proved himself to be a very merciful man and many of his decisions to give youngsters another chance have borne fruit. After his talks to them they had not offended again.—The Probation Officer (Miss J. Spencer White) said that she and her colleagues in the probation service had been impressed by Mr. Croucher's kindness and understanding. He was a man of great humanity.—Chief Police Inspector S. J. S. Bowles, on behalf of the Chief Constable (Mr. R. D. Lemon) and Superintendent V. E. Stanley and members of the I.W. Division also tendered condolences to the widow and family and the court stood in silent tribute.

HUNDREDS PAY LAST TRIBUTE

St. Thomas's Parish Church, Newport, which has accommodation for 900 worshippers, was almost filled at the funeral service on Wednesday.

The attendance, fully representative of the many spheres of Mr. Croucher's activities, included the Mayor and Corporation of Newport and members of the local Bench of Magistrates who walked in procession from the Guildhall, preceded by the Borough maces draped in crepe. Those also present included the Member for the Island (Sir Peter Macdonald K.B.E.), who was accompanied by the chief officers of the I.W. Conservative and Unionist Association. The staff of the Vectis Shipping Co. were also in the congregation.

The Vicar (the Rev. C. R. Farnsworth) officiated, assisted by the Archdeacon of the Island (the Ven. A. Cory). Miss K. Lower was at the organ and the service included the 23rd. Psalm and the hymns "God moves in a mysterious way" and "Who would true valour see". The Masonic brethren sang their closing ode.

The Vicar said he did not propose to refer to all the activities and interests of Mr. Croucher because he knew that the local Press could be relied upon to give a detailed account of a life which had been worthily lived, and would be referred to by them with sympathy and understanding. On such infinitely sad occasions he reminded those who mourned that God never made a mistake, and that the future of those who were left was in His hands. Mr. Croucher's magnificent qualities of character came from his constant attendance at church, and the family would be comforted by the large gathering at the service,

knowing that all were grateful in their hearts for what he had been. The Vicar recalled, as an instance of Mr. Croucher's loyalty and readiness to help the church, how he (the Vicar) had contemplated a 1000 miles journey to collect an essential part of the new heating equipment for the church, and how, with his customary power and confidence, Mr. Croucher said "Vicar, you are not to do that. I shall arrange for it, and there will be no expense to the church". Mr. Farnsworth added that all who know Mr. Croucher would acknowledge that his strength came from God, and he looked forward to the day when all those in the church would similarly look for that grace and help, which were there for the asking.

As the cortege left the church the family mourners were accompanied by Sir Peter Macdonald and Mr. Mark Woodnutt, C.C. (Island Conservative Association chairman).

The chief mourners were Mrs. Croucher (widow), Mr. M. S. Croucher (son), Mr. R. Croucher (brother), Mrs. L. Nixon (aunt), Ald. G. C. Russell, J.P., and Mr. H. Gould (directors, Vectis Shipping Co.), and Miss M. H. Cox (secretary).

Those in the civic procession were the Mayor (Mr. H. E. Harvey), the town clerk (Mr. W. R. Wilks), the Deputy Mayor (Mr. A. Hoare), O.B.E.), Aldermen Lt.-Col. F. J. T. Mew, T.D., A. O. Purdy, C.C., J. J. Simmonds, Mrs. E. R. Chandler, O.B.E., J.P., and E. C. Pearson, Cmdr. C. W. Fairall, and Councillors S. W. Wendes, M. K. Stone, K. E. Miller, R. C. W. Turner, G. F. Tomlinson, A. P. Simmonds, J. M. Allan, E. E. Fuller, R. White, F. C. O. Minns, G. H. Scott, W. R. Attrill, and W. G. Bull; the following magistrates for the Newport Petty Sessional Division: Mr. E. W. Landon (chairman, accompanied by the magistrates' clerk, Mr. E. Band), Mr. W. G. Sibbick, Mrs. C. Abraham, Lt.-Col. C. W. Brannon, M.C., T.D., D.L.; Mr. W. S. Warne, Mr. H. R. Watson, Miss L. Wickenden-Smith, Mr. H. E. Green, and Mrs. A. R. Cooper; and borough officials.

Also present were Mr. H. R. Palmer, the former clerk to the magistrates, Police Supt. V. E. Stanley (representing the I.W. Division of the Hampshire Constabulary), and representatives of the County Council and county officers, Ryde Town Council, Cowes District Council, the I.W. River Board, the I.W. Valuation Panel, Camp Hill Prison and the Prison Board of Visitors, Cowes Harbour Commissioners, the Ministry of Pensions and National Insurance, and the Commissioners of Inland Revenue.

Every local Conservative association in the Island was represented together with subsidiary organizations and Conservative clubs. Masonic brethren were present from the Osborne, Medina, Albany, East Medina, Chine, Needles and Spithead lodges, Albany Royal Arch Chapter, Albany Mark, Rose Croix and Vectis Chapters of the Knights Templar. Other organizations represented included Newport Rotary Club, Carisbrooke Toc H, Newport Round Table, British Legion: Newport Branch, N.A.L.G.O.: Newport Allotments Association, Newport Repertory Company, the British Sailors' Society, District Nurses, the Probation Service, the Secondary Grammar School Old Students' Association, the County Technical School, East Cowes; the Priory Boys' School, Carisbrooke; the Parish Church Mothers' Union, St. Thomas's Bible Class, Barton Brotherhood, St. Paul's Church Council and the Victoria Methodist Sisterhood.

Sports organizations represented included Hampshire County Cricket Club, the I.W. Club Cricket Association, I.W. Schools' Cricket Association, Hampshire Youth Cricket Council, Newport C.C., Newport Trades C.C., Northwood C.C., Shanklin C.C., Gurnard C.C., Newport Football Club, Carisbrooke F.C., and the I.W. Angling Society.

Business and shipping interests represented included the Chamber of Commerce, Southampton Harbour Board, Newport Harbour Users' Association, the Forestry Commission, W. B. Mew Langton and Co., G. Marvin, Westmore Coal Company, H. W. Morey and Sons, I.W. County Press Co., the Newport Motor Marine Engineering Co., Southern Gas Board, Groves and Guttridge, Frank Cheverton, J. W. C. Gill, Bright and Minns, I.W. Farmers' Trading Society, Wood and Jolliffe, Island Oils, British Road

Service, Harry Margham and Sons, W. H. Croucher, Leigh Thomas and Co., Such and Schooley (London), G. E. Lockyer and Sons (Southampton), Weeks Ltd., S. Guy Ltd., Wadham and Sons, W. H. Bishop and Son, Gubbins and Ball, Reg Wells, Alexander Sharp and Co., Buckell and Drew, Gould, Hibberd and Randall, O. G. Day, Ltd., Dabells, Island Bricks, Whitbread and Co., Cheek Bros., Vectis Stone Co., Arthur Wood, G. H. Brown and Son, the Borough Hall Garage, Cave and Sherwood, the Midland Bank, Edmonds and Co., Fraser and White, the General Accident Insurance Corporation, Coast Lines, G. E. Banks and Sons, R. Silcock and Son, Fisk and Fisher, Lloyds Bank, I.W. Grocers Association, Reg. White, W. H. Blake and Sons, J. Mew and Son, Upward and Rich, and H. and F. Damp.

Interment was at Carisbrooke Cemetery. Only family wreaths were placed on the coffin as it was Mr. Croucher's wish that in place of wreaths donations should be sent to the British Sailors' Society, Commercial Road, London.

The arrangements were made by Mr. A. E. Wyatt.

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