

## **Percy Hawkins**

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### **SUDDEN DEATH OF NEWPORT STATION MASTER**

After greeting one of his staff on Boxing-day morning with the words "Hullo Toby! Did you have a good Christmas?" and receiving the reply "Yes, thank you, sir", with his characteristic smile, Mr. Percy Hawkins, stationmaster at Newport, collapsed on the platform and died a few minutes later. His tragically sudden passing has thrown a gloom over the local railway personnel, among whom Mr. Hawkins was held in the highest respect because he had won his way from stores boy to stationmaster on the Island railways on sheer merit, and had always been a good comrade and a helpful and courteous servant of the travelling public.

Mr. Hawkins was a Newport man. He joined the staff of the I.W. Central Railway as a stores boy at Newport Station on leaving school in 1904 and was later cleaner and fireman before, as a member of the Hants Fortress Royal Engineer Territorials, he was called up for service at the outbreak of the last war. After a time on the local coast defence searchlights he transferred to a field company with which he served in France and Salonika. He was severely wounded, but recovered and continued on active service with the Railway Operating Division of the Royal Engineers until peace came, when he held the rank of company-sergeant-major. On being demobilized he returned to the position of relief clerk at Newport, but soon afterwards was appointed assistant stationmaster at Mill Hill, Cowes. He succeeded the late Mr. Williams as stationmaster there two years later, and after the Southern Railway took over the Island companies he was transferred to Horsley, Surrey, as stationmaster. He did not stay there long as he was brought back to the Island to be stationmaster at Ventnor in succession to Mr. Jenkins, and he remained there for six years, being very popular with residents and visitors alike. Early in 1936 he was transferred to Newport and had been in control there ever since. As an instance of his keen interest in his work, it may be mentioned that several times stations under his charge have won the best-kept station prize awarded annually by the Southern Railway in each of its sections. While at Ventnor he was a deacon and treasurer of the Baptist Church, and since returning to Newport he had maintained his association with the Baptist community at the Castlehold Church where he took an active part in the Contact Club and other church activities. Ever solicitous for the welfare of his fellow workers, he was the enthusiastic chairman of the Railwaymen's Institute at Newport and hon. secretary of the Island committee of the Southern Railway Orphanage. He was also actively interested in the work of the British Legion as a member of the committee of the Newport and Carisbrooke branch and vice-chairman of the Relief Committee. His death at the early age of 51 is a great loss to the railway service in the Island. He leaves a widow, two daughters, and one son (a pupil at Sandown Secondary School), who reside at 50 Clarence-road, Newport. They have the sincere sympathy of many friends in their irreparable loss. The bereavement was particularly sad for Mrs. Hawkins as it came on the 20th anniversary of her wedding. It is the second bereavement the family have suffered in two months, as on October 30th the eldest daughter's fiance, Sergt. Observer W. E. Elliott, R.A.F. was accidentally killed. Mr. Hawkins had a serious illness about two years ago which left him with a weak heart. In view of this the Deputy-Coroner decided that an inquest was unnecessary.

The funeral will be on Monday; service at the Castlehold Baptist Church at 2.30 p.m.