

James Philpot Witham

Isle of Wight County Press - 28 October 1922

NEWPORT

Death of Mr. J. P. Witham. - We regret to record the death at Pyle House, on Wednesday morning, of Mr. James P. Witham, head of the well-known firm of Messrs. Witham Bros., cycle and motor engineers, and also associated in other important undertakings with which his name is familiar far beyond his island home. Although severely handicapped physically since boyhood by the loss of the use of both legs though an injury during games at school, he was undaunted in spirit, and applied himself with splendid courage to overcoming his serious physical disabilities and to the successful development of his marked intellectual and business abilities, and the inventive genius which he evidenced in several directions. Early in his teens he developed his talent for story-writing for the magazines, in which he achieved considerable success, and also established a growing and important connections in type-writing. Stimulated by his disability he applied his inventive genius to the production of an improved self-propelling invalid chair, and, in conjunction with Mr. Dingwall, an engineer, brought out the Dingwall-Witham invalid chair, which has gained a world-wide reputation. Later he established the well-known business of Witham Bros. motor and cycle engineers of Newport, of which he was the ruling spirit. Latterly he became a keen motorist, having had his invalid chair fitted with a Douglas motor-cycle with special controls, which enabled him to travel widely in the Island, and he was a familiar figure at the fixtures of the I.W. Motor-Cycle Club, in which he took a lively interest. He was also a very enthusiastic and skilful amateur photographer. A few weeks ago he met with a motor accident owing to a collision, but this was not responsible for his fatal illness, which developed from his natural disability. Altogether he was a most estimable townsman, and his death, at an age when most men are in their prime - he was but 45 years of age—is sincerely regretted by a wide circle of friends. The funeral took place yesterday (Friday), amidst much evidence of regret and sympathy. A service was held at the Parish Church, the Vicar (the Rev. Canon Thompson) officiating, and the interment was at Newport Cemetery. The mourners were the Misses E. and R. Witham (sisters), Messrs. F. and R. T. Witham (brothers) Mr. C. W. A. Hale (brother-in-law), and Messrs. J. J. Witham, R. J. Philpot, and G. Dunn (cousins), Mr. A. J. Philpot (uncle) was prevented from attending. Those also present at the church included Mr. and Mrs. F. Dudley, Mr. and Mrs. H. W. King, Mr. R. Bird Cheverton, J.P., Dr. S. V. H. Underhill, Dr. E. F. Westmore Buckell (president), and Capt. C. W. Brannon, M.C. (hon secretary), representing the I.W. Motor-cycle and Light-car Club, Dr. G. Raymond, Mr. Cassford (representing the Trojans A. C., of which deceased was a vice president), Miss Pittis. Miss Orme, Mrs. Clarke, Messrs. A. A. Westmore, F. Lock, E. Cheverton, F. Morgan, W. C. Black, L. and E. A. Dore, W. Blake, J. C. Williams, C. Brown, H. Osborn, and the employees of Messrs. Witham Bros. at the High-street premises and the garage and works at Coppins-bridge. There were about 30 beautiful floral tributes, including those from deceased's employees, the staff of Mr. F. Trim, the I.W. Motor-cycle and Light-car Club (in the form of the Club's flag), the Trojans A. C., and the girls now and formerly in the type-writing office at 139 High-street. The coffin bore the inscription "James Philpot Witham, at rest, October 28th aged 45 years." Messrs. H and F. Damp made the arrangements.

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