

## **The Rev. John Selby Watson, died 6 July 1884**

Within our local cemeteries there are various groups of people. For example the first two persons buried in Mounjoy in 1858 were Roman Catholics, one a nationally recognised artist, the other a Servant from the House of Industry. These were later joined by the Countess of Clare, the lady who funded the building of the nearby Nunnery. Other groups include members of the military, those of various religions as well as atheists. There are the very wealthy, Workhouse paupers, inmates from the County Asylum, convicts from our nearby prisons and members of the clergy. Death does not discriminate.

One man who qualified as being in the last two groups was the Rev. John Selby Watson who in 1872 became known as the Stockwell murderer.

This man around 1860 became the headmaster of a London school. However he later elaborately planned and then proceeded to murder his wife by hitting her around the head with a heavy horse pistol. He then placed an order with a nearby carpenter to make him a crate in which he somehow was going to dispose of the body. For all this he stood trial and was sentenced at London's Central Criminal Court to hang. Throughout he showed not a fraction of remorse. Queen Victoria however controversially granted him a reprieve and he spent the rest of his life behind bars, much of which was spent inside Parkhurst prison. When he died there in July 1884 he was buried in Mountjoy and the cost of his funeral, that probably included his gravestone, was all paid for by one of his ex pupils who was also the only mourner.

*Written by Brian Greening for the Friends of Newport & Carisbrooke Cemeteries*

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## **Hampshire Telegraph - 12 July 1884**

### **NEWPORT**

**DEATH OF THE REV. JOHN SELBY WATSON.** - The Rev. John Selby Watson, convicted in 1872 of the murder of his wife, and sentenced to penal servitude for life, died of erysipelas in Parkhurst Prison, Isle, of Wight, on Sunday morning, in his 80th year. - The inquest was held on Monday by Mr. F. Blake, Coroner. - Mr. William T. Alison said he was chief warder at the prison, and the deceased was a convict under a life sentence, commencing January 8th, 1872. He was received at Parkhurst from Pentonville Prison on the 26th of November of the same year and had been there ever since. His age at his death was 79, and he had been during the most of his time in the tailor's shop patching and darning. - Richard Livingstone said he was a warder at Parkhurst Prison, and had charge of the ward in which the deceased was confined. At twenty minutes past five on the morning of Monday, the 30th of June, on opening the deceased's cell door he found him standing half dressed, and noticing blood on his whiskers he asked him how he had done it, when he replied that he had fallen out of his hammock and struck himself on the edge of a tin utensil. The deceased had but lately left the hospital. He accounted for his falling out of his hammock by having been accustomed to a wider bed in the Hospital. - Henry de Foxmanton said he was Senior Medical Officer of the Prison, and on Monday, the 30th ult., he saw the deceased at the Hospital, and on examining him he found the top lobe of his ear cut quite through as if it had been by a sharp instrument, and there were other contusions about the face, as if he had fallen on a flat surface. On asking him how he had received the wounds, he gave him the same answer which he gave to the warder. He had been in the Hospital from the middle of May to the 27th of June. He frequently visited him, and on the 2nd of July erysipelas

began, and death shortly afterwards ensued. Had the deceased been a young man he would not have considered the wounds serious, but as he was an old man he, from the first, considered the case a serious one, and consequently his friends were written to. - Verdict, that deceased died from erysipelas, consequent on a wound received by accidentally falling out of his hammock. The remains of the deceased were buried in Carisbrooke Cemetery on Wednesday morning at half-past ten o'clock. As no relative claimed the body of the deceased, it was claimed by a former pupil, who rode alone in the carriage, and who bore the whole expense of the funeral.

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