

Thomas Charles McGrotty

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DEATH OF MR. THOMAS McGROTTY.

Keen regret was aroused amongst his numerous local friends, and it will doubtless be shared by many in other parts of the country who remember him as the well-house keeper at Carisbrooke Castle, by the death of Mr. Thomas McGrotty, of 68 Carisbrooke-road, which took place suddenly early on Monday morning. Four years ago Mr. McGrotty retired after nearly 50 years of faithful service in various capacities at Carisbrooke Castle, where his father, Major J. McGrotty, at one time held the office of custodian, and since then he and his wife have been living at Carisbrooke-road. On Sunday night Mrs. McGrotty was taken ill, and her husband, who had enjoyed good health since his retirement, fetched a medical man. In his anxiety to secure aid for his beloved wife he probably overtaxed his strength, as in the early hours of the morning he had a seizure, became unconscious, and passed away about an hour later. Mr. McGrotty, who was approaching his 77th birthday, was a man of the highest character, who quickly won the sincere esteem of all with whom he was brought into contact. Whatever he set his hand to do he did conscientiously and well. In his younger days he went to sea as an engineer on the vessels of the Ducal line, a London Shipping Company, which has now ceased to exist, but in 1877 he gave up a sailor's life to join his father at Carisbrooke Castle, and remained there until 1926, thus having served five custodians or deputy governors, viz., his father, Capt. J. Markland, Mr. A. Harbottle Estcourt, Mr. T. B. H. Cochrane, and Mr. F. J. S. Hay-Newton. On the death of the last-named, when the Castle was made the residence of the Royal Governor, he became a servant of the Office of Works. He had many duties at the Castle. He was in charge of the water and electric light supplies which he installed, and was the general handy-man of the place, but the duty which made him notable and popular with visitors was that of well attendant, particularly his wonderful friendship with and control of the two donkeys, which tread the huge wheel and draw water from the well 150ft. deep. The way Mr. McGrotty managed the donkeys, usually considered intractable animals, astonished visitors to the well-house. Such was the beautiful understanding between him and his charges that one or other of them would immediately come at his call from a shed nearby, enter the wheel, perform its task, be rewarded with a few biscuits from the visitors, and then leave the well-house without a single word of command. Occasionally the donkey would stop treading the wheel before the bucket had been fully raised, but on hearing a quiet "A little further, please," from their master they would immediately respond. Mr. McGrotty was exceedingly proud of his donkeys, and his rule of them was by love, not by fear. Frequently during their off duty periods they would accompany him on walks in the grounds. The delightful picture of this happy trio – the keeper with his hands resting on the necks of his two dumb friends – which is published in another column [see below], was taken during one of these little excursions. As is the case with all the previous residents at the Castle Mr. McGrotty was thought very highly of by Princess Beatrice. Her Royal Highness gave him and Mrs. McGrotty a clock as a token of her appreciation on their leaving the Castle, and on hearing the news of Mr. McGrotty's death the Royal Governor immediately wrote a letter of sympathy with his widow. Mrs. F. J. S. Hay-Newton also sent an expression of regret and sympathy. Mr. McGrotty was one of the first pupils of Portland House Academy, being a fellow student of Mr. E. G. Barnes (the late principal) under the latter's father, who founded the school. He was also a member of the Albany Lodge of Freemasons. During his long period in charge of the

well-house at the Castle the visitors there included the King and Queen, the late King Edward and Queen Alexandra, and many other European royalties.



The funeral took place at Carisbrooke Cemetery on Thursday, and a wreath of white and bronze chrysanthemums and lilies was sent by H.R.H. Princess Beatrice, bearing the inscription "A mark of esteem and regret from Princess Beatrice," and another wreath came from Mrs. F. Hay Newton, wife of a former deputy governor and extra lady-in-waiting to Her Royal Highness, bearing the words "In grateful remembrance of good service, kindness, and sympathy." The officiating clergy were the Revs. H. S. Footman and W. H. Mackinnon. The mourners were Mr. T. C. McGrotty (son), Mr. H. Mackett and Mr. R. Tims (sons-in-law), Mr. A. W. Tims, Ryde, Mr. H. Hibbard, Sandown, and Mr. E. G. Barnes. The Albany Lodge of Freemasons, of which the deceased had been a member, was represented by the following: Wor. Bros. the Rev. W. H. Mackinnon, M.A. (chaplain), G. A. Brannon, P.M., P.P.S.G.D., H. W. Horan, P.M., P.P.S.G.D., H. G. Groundsell, P.M., P.P.S.G.D., E. A. Kime, P.M., P. G. Few, S.W., and Bros. A. J. Hitching, J. B. Alderslade, M. W. J. Attrill, T. Ross Pratt, W. D. Way Buckell, H. M. Williams, D. Morris, T. H. Alexander, F. Chiverton, F. Yelf, N. H. T. Mursell, and T. P. Whiston. Those also present were Capt. H. G. Adams-Connor, M.V.O., D.L., Messrs. A. Scott (representing the Earl Yarborough Lodge of Oddfellows, of which deceased was a member), J. Moorman and A. Jones (fellow employees at Carisbrooke Castle), R. W. Scott (formerly at Osborne), J. W. Lockhart, and E. W. Tyler. The Masonic oration at the graveside was said by the lodge chaplain, Wor. Bro. W. H. Mackinnon, M.A. ... The funeral arrangements were carried out by Messrs. O. C. Hamilton and Son.

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