

Bertie Charles Knapp

Isle of Wight County Press – 6 December 1947

Newport Crane Driver's Suicide..

The Coroner (Mr. R. E. A. Webster) conducted an inquiry at the Guildhall, Newport on Tuesday into the death of Bertie Charles Knapp, of 5 Hunnyhill, a crane driver, employed by Carter Paterson at Cowes, who was found dead at his home early on Sunday morning. – The widow, Ellen Mary Knapp, said her husband had been ill for nearly two years with chronic dermatitis, which she thought had started with a rash on one leg. The disease gradually spread to his whole body and on Aug. 23rd he entered the County Hospital for treatment. He was discharged on Nov. 20th, a little better, and he had been in bed since his return. He was in a low nervous condition. She went to bed at about mid-night on Saturday and her husband said “Good night.” At about 8 a.m. on Sunday she went downstairs to make tea and saw her husband's feet against the door of the scullery. She could not push the door open and called her son. She could smell gas. Her husband had threatened to take his life, but she did not think he meant it. – Raymond Knapp, a farmer worker, deceased's son, said he forced the door open and found his father lying on the floor covered with a blanket and overcoat. There was a strong smell of gas. Under the blanket near his father's head he found a portable gas ring. He turned off the gas and sent for the doctor and police. – Dr. G. L. Peskett said death was due to coal gas poisoning. He saw many areas of dermatitis on the body, some of which were bandaged. The complaint could have been aggravated by nervous debility and depression. – Mrs. Freda May Smallbone, of Highlands, Pyotts Hill, Old Basing, near Basingstoke, deceased's daughter, said she saw her father the previous week-end and he seemed to be much brighter. In August her mother wrote to her, saying that her father was very depressed and had taken an overdose of sleeping tablets. She came to the Island and arranged for her father to enter hospital for treatment. When he came out of hospital he was much better. – Dr. A. A. Heathcote, who had attended deceased, said the dermatitis was very severe and progressive. It had started on the hands and legs and had spread over the whole body. He had been seen by Dr. Dockray at Ryde and by Dr. Murray Stewart at Portsmouth, and various courses of treatment had been carried out. He was of the opinion that the cause could have been occupational, because of the distribution of the disease. – The Coroner returned a verdict of death from coal gas poisoning, self administered whilst the balance of his mind was temporarily disturbed, and expressed sympathy with the relatives. – The funeral took place on Wednesday, the service at the Quay Street Methodist Church being conducted by the Rev. A. H. Clarke, and the interment was at Carisbrooke Cemetery. Messrs. O. C. Hamilton and Son made the arrangements.

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