

Walter Willis

1881 census, Cross Lanes, Whippingham

Walter Willis	Head	Married	62	Unemployed	Newport, Isle of Wight	Blind
Miriam Willis	Wife	Married	61	Seamstress	Newtown, Isle of Wight	

Note: Miriam appears to have died 1898 in the Workhouse and was buried in Carisbrooke Cemetery.

Hampshire Telegraph – 12 July 1882

CRICKET

BENEFIT CRICKET MATCH. – On Friday a match was played on the Newport Cricket Ground, Shide, between teams composed of island gentlemen and players, for the pecuniary benefit of a blind and aged island cricketer, who is well-known as Blind Walter Willis. The attendance was very satisfactory, and included the Mayor, several members of the Corporation, and a goodly number of visitors. Play commenced at twelve o'clock, but the runs came rather slowly. At the time of drawing the stumps the players had scored on the two innings 95, with four wickets to fall, while their opponents' score for the two innings numbered 152. Spens played in good form, and succeeded in making the premier score of the day – 27. For the gentlemen might be mentioned a wonderful feat in bowling by Jolliffe, who took five wickets with a like number of successive balls. He was much applauded by the spectators. We hear that thanks to the energy and forethought of Major Peel, from 12*l.* to 13*l.* [about £1,500 to £1,650 in 2019] will be handed over to the recipient of the benefit cricket match.

Hampshire Advertiser – 19 May 1883

NEWPORT.

DEATH OF A FAMOUS ISLE OF WIGHT CRICKETER. – On Saturday last, Walter Willis, a noted cricketer in the Isle of Wight, passed away in his 65th year. The deceased was well known and much respected by local cricketers. He was a clever artizan, but owing to a sad misfortune he has for many years been deprived of the use of his eyesight. Prior to this, however, he had taken a great interest in cricket, and when about a year ago Major Peile generously undertook and carried out the arrangements incidental to a representative cricket match for the deceased's pecuniary benefit, we recollect how proudly the old man told his numerous interviewers "that he was the first round-arm bowler the Isle of Wight produced." Shortly after the match we have referred to, the deceased was overtaken by a lingering illness, which his many friends and benefactors in local cricketing circles will regret to learn terminated in his decease on the 12th inst. As a carver in wood he displayed rare talent, and his remarkable skill in this direction was a source from which he derived some pecuniary benefit in his declining years. His cork models, wrought with but one instrument – his pocket knife – were productions which never failed to attract considerable attention when exhibited on public occasions. His fame as a cricketer was fairly established, and will not soon be forgotten. He was familiarly known by the title of "Blind Walter." On Thursday his remains were interred at St. Paul's cemetery, in the presence of several relatives and friends.

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