

## Mary Louisa Annie Appleton

### 1911 census – 3 Chain Lane, Newport

William Edward Appleton	Head	38	Labourer General	Newport, Hampshire
<b>Mary Louisa Annie Appleton</b>	<b>Wife</b>	<b>32</b>		<b>Ryde, Hampshire</b>
James William Appleton	Son	2		Newport, Hampshire

Isle of Wight County Press – 11 June 1911

### WOMAN'S DEATH AT NEWPORT.

#### RUMOURS OF STARVATION AND POISONING DISPROVED

On Saturday afternoon the Deputy Coroner (Francis A. Joyce, Esq.), held an inquest at the Parish-room, Crocker-street, Newport, on the body of Mary Louisa Appleton, 32, married woman, who had lived at 3 Chain-lane, Newport. – Mr. W. J. Rugg, T.C., was foreman of the jury and Insp. Cass and P.S. Foyle were present on behalf of the police.

The CORONER said as a post-mortem examination had been held it was advisable that the medical evidence should be given first for their guidance as to what further evidence would be necessary.

Dr. M. L. B. COOMBS, practising at Newport, said that deceased came to him on the previous Tuesday morning, at about 10.15, that being the first time she had done so. She complained of illness, for which he gave her medicine and told her that she could see him again, as he then had to keep an appointment. – Q. Did she complain of insufficiency of food to you? – Not at all. She did not say anything about coming to see him again; it was he who spoke to her about it. Early on Wednesday morning, between 2 and 3 o'clock, some one came to his surgery and asked if he would come and see deceased, as she was dying. He was telephoned for and he went at once and found her in a collapsed condition, apparently dying. She told him the medicine he had prescribed had done her good and that she was in no pain. A neighbour, Mrs. Emery, was attending to deceased and had very kindly provided clean sheets and other clothes for deceased, in order, as she stated, to make her fit to be seen. He advised that deceased should be put into blankets with hot-water bottles and should have some brandy. There was brandy in the house. Between 9 and 10 on the same morning they told him at his surgery that deceased was certainly better and he gave an order upon the relieving officer for two pints of milk daily, a 4oz bottle of Lemco, and some brandy, as she wanted nourishment and stimulant to get her out of collapse. When he called the same day, between 12 and 1 o'clock, deceased said she had thoroughly enjoyed the Lemco and they told him that she had eaten the things ravenously. Deceased asked if she might have some bread and jam. She had then, unfortunately, started another collapse, and witness said he was afraid there was no hope for her.

By the Coroner: He did not have any conversation with deceased's husband during his visits; he was not fit to have any conversation with. – Q. He being under the influence of drink? – Yes, sir. The husband came up to him on Thursday morning and demanded the certificate of death and he (witness) told him he should not give him a certificate at all, but

that he should see the Coroner. Appleton then began arguing, but as he was very much in drink he (the Doctor) told him to clear out. On Friday afternoon, acting under instructions from the Coroner, he, with Dr. Underhill, made a post-mortem examination. The body was fairly well nourished, but there was a general unhealthy condition of the organs. The liver was cirrhotic, the kidneys showed evidence of Bright's disease of some duration, the heart was pale, flabby, and greatly thickened on the left side, the lungs were both unhealthy, particularly the right one, the lower lobe of which was collapsed and in the pleural cavity there was fluid.

By the Coroner: He found no evidence of death having been caused by drugs or starvation. His deduction from the post-mortem was that death was due to Bright's disease and heart failure. - Q. You say you saw her in the house on Wednesday morning early and that the husband was not then in a fit state, through drink, to look after his wife or give suitable orders for attendance upon her. Do you think, if she had received every care and attention, having regard to what you found at the post-mortem examination, that her life would probably have been saved? - No, I do not, sir. Possibly it might have been prolonged for a week if they had fought the collapse earlier, but the condition of the organs was so bad that she would have died from it sooner or later.

In reply to further questions, the DOCTOR said he did not want to take the husband's part, but it was only fair to the man to say that he (witness) was told by a neighbour that deceased was continually leaving home and staying out with the child and that she had drink. For chronic Bright's disease drink would be bad and exposure to wet and cold would be worse.

Dr. S. V. H. UNDERHILL, medical officer of the police, said he assisted Dr. Coombs to make the post-mortem examination, and he confirmed his evidence as to the condition of the body and the cause of death.

WILLIAM EDWARD APPLETON, husband of the deceased, labourer, generally employed on vessels at the Quay, said he thought deceased was 32 years old. He had been married 10 years and deceased had been in very good health. She had never complained to him of ill health until the previous Tuesday morning, when he arrived home at 3 o'clock, after having been away from Monday morning, and he told her to go and see a doctor at once. He went out at 6 a.m. to start work again and at 7.30 a.m., when he returned, she said she was going to the doctor after breakfast. When he returned to dinner she had the medicine from the doctor. She had a piece of meat for breakfast, the same as he had. She did not complain of having no food in the house; there was plenty there - meat, potatoes, cabbage, bread and butter. - Q. Has she ever complained of having insufficient food? - She had never complained. Of course I always let her have her own way with the money I gave her. I have not been in constant employ. He had averaged only 10s. or 11s. a week. - Q. How much did you hand her for house keeping? - If I earned 10s. I gave her 8s., sometimes 9s. It all depended whether I had anything to buy or not. - Q. You do not remember Dr. Coombs coming the first time, I suppose? - Yes, sir. I can honestly say I had not tasted a drop of drink that day. - Q. You had no drink whatever? - Yes, sir.

Dr. COOMBS: How about the evening, if you had none all day? – I had none in the evening. I never finished work till late.

