

Frances Eldridge

Isle of Wight County Press 5 October 1907

SUDDEN DEATH OF MRS. JAMES ELDRIDGE

We record with deep regret the death, which took place with painful suddenness on Wednesday afternoon, of Mrs. James Eldridge, wife of Mr. James Eldridge, of Elmslee, Shide-cross, Newport, Clerk to the Borough Justices of Newport, Acting Deputy Coroner for the Island, and a member of the well-known firm of solicitors, Messrs. James Eldridge and Sons. The deceased lady had just left her home at Shide-cross with Mrs. Harrison, wife of the Vicar of St. John's, Newport, to walk to Broadlands, and was proceeding down Cypress-road to Mount Pleasant, when she suddenly complained to Mrs. Harrison of pain and almost instantly fell and died. Servants at Dr. Coombs's residence, which faces down the road, ran out to offer what assistance they could in attempting to restore the deceased lady, who at first was thought to have fainted, and Mr. R. J. Eldridge, nephew of the deceased, who was passing Cypress-road at the time, also went to the scene and assisted in removing her into the residence of Dr. Coombs. Dr. Coombs was out at the time, but Dr. Foster was telephoned for immediately, and he arrived as quickly as possible and pronounced life extinct, death, having apparently been due to syncope. When news of the sad event became publicly known it occasioned a very painful shock, the lamented deceased having been quite recently seen in the town, apparently in her usual health and greeting her friends with her always winning smile. The late Mrs. James Eldridge was over zealous in good works, and her death causes a blank in connection with many excellent institutions which it will be difficult to fill. She was most closely identified with St. John's Church (of which her husband has been churchwarden for some years), and she conducted the Young Women's Bible Class with great devotion and the happiest results; but her benevolent activities were not limited to St. John's. She was secretary of the Newport branch of the Y.W.C.A., a member of the committee of the Rescue and Preventive Society and of the committee of the Newport District Nursing Society, treasurer of the Soldiers' Home, Newport, president of the Newport branch of the Women's Temperance Association, president for the year of the Hants and Isle of Wight Union of British Women's Temperance Association, and one of the district heads of the Newport Guild of Help. She was on a philanthropic mission when the last clear call came for her, and it found her ready. The deceased lady, who was in her 53rd year, was the younger daughter of the late Mr. H. W. Thomas, of Pinchinthorpe House, Yorkshire. We trust it may be some solace to the bereaved husband and his sons to know that the deepest sympathy of the whole community is with them in their sorrow. The funeral takes place at St. John's Church, at 2 o'clock, on Monday afternoon.

On Thursday evening the Deputy Coroner for the Island (F. A. Joyce, Esq.), held an inquest at St. John's Vicarage. Mr. Paul Eldridge (deceased's elder son) and Mr. Robey J. Eldridge (nephew) were present on behalf of the family, and the Deputy Chief Constable (Supt. J. H. Gallaway) and Inspector Cass also attended. Mr. J. Sheath was chosen foreman of the jury.

The Coroner said he did not propose to call Mr. James Eldridge, with whom they all deeply sympathised in his great bereavement, and he thought the jury would agree, after hearing the evidence, that they need not trouble him to attend. The Coroner also mentioned that having regard to the evidence which would be given as to the deceased's lady's health he had not thought it necessary to direct that a post-mortem examination should be made, and he thought the jury would agree they could dispense with such examination.

Mr. Robey James Eldridge, solicitor, of Daylesford, Newport, gave evidence of identification, and stated that about 1 p.m. on Wednesday he spoke to the deceased, who was at the gate of Elmslee, Shide-cross, as he passed on his way home. She then seemed in her usual health. About 3 o'clock he was returning to the office in Newport when he saw two of Dr. Coombs's servants run across from his house into Cypress-road. Seeing some-one lying down in the road he went to the scene, and Mrs. Harrison, who was there with the servants, said that Mrs. Eldridge, who was on the ground, had fainted. Witness noticed that deceased made a slight noise – not exactly a groan – and that her lips were quite blue. The servants were trying to give her water. Witness and two other men carried deceased into the residence of Dr. Coombs, and as Dr. Coombs was out, Dr. Foster was telephoned for, and he arrived with all possible speed about 3.45. Deceased had enjoyed very good health, although she had been subject to shortness of breath, and witness had noticed that when she was walking uphill she had often to stop and wait for a minute, especially on Rose-hill. He believed that she had not been medically attended for three or four years. Deceased's father died quiet suddenly, simply falling down by his bedside, and her sister also died in a similar way, suddenly.

Mrs. Agnes Beatrice Harrison, wife of the Rev. Douglas C. W. Harrison, vicar of St. John's, Newport, said she was out walking with deceased on the previous afternoon about 3 o'clock. They walked from Shide-cross to Cypress-road, and were proceeding down Cypress-road, talking as they went, on the way to Miss. Mortimer's residence, when just before turning down into Mount Pleasant-road Mrs. Eldridge suddenly complained of a pain at the back of her neck and held on to witness for support, and then immediately fell to the ground. Deceased was evidently in pain. Witness thought she had fainted. Dr. Coombs's servants saw what happened from the Doctor's house and came running up, and Mr. Robey J. Eldridge also came up immediately after. Deceased had seemed quite in her usual health up to that time, and they were not walking out of the way fast.

By Mr. Whitcher: Deceased never regained consciousness.

By the Coroner: She was inclined to think deceased died at once.

Dr. Stanley Foster, practising in Newport, said that between 3 and 4 on the previous afternoon he received information that deceased had been taken seriously ill and was lying at Dr. Coombs's house at Shide. He arrived there about a quarter to 4 and was told that it was thought that Mrs. Eldridge had fainted. Deceased was lying on the sofa and he immediately saw that she was dead. There was no mark on her whatever. From his examination he said she had been dead about half an hour, and he should say that she died immediately after she fell. He had not the slightest doubt that deceased died from syncope – sudden failure of the heart's action.

