

George Stephen Hibberd

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THE LATE MR. GEORGE HIBBERD

OVER 60 YEARS IN MINERAL WATER TRADE

A great loss to the business community of the Island has been occasioned by the death of Mr. George Stephen Hibberd, of Heatherley, Avondale Road, Newport, at the Royal I.W. County Hospital, Ryde, on Friday week. He had been connected with the mineral water trade for over 60 years, and at the time of his death was chairman of Gould, Hibberd and Randall, Ltd., of Church Litten, Newport. His energy, enthusiasm, and shrewd practical approach did much to build up the business to its present high standing. Mr. Hibberd was for many years a member of the council of the National Association of Soft Drink Manufacturers, and was an honorary life member of the Hants, Wilts, and Dorset Mineral Water Manufacturers' Association, being president from 1938 to 1946. He was the oldest member of the Yarborough Lodge of Freemasons, Ventnor, having joined in 1906 and was worshipful master in 1936. He had also been secretary. He had been in failing health of recent months, a fall in the garden in September, seemingly sapping his strength. He was in hospital a week before he died.

Cremation took place at Southampton on Wednesday, and the funeral service was held at the Castlehold Baptist Church, Newport, on Thursday.

INTERESTING BUSINESS CAREER

Mr. Hibberd was born at Ventnor in 1880, and moved to Niton at the age of three when his father became landlord of the Star Inn. He began his career as a junior clerk in the Ventnor Post Office, but found routine office work irksome, so he joined his Grandfather, Mr. Charles Hibberd, in the mineral water factory founded at High Street, Ventnor, some 30 years before, and which had engaged his interest as a lad. In those days horses were used for haulage and for operating a bottle power-unit – a far cry from the mechanical methods of today. His grandfather died in 1899, and Mr. Hibberd, then only 19, assumed sole control on January 1st, 1900. Under his energetic direction, Hibberd and Co. expanded and the factory moved from North Street to West Street, at a schoolroom still owned by the present company.

Shortly after the first world war, Mr. Hibberd bought Hervey's Farm at Niton and returned to the village in which he had spent his boyhood, intending to devote most of his time farming and took only a detached interest in the firm. Nevertheless, he negotiated the amalgamation of Hibberd and Co. and Gould and Co. of Newport, in April 1921, and at his instigation, Randall and Co. of Ryde, were brought in in February 1922, to form the company as now constituted; but he divested himself almost entirely of responsibility. When plans for a central factory at Church Litten were discussed in the late 1920's, however, he was persuaded to leave the farm and to move to Newport, to apply his ability and long experience to its establishment. He became managing director after the building was erected in 1931. Notable for its hygienic layout, the factory claimed to be one of the finest of its size in the country, and mainland trade visitors are much impressed. Mr Hibberd retired on January 31st. 1954, but retained a directorship. On the death of Mr. F. Welsh, J.P., in March of that year he succeeded him as chairman of the directors.

Mr. Hibberd served on the Ventnor Council for about 12 years from 1911, but in the main his interests were centred on the business which engrossed him most of his life. Even after retirement his enthusiasm was undimmed, rarely a day passed when he did not call into the office and tour the works. He was fond of cultivating begonias, and grew them to perfection in the front garden of his residence, and, in his middle years, enjoyed rough shooting and coursing. Towards the end of his life, nothing gave him greater pleasure than his games of snooker with a small group of old friends at the County Club. For the rest, he desired nothing beyond the serene domestic life which was his. He married firstly Miss Hilda Mursell, of Span Farm, and secondly, Miss Irene Lockhart, of Newport, who survives him. He leaves three sons.

THE FUNERAL

The high esteem in which Mr. Hibberd was held was reflected in the large attendance of representatives of firms and associations at the service at the Castlehold Baptist Church, Newport, on Thursday. Members of the staff of Gould, Hibberd and Randall, Ltd., followed the family mourners. The service was conducted by the minister (the Rev. I.R. Davies, J.P.). The hymns, accompanied at the organ by Miss L. Abraham, were "The Lord's my Shepherd" and "In heavenly love abiding". Mr. Davies said the large gathering indicated the high regard in which Mr. Hibberd was held. Mr. Hibberd was a good husband, father, employer, and Christian. His thoughts for others exemplified in his custom of leaving cut flowers from his front garden for children to take.



The Gould, Hibberd and Randall
'Well at Carisbrooke Castle' trademark
now (2017) on the side of Marks and Spencer store, Church Litten.

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