

Joan Mary Power

Isle of Wight County Press – 4 April 1959

FATAL FALL FROM MOTOR SCOOTER

YOUNG WOMAN WOULD NOT WEAR CRASH HELMET

The Coroner (Mr. J. V. Bullin) held an inquest at the County Hall, Newport, on Wednesday on Joan Mary Power (20), a senior aircraftwoman, of Birchmore Cottage, Birchmore Lane, Blackwater, who died after being thrown from the pillion of her fiancé's motor-scooter when travelling on a private road leading to her home on Easter Monday.

The Coroner sat with a jury, the foreman of which was Mr. A. E. Brading.

James Edwin Reed, deputy county surveyor, said that the lane was a bridle road, with certain rights of way over it. – Replying to the jury, witness said that the County Council were responsible for maintenance, but that did not mean maintenance of a standard suitable for motor vehicles.

NO CRASH HELMETS

Patrick Power said that his daughter, who was in the Women's Royal Air Corps, was due to complete her service next August. She was home on leave and her fiancé, Corpl. Pugh, was staying with them. On Monday at 11.50 a.m. they left for Newport. His daughter was on the pillion. They were not wearing crash helmets. He met them again at 12.15 in the Barley Mow. They stayed 10 minutes for one drink. Corpl. Pugh had a pint of beer and his daughter a Babycham. They then left for a ride around. Witness caught the bus home, and they passed him on the main road. They seemed quite happy and waved to him. They were travelling quite slowly. They stopped to see an aunt, Mrs. Bullock. Witness was cycling up the lane and heard them stop. He went indoors and commented to his wife: "Their bike's conked out." He had no thought of an accident. Witness went back on his machine when they did not come in. A friend from the farm came up the road carrying his daughter's handbag. She told him of the accident.

SEVERE INTERNAL INJURY

Dr. P. D. Swinstead said that there were no external injuries, but the skull was badly fractured and there was considerable haemorrhage. Death was due to inter-cranial haemorrhage as a result of the fracturing of the base of the skull. – Replying to the Coroner, who commented that the evidence was that the machine was going slowly, witness said that he had been surprised. It must have been a flinging motion to inflict such damage. An ordinary fall would not have inflicted such a fracture.

James Dawber, brickyard labourer, of Skinner's Cottage, Blackwater, said as he walked up the lane the motor-scooter ridden by Corpl. Pugh and Miss Power passed. It was not going fast because of the state of the road, which was full of holes. The rider was dodging the holes. As his wife was attending to the baby, he paid little attention, but it seemed, from

60 yards away, that the machine may have hit a post and wire fence or gone on to the grass verge. The lady fell on to the road and rolled over two or three times. Witness ran to the farm and telephoned for an ambulance.

DODGING A HOLE

Asked by the Coroner what he thought caused the accident, witness said: "I think the back wheel went on to the grass verge as he was dodging a big hole, and that threw the back round."

P.C. R. Rowsell said that he found a tyre mark 9ft. long across the verge, connecting with a post on which there were marks. The machine travelled only 7ft. after hitting the post. The motor-scooter was damaged on the off side. It was not raining at the time of the accident, but the road and verge were wet.

REFUSED TO WEAR HELMET

Corporal David Michael Pugh, aged 19, said that he had driven for about two years and the scooter for nine months. There was a suitcase strapped on the special luggage rack which he was carrying for a friend. It did not affect the balance of the machine. When it came to the pot holes he pulled the clutch and braked. "When I tried to avoid a big hole, the machine went on the grass. The back wheeled round to the left. I tried to control the bike and it went under the fence. I do not remember hitting the post. I was trapped under the bike by my right leg." he added. – Replying to the Coroner, Corpl. Pugh said that his fiancée refused to wear a crash helmet, although he frequently did.

The Coroner, addressing the jury, said that it was clear that the main cause of the tragedy was the condition of the road. One could not ignore the fact that had she been wearing a crash helmet, Miss Power might not have been killed. No liability rested on the County Council. Only if "man traps" had been dug in the road would that question arise. It was purely a question of disrepair.

The jury returned a verdict of accidental death. The foreman added: We feel that had Miss Power been wearing a crash helmet, this unfortunate fatality might have been averted. The cause of the accident was the state of the road.

The funeral will take place with military honours at St. Thomas's Church, Newport, at 2 p.m. to-day. A detachment from the R.A.F. Station, Stanmore will attend with the company standard.

Isle of Wight County Press – 11 April 1959

BLACKWATER

The Late Miss J. M. Power. – The funeral took place on Saturday of Miss Joan Mary Power, of Birchmore Cottage, Birchmore Lane, whose accidental death was reported last week. A large congregation of friends attended a service at St. Thomas's Church, Newport. The Rector of Northwood (the Rev. H. E. Strudwick) officiated. Among those attending the

service was a contingent from the W.R.A.F. Headquarters Command, R.A.F. station at Stanmore Park, Middlesex, where Miss Power was stationed. The company standard was draped over the coffin and Miss Power's uniform hat was also placed on the coffin. The family mourners were Mr. and Mrs. P. Power (parents), Cpl. D. Pugh (fiancé), the Misses N. and M. Power (aunts), Mr. and Mrs. R. Bullock (aunt and uncle), and Mrs. L. Phillips (grandmother). ... Interment took place at Newport cemetery and the W.R.A.F. contingent formed a guard of honour at the graveside. The arrangements were made by Messrs. O. C. Hamilton and Son.

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