

Herbert Lower

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SUDDEN DEATH OF NEWPORT'S DEPUTY MAYOR.

MR. HERBERT LOWER.

The religious, municipal, and business life of Newport has suffered a grievous loss by the tragically sudden death on Sunday at his residence, Ingleside, Mount Pleasant-road, at the age of 56, of the Deputy Mayor of the Borough, Mr. Herbert Lower, one of the Island capital's best known citizens and a man universally respected for his many admirable qualities and good works.

Although suffering from a heavy cold for about a month, Mr. Lower had carried on his usual activities and had not even thought it necessary to consult a doctor, but unfortunately his lungs had become badly congested and he collapsed in this home just after having breakfast on Sunday morning and died almost instantaneously. Dr. G. L. Peskett, who resides near, was quickly in attendance, but there was no response to his efforts at resuscitation. A post mortem examination, ordered by the Deputy Coroner, revealed that the condition of the lungs had caused his heart, although perfectly normal, to cease functioning, and no inquest was held. The tragically sudden nature of his end came as a great shock to his family and hosts of friends, and intense sympathy is felt with his widow and family in their irreparable and totally unexpected loss. It is a strange and sad coincidence that his predecessor as Deputy Mayor, the late Mr. Arthur Elderfield, also died suddenly two years ago. Sympathy is felt with the Mayor (Mr. G. C. Russell) in the loss of a life-long friend and former school fellow at the Newport Grammar School, who had been his very helpful co-operator in the important duties of the mayoralty, and with the members of the St. John's Men's Bible Class, of which Mr. Lower was the beloved acting-leader, in the loss of three of its oldest members in the last fortnight - Mr. Lower, Mr. W. J. Early, and Mr. H. Midlane.

Herbert Lower was the eldest son of the late Mr. Benjamin Lower, founder of the well known pork butcher's business at 56 High-street, which he had very successfully controlled since the death of his father in 1908, latterly in partnership with his two sons, Messrs. Herbert and Horace Lower. As a business man he held the respect of the community generally, as one who was the very soul of integrity, who was ready with the hand of friendship or with sound advice however difficult the circumstances, and who would vigorously defend the high principles on which he moulded his life. No better evidence of this could be given than the fact that during the last war he watched the interests of the butchers of the town under the meat control rationing scheme and soon after the present war broke out he yielded against his inclinations because he was a very busy man, to the unanimous wish of his colleagues that he should once more act as their secretary and general advocate. During the last few months, with characteristic assiduity and attention to detail, he had unsparingly applied himself to these exacting duties, and it is probable that his anxiety not to fail his friends in this important task led him to deny himself the treatment and rest he so badly needed and thus hastened his end. As late as Thursday of last week he strongly voiced the protests of the local butchers as to the quality of certain meat which had been allotted to them by the authorities and was later busying himself to see that representations were made in high quarters. Another incident which had undoubtedly caused him anxiety was that his younger son, who had relieved him of much of the supervision of his business, was called up for military service last week. His only daughter, Miss Kathleen Lower, L.R.A.M., who is well known as

a pianist and organist, was for the first time deputising for her brother as organist of St. James's Church, Ryde, when the sad news of her bereavement was conveyed to her at the morning service and she had to return to console her heart-broken mother, who was alone with her husband at the time of the fatal seizure.

Mr. Lower had been a member of the Town Council since November, 1934, when he was elected by a very large majority to succeed the late M. J. L. Mitchell as a representative of the Pan ward. He was re-elected unopposed three years later and throughout his association with the Council he had been most regular in attending to his duties and often helpfully contributed to the debates. As an enthusiastic floriculturist he was particularly interested in gardening and for that reason was chosen as chairman of the Allotments Committee. He had been very active in this phase of his municipal work, especially of late in response to the national need for increased production. His general aptitude for public life would undoubtedly have resulted in his being honoured by the mayoralty had he lived.

The dominating trait in his character, however, was his deeply religious convictions, and being gifted with the power to proclaim his beliefs, he had been prominent in the religious life of the town from early manhood. An old scholar of the Bible Christian Church in Quay-street, he later became associated with the Parish Church as a Sunday-school teacher, bellringer, and general church worker. Then some 35 years ago his interest in athletics led to his becoming a member of the St. John's Men's Bible Class and Athletic Club and he had rendered that class and St. John's Church devoted service ever since. After a few years as hon. treasurer of the Bible Class he became its secretary in succession to the original secretary (the late Mr. James Dewey), and for some 30 years he had carried out the duties in an exemplary manner. Five years ago, when the health of the founder and leader of the class (Mr. James Eldridge) failed he took over the duties of deputy leader as well, and had won the esteem and gratitude of the members by the extremely able discharge of the duties of the office and his practical Christian addresses. He had served the church by frequently reading the lessons and as a member of the Parochial Council. In early days he was a keen athlete, winning many prizes in short-distance events at local sport meetings, and he was also a skilful amateur photographer. Politically he was a Liberal, but he never took an active part in politics, although he was a vice-president of the Newport Liberal Club. He was a Rotarian, vice-president of the I.W. Master Butchers' Association, and the Newport Victoria Sports Club, and a member of the Newport Trades Cricket Club. His numerous interests also extended to Oddfellowship. He had been through the chair of the Earl Yarborough Lodge, which he served very capably as lecture master for some years, and was also a Past Provincial Grand Master of the Order. Everything he did was sweetened by his Christianity, his cheerful disposition, and charitable outlook toward his fellowmen. Newport can ill spare such a valued and exemplary citizen.

