

William Henry Saunders

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TELEPHONE PIONEER

THE LATE MR. W. H. SAUNDERS

The death occurred on Saturday of Mr. William Henry Saunders, of 37 Robin Hood Street, Newport, in his 90th year. As a telephone engineer, he laid one of the first cables when the service was introduced to the Island. Mr. Saunders was born in Staplers Road, and lived in his present house since 1897. Since his wife died in 1930 his sister, Mrs. Phyllis Saunders, had kept house for him. Mr. Saunders spent his early days at sea, when he crewed for eminent yachtsmen, and one of his favourite reminiscences was when he cooked plum duff for King Edward VII, whom his employer was entertaining. Known as "Sandy" in his working days, Mr. Saunders joined the old National Telephone Company in 1896 as a wireman and was made foreman in 1904. When the General Post Office took over the service in 1912 he was transferred, on promotion, as skilled workman, Class II, with a starting pay of £1 13s. a week. Powerfully built he was strong and fearless in the manner in which he would scramble over roofs in laying cables. He would cycle long distances to his work, and after a lengthy working day would work in his garden. During the first world war he was concerned in cable-laying work to the mainland from Freshwater, in conjunction with the Royal Engineers, and, in fact, joined that unit, but was discharged after one day! – as he was able to perform the same duties as a civilian. When he retired about 27 years ago he received a glowing testimonial, signed by Mr. Attlee. Mr. Saunders was a keen member of the Liberal Club, a life-long member of the Foresters, and a keen amateur gardener, gaining many show successes. He kept a beautiful garden at Robin Hood Street, although for the last 18 months he was not able to take an active part in its cultivation. At the grand age of 89 he maintained his keen faculties to the end, especially the interest in the garden. He is survived by a son, a daughter, two grand-daughters, and five grandsons.

The funeral took place on Tuesday, a service at the house, conducted by the Rev. Dr. W. H. Mildon, being followed by interment at St. Paul's Cemetery, in the grave of his wife. The mourners were Miss P. Saunders (daughter), Mrs. L. W. Saunders (daughter-in-law, also representing Mr. L. W. Saunders, of Ripon, son), Mr. W. Elkins (nephew), Mrs. G. Hendy (niece), Mrs. W. Reynard, Miss M. Leary, and Mr. E. Hardy. Among the floral tributes were those from the Post Office engineering department, and friends and neighbours of Robin Hood Street, Green Street, and John Street. Messrs. O. C. Hamilton and Son made the arrangements.

Transcription by Michael Mew for the Friends of Newport & Carisbrooke Cemeteries

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