

Walter James Rugg

Isle of Wight County Press

23rd October 1943

Death of ex-Alderman W. J. Rugg, of Newport.

We regret to record the death at his residence, Lynwood, St John's-road, Newport, on Thursday, of Mr. Walter James Rugg, an ex-alderman of the Corporation and managing director of Messrs. Walter J. Rugg and Company, wholesale and retail tobacconists. His health had been failing for some months, but he had continued to conduct his business affairs with characteristic pluck. His wife died six years ago, and he leaves one daughter.

Mr. Walter Rugg was a Newport man, who from small beginnings had built up one of the largest wholesale and retail tobacconists businesses in the South of England. He started trading at premises in St. James's-street, Newport, over 50 years ago, and in 1907, in association with the late Mr. Francis T. Mew, J. P., and Dr. Milbourne L. B. Coombs, a company was formed of which he had ever since been the managing director. The growth of the concern, which had marked Mr. Rugg's period in sole charge, was rapidly extended after the company was formed until it had flourishing branches at Southampton, Portsmouth, Winchester, Bournemouth, Andover, and Lymington, as well as branches in Ryde, Cowes, and Ventnor. Mr. Rugg constantly supervised operations at all the branches, making regular visits to each, and consequently he was known and esteemed by business acquaintances over a wide area of the South of England. His quiet, courteous ways, unflinching geniality, consideration for others, and keen sense of humour made him a popular figure in all his associations. Although one of the busiest men in Newport he found time to serve the community as a member of the Town Council for many years. He was first elected in 1901, was honoured by being made an alderman in 1920, and continued to render admirable service until his retirement in 1933. On more than one occasion he had been pressed to become a candidate for the mayoralty, but for private reasons he had declined, otherwise he would most certainly have been given the borough's highest honour. He also found time to take an active interest in Oddfellowship. He was Grand Master of the I.W. District in 1903 and a Past Grand and Trustee for many years of the Earl Yarborough Lodge. In early days, and well on into middle life, he was an enthusiastic and efficient volunteer as a member of the I.W. Rifles, in which for some years he held the rank of colour-sergeant of the cyclist section, a position in which he enjoyed much popularity, and he was an excellent marksman. He followed his favourite sport of cycling as a member of the old I.W. Cycling Club, and will be remembered as having acted as starter at sports meeting in the Island. He was a member of the old Carisbrooke Bowling Club, a good all-round sportsman, and a generous supporter of local sporting organisations, a brother of the Albany Lodge of Freemasons, and a vice-president of the Newport Conservative Club. In his business life he gained the high honour of the presidency of the Wholesale Tobacco Trades Association in 1933-4. On completion of his year in office he was presented with a handsome silver coffee service and salver, and he had continued his membership of the Executive Council of the association, his wide experience of the trade being highly valued by his colleagues in control of this national organisation.

Much sympathy is felt with his daughter in her bereavement and with the employees of the firm who are mourning the loss of a much respected chief. The funeral will be on Monday; service at St. John's Church, Newport, at 2.45 p.m.

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