THE FUNERAL.

A congregation of over 500, filling almost every seat in St. John's Church, and a lovely display of about 120 wreaths, made the funeral on Thursday a memorable tribute of sympathy and respect. Mr. Lower's colleagues in the Corporation wearing their robes, headed by the Mayor (Mr. G. C. Russell), and accompanied by the Mayor of Ryde (Mr. H. W. O. Weeks) and several other representatives of the Ryde Town Council walked in procession to the church, preceded by the maces of the two boroughs draped with crepe, and later proceeded to Carisbrooke Cemetery, where the interment took place. The borough standard was flying at half mast from the Guildhall, and mourning shutters were universally displayed. A party of firemen, under the Chief Officer

Fairbrass, formed a guard of honour at the church door. Mr. Lower apparently had a premonition of his death, as on the back of the envelope containing his will he had recently written a request that the Vicar of St. John's (the Rev. W. H. Mackinnon) and the Rev. F. E. Jones, vicar of St. Michael's, Wood Green, London (who in his youth was an assistant in his shop) should officiate, and that they should emphasise the words of Romans I, 16, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation unto everyone that believeth." He also requested that Mr. H. W. Stubbington, F.R.C.O., formerly organist of Newport Parish Church, and now of Birmingham, should play Walford Davies' "Solemn Melody" and Bach's "Air on a G string," which were among his favourite pieces of music. His wishes were loyally fulfilled. The hymns "How sweet the name of Jesus sounds" and "Jesu lover of my soul," were sung, and the 23rd Psalm and Nunc Dimittis chanted, the latter as recessional.

The Vicar, after referring to the exceedingly sudden nature of the call, and expressing sympathy with the bereaved family, read the passage from Romans, and said Mr. Lower's whole life witnessed that he was not ashamed of his Master. Not only as leader of the St. John's Men's Bible-class, but in his business and private life, everyone knew that Herbert Lower was a Christian, and there were many who thanked God for his witness and example. As to his public work, the large attendance of those who were associated with him in service for the community testified to the general appreciation of his labours. They mourned the passing of one who was truly a Christian gentleman, kindly, gentle, courteous, a man with a delightful sense of humour, who loved his fellow man, music, and flowers, and all God's gifts, and for whose noble example they were thankful.

After impressively reading the lesson the deceased had chosen from I Corinthians xv, the Rev. F. E. Jones, in a feeling tribute to "The Guv'nor," the name by which he had always addressed Mr. Lower, said: "He was the man who taught me to pray and to love and serve God. He had an abiding faith, was a man of prayer, and a very lovable character. We can safely leave him in the hands of the Lord and Master he so faithfully served." The rev. F. E. Jones officiated at the committal.

The mourners were: Messrs. H. B. J. and H. A. Lower (sons), Messrs. S., Horace, W., and Hilton Lower (brothers), Messrs. J. and W. Dove, W. G. Bartlett, and A. Dore (brothers-in-law), Mrs. H. B. J. Lower (daughter-in-law), Mrs. S. Lower (sister-in-law), Mr. S. Brown (uncle), Mr. D. T. Lower (nephew), Mesdames Urry and Rugman (cousins), Mrs. Bruce Drayton, Miss N. Stowell, Mr. and Mrs. W. Upward, Messrs. G. W. H. Jones, W. G. Sibbick, and W. Spanner, and the following members of Mr. Lower's business staff: Messrs. A. Graham, C. Hunnybun, B. Brown, and G. Pearce, and Mrs. Marsh. Mr. and Mrs. H. M. , Mr. N., and Miss M. Way (cousins of Wootton), and Messrs. F. Brown, A, and W. Scott, and C. W. Allee were prevented from attending by indisposition.

Police Inspector T. Willmott and P.C. Jacobs, with Messrs. W. Phillips and W. R. Clark (mace-bearers), headed the procession, which included the Mayor of Newport (Mr. G. C. Russell), Aldermen F. E. Whitcher, J.P., J. C. Millgate, J.P., Mrs. E. R. Chandler, J.P., A. E. Harvey, J.P., and J. H. Deacon, Councillors F. J. Way, A. E. King, F. Chiverton, H. Whitehead, H. Godwin, J. Salter, A. James, C.C., J. W. Lockhart, J. J. Simmonds, W. C. Smith, W. H. Downer, and F. E. Welsh, Mrs. A. D. W. Eldridge, B.Sc., and Messrs. L. Jordan, J.P., and H. W. Horan (members of the Education Committee), and Mr. G. N. Rogers J.P. The Ryde Corporation were represented by the Mayor (Mr. H. W. O. Weeks), Aldermen Major A. Dennis and E. C. Loader, and Mr. H. V. Taylor. The Town Clerk of Newport (Mr. R. Preston), walked with the Mayor, and the principal Corporation officials present were Dr. W. S. Wallace (medical officer) and Messrs. C. L. Davies (treasurer), R. J. Machin

(accountant), H. Raine (chief education officer), A. F. Hart (sanitary inspector), J. W. Gibbs (fuel overseer), C. A. Westmore (school attendance officer), J. R. Toogood (building inspector), C. Wells (waterworks manager), and V. H. Eldridge (harbourmaster). Several Corporation employees were present. Members of the Corporation prevented from attending were Ald. W. Blake, J.P., Capt. J. S. Brown, and Messrs. A. O'Purdy and J. R. Wise.

Transcription by Kate MacDonell for the Friends of Newport and Carisbrooke Cemeteries,

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