

## **Frederick William Spanner**

**Isle of Wight County Press  
22 January 1927**

### **SUDDEN DEATH OF THE NEWPORT GLEEMEN'S CONDUCTOR.**

The musical life of Newport and district suffered a grievous loss by the death, which took place with tragic suddenness on Tuesday, of Mr. Frederick William Spanner, draper, of 9 Lower St. James's-street, Newport. His unexpected demise cast a gloom over the Island capital on Wednesday, when news of the sad event circulated, as Mr. Spanner, both in business and in his enthusiastic and talented work in connection with choral singing, had made hosts of friends, who deeply deplore his passing in the prime of life and sincerely sympathise with his widow and family in their irreparable and painfully sudden bereavement. He attended his business on Tuesday apparently in excellent health, and at 6.30 p.m. was engaged in getting together the music he would require at a practice by the Newport Gleemen later in the evening, when he complained of feeling unwell, and, acting on the advice of his wife, went upstairs to rest. Immediately after lying down he had a seizure, which caused complete unconsciousness and partial paralysis, and he passed peacefully away at about 11 p.m. without regaining consciousness, death being evidently due to cerebral haemorrhage. Mr. Spanner, who was 56 years of age, was a native of Newport, being a son of the late Mr. Henry Spanner, of Cavendish-place. As a lad he entered the drapery trade in London, and on his marriage to the younger daughter of the late Mr. J. K. Alderslade, of Newport, he opened business on his own account in Bristol, where he traded until he returned to his native town and commenced the business in St. James's-street in 1906. Always a lover of music, even as a lad he was an enthusiastic fifer in a local fife and drum band, and a singer in a tonic-sol-fa class, conducted by the father of Messrs. A. A. and C. H. Russell, who in later years were to become closely associated with him as Gleemen. His first attempts at conducting were in Bristol, where, much against his will, he was prevailed upon to act as choirmaster at a new Wesleyan Church. He soon demonstrated his aptitude for the work, however, and rendered splendid service there until his return to Newport. About 16 years ago he became the conductor of the Wesleyan choir at Newport, which has even enhanced its former high reputation under his baton, but his greatest musical achievement undoubtedly came when he was instrumental in forming "The Newport Gleemen," a male voice choir, whose reputation has spread far beyond the confines of the ancient borough, and of which he was the able and popular conductor. How the Gleemen choir came to be formed is worthy of note. Mr. Spanner had arranged a concert in aid of the local Football Club, in which one of his sons was interested, and a male voice choir, organised and led by him on that occasion, made such an impression that its continuance and extension under the title of The Newport Gleemen was suggested and became an accomplished fact. Under his able and popular direction, and with his only daughter (Miss Ethel Spanner) as a skilful accompanist, the Gleemen have gone from success to success, winning the male voice choir competition at the I.W. Musical Festival three years in succession. The Gleemen themselves would be the first to admit that their achievements have been largely due to the happy and musicianly understanding between the father and daughter which is, alas! now broken. Mr. Spanner was ever ready and ever anxious at all times to assist any deserving object by organising concerts. During the war he organised concerts for the soldiers at the Victoria Recreation-rooms, and was presented with a watch in recognition of his efforts. He was also a popular entertainer with the Gleemen at the Prisons at Parkhurst. Himself an excellent bass singer, he was a member and former officer and local supporter of the Newport Philharmonic Society. In addition to his widow

and daughter he leaves three sons. The funeral will take place tomorrow (Sunday) afternoon at the Newport Wesleyan Church at 2.30 p.m.

### **Isle of Wight County Press-29 January 1927**

#### **FUNERAL OF MR. F. W. SPANNER AT NEWPORT**

There was notable demonstration of appreciation of public service and personal esteem in the very large gathering at the funeral on Sunday at Newport of Mr. Frederick William Spanner, conductor of the Newport Gleemen and Wesleyan Church choir, whose regretted sudden death we announced last week. The Mayor of Newport (Mr. W Blake, T.C.) attended with the Town Clerk (Mr. T. Ross Pratt), and the mourners also included representatives of the Newport Philharmonic Society, the Ryde Male Voice Choir, and the various churches and social organisations of the town with whom the deceased had become associated in his labours. The church was filled, and many more sympathetic friends joined the cortege at Newport Cemetery. The Rev. R. S. Kirkham, who officiated, assisted by the Rev. R. Nicholas, paid a touching tribute to the deceased's work and worth in the course of a prayer, in which he rendered thanks for Mr. Spanner's faithful service to the church, his joy in shedding joy amongst others, and Christian faith and character he displayed in all his varied activities. The choir and the Gleemen led the singing of the hymns "O love of God" and "The King of Love," and the organist, Mr. E. J. H. Quarrier, played "O, rest in the Lord" at the close. At the graveside the Rev. R. S. Kirkham conducted the committal, and the Rev. E. Nicholas recited the concluding prayers.

The chief mourners were the widow, Miss Ethel M. Spanner (daughter), Messrs. Hubert and Norman Spanner (sons), Mr. Frank Spanner, of Nottingham (brother), Messrs. Fred, Frank and Albion Spanner (uncles), Messrs. J. B. and W. Alderslade and A. W. Abraham (brothers-in-law), Miss Doris Gentle, and the Rev. L. J. Stagg, B.A. Deceased's other son Kenneth, is a ship's wireless operator, and was away at sea.

(only family mourners transcribed)

Mr. F. Spanner efficiently made the arrangements.

At the P.S.A Brotherhood on Sunday Mr. J. R. Wise (hon. secretary) referred to the sad loss which Newport had sustained by the death of Mr. Spanner, who, he said, was a musician to his finger-tips, and his talents were always at the disposal of any deserving object. As conductor of the Gleemen, he was all that could be desired. Not only Newport but the whole Island would be the poorer by his passing. - A vote of sympathy was passed with the widow and family.

At the close of the weekly rehearsal of the Newport Philharmonic Society on Monday, under the conductorship of Mr. H. W. Stubbington, F.R.C.O., L.T.C.L., the Hon. Secretary, Mr. H. F. Heaton, made feeling reference to the loss the Society had sustained by the death of Mr. Spanner, who, he remarked, was amongst them a week previously, apparently in the best of health and spirit, and within 24 hours had left them. Many members of the Society had known Mr. Spanner a great many years, far more than Mr. Stubbington or himself, but even those who had known him only a short time had a very real affection for him. One thing which struck them all very forcibly was that his life seemed to be devoted to the service of his fellow men, particularly on the musical side, and they benefitted by his musical ability and enthusiasm.

- The members stood in silence as a mark of respect and of sympathy with the bereaved family.

Transcription by Kate MacDonell for the Friends of Newport and Carisbrooke Cemeteries,  
© 2020 <https://www.foncc.org.uk>