The CORONER: If you were under the influence of drink you had better own up to it. – I am owing to it, I am speaking the truth. I don't know that I ever drank at all; I am certain I did not.

The CORONER said they were not there to fine the witness for drunkenness. They must simply take his denial.

The FOREMAN asked why if the witness had so much food in the house as he had stated, his wife was so hungry that other food had to be provided and that she ate it ravenously.

WITNESS said no one asked him about getting more food. His wife had 6s. or 7s. lying about in the house and there was plenty of food there. He gave her 8s. on the Tuesday evening and she had the money upstairs.

The CORONER: Is your evidence to the effect that your wife has been provided with money by you to get the necessary food? – Yes, sir. – Q. How many in family have you? – Only one child of 2 years and 9 months.

By Insp. CASS: The 10s. or 12s. a week had to pay house rent and keep them. Last Saturday he gave his wife 9s. and on Tuesday 8s., as he earned it. – Q. When you came home early on Tuesday morning and your wife told you she was not well did you inquire as to the nature of her illness? – No, I told her to go straight to the doctor. – Q. Did not you think it was your place, if your wife was ill, to go and fetch the doctor? – She would not let me. She was walking about the house with the child. – Q. Did not you think it was your duty to go? – It ought to have been. He added that a neighbour who was there said she would go, as he had a job of work. His wife did not tell him what was the matter if he asked her.

Insp. CASS asked how it was witness did not go to the police or Coroner and report the death when the doctor would not give him a certificate. – Witness said Mrs. Emery told him distinctly that she was going to do everything for him, and he left everything to her. – Q. Don't you think it was your place as husband to have done it yourself? – She told me she would do it. – Q. Don't you remember I told you that if the doctor did not give a certificate you should come and notify me? – I went back and told my mother. – You did nothing yourself? – No, nothing.

Insp. CASS said the reason he mentioned that point was that if the police had not heard of the case casually in the street it would have gone on for two or three days and would have caused serious inconvenience to the police and those who had to make the post-mortem.

The CORONER said they wanted an alteration of the law compelling people in cases where a certificate was refused by the doctor to communicate with the Coroner within so many hours. It was quite right of the Inspector to direct attention to the matter.

WITNESS in reply to further questions, said he did not go for the doctor himself, but Mrs. Emery went, as he wanted to "bide" with his wife. He stopped downstairs and Mrs. Odell went upstairs.

It was stated that Mrs. Emery had said that the food in the house was not fit to eat and that was why the doctor gave the order for the other things.

The CORONER said that both doctors had sworn that the deceased did not die of privation and therefore they were travelling a little wide.

Insp. CASS said it seemed that there was food in the house, but not that which was suitable for a woman in such a state as deceased was, until the doctor ordered the other things.

The CORONER said there was no evidence that deceased was suffering from any declared illness that the husband knew of, and Bright's disease, he supposed, might exist without a person being aware of it. If there was sufficient of even common food, he did not think that under the circumstances they could blame the husband, who was a man in humble circumstances, earning very little, unless they could prove that privation was the cause of death. The medical evidence, as he had already stated, was that she did not die of privation.

LUCY EMERY, wife of Charles Henry Emery, of 14 Chain-lane, said she had known deceased for about nine years. Deceased complained several times of her head being bad and of feeling very ill and witness advised her to stay indoors more and clean the place up.

Asked by the Coroner if deceased had complained of insufficient food, WITNESS said that she once asked deceased if she had had any dinner and she said "No." That was when there was a quarrel, about 18 months ago.

The CORONER said they did not want to go into that. "As a general rule," asked the Coroner, "Do you think she suffered from having insufficient food?" – She has complained of being short of food. Witness added that deceased's husband was at home under the influence of drink when the doctor came. She got deceased some clean bed linen and clothing, as she was not fit to be seen. -Q. Was deceased inclined to drink? – She has had a glass of stout when it was given to her, but I have never known her to drink otherwise. Witness added that she had never seen deceased's husband strike her.

Dr. COOMBS. In reply to the Coroner, said the body was too well nourished to say deceased was deprived of food. In fairness to the man he should say that it was not the body of a starved woman.

The CORONER said suggestions had been made so freely in the case that he felt constrained to put those questions.

WITNESS said she had known deceased to be given money by her husband and she had gone out and given it to some one she had no business to give it to. – Q. From your observation, apart from his indulgence in drink, do you think Appleton fairly looked after his wife? – Yes, I do. – Q. Do you know anything about money being in the house? – I think she

(deceased) said he gave her 8s. on the same day that she was taken bad. She had it wrapped up in a piece of dirty rag. She kept sending for things which were necessary for him and the home. She would not stay at home to get her husband's food. She was extremely dirty and was enough to drive a man out. I have given her clothes and she had gone and sold them. I think it was to get money to give to this person she had no right to give it to; she used to meet him coming home from work every night.

The CORONER said he did not see any necessity for further evidence. The medical testimony was clear as to the cause of death. The deceased and her husband had a very small income and the house was kept in a very bad state and Mrs. Emery's evidence showed that deceased was more or less responsible for that. Mrs. Emery had stated that deceased's husband was drunk on the occasion referred to and she also said there was money in the house sufficient to purchase necessities. There their inquiry stopped. They were very sorry to hear that there was such atrociously bad surroundings in that house, but the husband's justification was expressed in the fact that the house was kept in a frightful state, enough to drive a man out, as the last witness had put it, and if the woman indulged in drink or gave away money to some one else the fault was hers and her husband was not to blame.

The FOREMAN said the jury agreed with the medical evidence as to the cause of death and a verdict was returned accordingly.

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