By the Foreman: In his opinion nothing would have saved her life if he had been there immediately she was taken ill.

Asked by Mr. Whitcher whether the pain in the neck of which the deceased lady complained was an indication of heart trouble, witness said that he thought the pain would have been so sudden that there would not have been time to localise it.

The Coroner said that Dr. Underhill, the family doctor, was present on behalf of the family, but he had not attended deceased for three or four years, and he did not think his evidence would help them. Mr. James Eldridge, for whom they all felt very deeply in his bereavement, would place himself in their hands if they desired him to give evidence, but he did not think that further evidence was necessary. He had ascertained from Mr. Eldridge that his wife was in good health, although she had now and then complained of shortness of breath, but beyond that and a consultation with a medical man when away

from home, there did not seem to be any reason for alarm. Having heard the evidence, which had been given very clearly, he thought the jury would have no difficulty in coming to the conclusion that death was due to sudden failure of the heart's action.

The jury thought that further evidence was not necessary and at once returned a verdict of "Death from natural causes," in accordance with the medical evidence.

The Foreman said that the jury desired to express their deep sympathy with Mr. Eldridge and his family in their very sad bereavement.

The Coroner said no doubt the representatives of the family present would convey to Mr. Eldridge and other bereaved ones the expression of sympathy, in which every one would join.

Mr. Paul Eldridge, on behalf of the family, acknowledged the jury's expression of sympathy.

At the harvest festival service of the P.T.E. Society at Newport on Thursday evening, Miss Cheverton (secretary) said she was very sorry to have to bring a note of sadness into that service, but one of their very best friends had passed to her reward; she referred to the death of Mrs. James Eldridge. She was sure she would be voicing the wish of all their hearts in proposing that they should send to Mr. James Eldridge a message of their sincere sympathy. She well remembered the last occasion on which the late Mrs. Eldridge gave the address at their meeting, a very earnest address on the words "Brighten up." The proposition was carried in silence, the audience standing.

At the cafe chantant held at the Medina-hall on Thursday afternoon, in aid of the funds of the local Centre of the Oxford University Extension Movement, the Rev. W. H. Nutter said he need not say how much they all regretted the death of Mrs. Eldridge, and how much they sympathised with Mr. Eldridge, and had it been possible to have postponed the concert at the last moment they would have done so.

Isle of Wight County Press 12 October 1907

FUNERAL OF MRS. JAMES ELDRIDGE, OF NEWPORT.

Amidst manifestations of universal mourning and sympathy, the body of Mrs. James Eldridge, whose tragically sudden death we recorded in our last issue, was laid to rest in the churchyard of St. John's, Newport, under the very shadow of the church she loved so well, and in which she had worshipped since her advent to the Island as a happy bride. The funeral took place on Monday afternoon, and as showing the respect and esteem in which the deceased lady and her family were held, the church was filled to overflowing with a large congregation of mourning friends. Starting from Elmslee the cortège proceeded to the church, where the centre pews had been removed in order to make a broad aisle from the west door to the east end. Beautiful wreaths and floral tributes were suspended from the Communion rails and disposed about the lectern, only those from the immediate relatives being placed on the coffin. Whilst the congregation were assembling, Mr. Alex. Scadding played Beethoven's "Funeral march," the beautiful aria "Angels, ever bright and fair," and "Comfort ye" from the Messiah, whilst as the body was borne into the church the comforting strains of "O rest in the Lord" were heard from the organ. The coffin was carried into the church by members of the St. John's Men's Bible Class, of which Mr. James Eldridge was the devoted leader, the bearers being Messrs. H. Lower,

W. E. Wickens, W. Hayles, A. Fleming, G. Burt, and W. Standage, whilst Messrs. E. Daniels, J. Dewey, J. Sanders, W. Barton, J. H. Williams, and T. Buckler, also members of the St. John's Bible Class, acted as pall bearers. The cortège was met at the west door by the Vicar of St. John's (the Rev. D. U. W. Harrison), the Vicar of Newport (the Rev. H. Edmund Sharpe), the Rev. W. H. Leak (vicar of Ropley, Hants), and the Rev. A. C. Hutchinson. The mourners were Mr. James Eldridge (husband), Messrs. T. P. and E. H. M. Eldridge (sons), Mr. Lionel R. Wood (brother), Miss M. Wood (niece), Mr. and Mrs. Robey F. Eldridge, Mr. R. J. Eldridge, Mrs. K. W. Liesching, Mr. and Mrs. Frederic Stratton, Mr. H. Eldridge Stratton, Mr. and Mrs. Francis Pittis, Miss Jane Pittis, Miss Mary Eldridge, Dr. S. Nockolds, and Dr. S. V. H. Underhill, whilst the large congregation included the Mayor and Mayoress of Newport (Ald. W. J. Whittington, J.P., and Mrs. Whittington).

{only main mourners transcribed}

"Peace, perfect peace" was then sung with great impressiveness, and as the coffin was borne from the church Chopin's "Marche funèbre" was played by the organist. The interment took place in a brick grave at the south-east corner of the churchyard, and it had been lined with evergreens and flowers. Here the committal portion of the service was read by the Vicar of St John's in the presence of a very large number of people. The body was enclosed in a white elm shell, which was encased in a polished, oak coffin with brass mountings. The breast-plate bore the inscription: "Frances Eldridge, died October 2nd, 1907, aged 52 years." Messrs. Moorman and Son were the undertakers.

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