

Robert Benfield

Isle of Wight County Press - 23 May 1959

EX-PRISON OFFICIAL

SUDDEN DEATH OF MR. R. BENFIELD OF NEWPORT

The death occurred very suddenly on Friday week at his residence, Downs View, St. John's Road, Newport, of Mr. Robert Benfield, aged 63, an esteemed retired official of H.M. Prison Service and a valued worker for the Pyle Street Methodist Church, Newport. Mr. Benfield was drinking an early morning cup of tea in bed when he collapsed and died before medical aid could reach him. The Coroner ordered a post-mortem examination, which showed that death was due to sudden heart failure, and an inquest was unnecessary.

Mr. Benfield was the eldest son of the late Mr. Frederick A. Benfield, a former hospital principal officer at Parkhurst Prison, and Mrs. Benfield, of Heytesbury Road, Newport. After serving his apprenticeship as a boiler-maker with Messrs. Samuel White and Co., Cowes, he joined the I.W. Rifles and fought with them on Gallipoli and in Palestine in the first world war, being wounded several times. He joined the Prison Service at Dartmoor in 1921 and was advanced to clerical officer in 1928. In 1936 he was transferred to Camp Hill Prison and remained there until 1946, when he was appointed steward at Latchmere House, the Borstal reception centre at Richmond, Surrey. Owing to indifferent health he was posted back to Camp Hill, where he continued as an executive officer until his retirement in 1955. He married in 1922, Miss Susan Sansom, of Portland, who survives him with one daughter.

Mr. Benfield was a valued worker for the Methodist Church. He had served as a society steward of the Pyle Street church, Newport and was a trustee of the church and had been an enthusiastic supporter of foreign missions as the hon. treasurer of the circuit Overseas Missionary Society. His wife and daughter are also devoted workers for the church.

The funeral service took place there on Wednesday, the Minister (the Rev. D. J. Creamer) and the Rev. Dr. W. H. Mildon (circuit superintendent) officiating. A large congregation of friends, Prison Service colleagues and church members were present. Officers from the Camp Hill Corrective Training Prison acted as bearers. Mr. Creamer referred to Mr. Benfield's loyal and devoted services to the church, the Missionary Society and the circuit. The hymns "All as God wills" and "Gracious Spirit dwell with me" were sung. Mr. H. F. Payn being the organist.

The chief mourners were Mrs. Benfield (widow), Miss M. E. Benfield (daughter), Messrs. F. H. and S. Benfield (brothers),

Mesdames A. Carpenter and I. Philpot (sisters), Mr. G. Philpot (brother-in-law), Mesdames F. and S. Benfield (sisters-in-law), Mr. D. Philpot (nephew), Mrs. R. J. and Miss N. Pearce (cousins) and Messrs. F. R. Gracey and H. B. J. Lower. Mrs. S. Benfield (mother), Mrs. S. Sansom (mother-in-law) and Miss M. Benfield (sister) were unable to attend.

Others present included representatives of the Victoria Sisterhood, the church trustees, West Wight Circuit Overseas Missions Committee, Porchfield, Pallance Road, Cowes, East

Cowes, Chale and Rookley Methodist churches, Camp Hill Corrective Training Prison, Quay Street Methodist Junior Choir, I.W. Sisterhood Federation, Newport Football Club, West Wight Methodist Circuit, I.W. Rifles Comrades' Association, and the Civil Service Pensioners' Alliance. There were no flowers, by request, but donations instead to the Methodist and Missionary Society and the Pyle Street Methodist Church. The interment was at Carisbrooke Cemetery. Mr. W. W. Wells made the arrangements.

Transcription by Kate MacDonell for the Friends of Newport and Carisbrooke Cemeteries,
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