

Walter Charles Ewens

Isle of Wight County Press – 9 July 1938

WORKMAN'S FATAL FALL AT NEWPORT

DEATH OF POPULAR LEGIONIST

The death took place under tragic circumstances on Tuesday of Mr. William Charles Ewens, aged 50, of Overewe, Alderbury-road, Newport. During Monday evening Mrs. Ewens was working on the internal decoration of premises in the Upper High-street, when he fell from staging which he was using, receiving severe head injuries, which resulted in his death the following morning at the County Hospital at Ryde. A native of Portsmouth Mr. Ewens joined the Royal Engineers in 1906 and went to France with the Old Contemptibles. He came safely through the battle of Mons, but shortly afterwards was wounded and invalided out of the army. He counted the Mons Star as one of his proudest possessions. His connection with the Island dates from 14 years ago when he came to Newport, and later he became the licensee of the Mutton Inn, South-street. He has for some 10 years been employed by the firm of J. K. Alderslade, Ltd., as a general hand, and was held in high regard by his employers. He had been a member of the British Legion from its commencement, and while at Newport had taken a keen interest in the Newport and Carisbrooke branch. He was a very popular member and was always ready to render any service in his power, both to the legion and to his fellow members. Latterly, since the death of Mr. William Clarke, he had ably acted as standard bearer to the branch, and in this capacity attended many important Legion functions, including the National Festival of Remembrance at the Albert Hall on Armistice-day last year. His passing, and its tragic manner, is deeply regretted not only by his Legion comrades, but by all who knew him, and sincere sympathy is extended to his widow and step-daughter in their exceedingly sad bereavement. The funeral service will take place at Carisbrooke Church to-day (Saturday) at 2.15 p.m.

The Inquest.

Yesterday (Friday) afternoon the sad circumstances were investigated by the Acting Deputy Coroner (Dr. H. Y. Mansfield) at the Town-hall, Ryde. Mr. G. S. Green represented Messrs. Alderslade, by who deceased was employed, Mr. F. W. H. Cool was present on behalf of the widow, who was unable to attend, and Inspector H. Rogers represented the police. The Coroner had the assistance of a jury, of whom Mr. A. F. Hanson was the foreman.

Hilda M. Teunon, senior house surgeon at the County Hospital, said deceased was admitted just before 10 p.m. on Monday. He was deeply unconscious, suffering from shock, a fractured skull, and injury to the brain. He died at 6.45 a.m. the following day.

William M. Alderslade, a director of Messrs. J. K. Alderslade, Ltd., of 45 High-street, Newport, said deceased had been employed by the company as a storeman for the last three years, and had worked for the firm before it became a company. He was a splendid man at his job. Occasionally he did various outside jobs for witness and other people in his spare time. Witness was the owner of 64 High-street, a three-storied building with two flats over a shop. He received a request from one of his tenants that some decorations were

needed, and he asked deceased to see what was required and to make the arrangements. On July 4th he was informed that there had been an accident, and on the following morning he visited the scene and was surprised at the work which deceased had undertaken on his own. Had witness known he would have had someone to assist him. He knew Ewens suffered from fits of giddiness some years ago, but he had not complained recently.

Frank J. Stratton, insurance agent and tenant of the top flat, said he approached Mr. Alderslade about having the ceiling whitewashed. Deceased came to see what was necessary. Witness was anxious to get the work done and deceased arranged to come on Monday evening, bringing with him ladders and other things required to do the job. At about 8.45 he was at the back of the house when his wife called to him from an upstairs window, and on going to the hall he found deceased lying there, having fallen a distance of about 45 ft. Witness afterwards saw that one of the ladders deceased was using had slipped and the plank had fallen. – A juror asked if it was not illegal to work on a single plank above a height of 30ft. – The Coroner said he knew of no such regulation. The facts had been reported to the Home Office, who dealt with breaches of the regulations, and they were not represented.

Leslie Harold Frank Matthews, a baker's roundsman and the occupant of the lower flat, said he returned home from work at 6.30 deceased was at work on the ceiling above. Later witness was in his living room when he heard a terrible crash, and found deceased lying on the ground floor. He afterwards noticed that the plank between the ladders had fallen.

P.C. Mackett said he arrived on the scene at the same time as the doctor and found deceased lying on the ground floor passage just inside the front door. He had severe injuries to the head, and had lost a considerable amount of blood. Deceased had erected a long ladder, 11ft.8in., from the fourth stair of the landing and another 9ft.8in., long. On the other side of the stairs he had a third ladder, 9ft.8in. long, resting against the wall, and between that ladder and the longer one he had a plank 6ft.6in long and 7in. wide, resting on the two ladders. The banister just above his platform was 38ft. from the ground floor. Deceased would have completed the work within a matter of a few minutes. Witness was unable to find any cords or lashings for the ladders. He found that the latter supporting the longer one had slipped out of place, the longer one had fallen towards the wall, and the plank had slipped two rungs on the ladder. By the tilt of the ladder deceased must have fallen back down the well of the staircase, a distance of about 40ft., without touching the banisters. He was a stout man weighing about 14 stone.

The Coroner said it was a very unfortunate accident. Deceased was an excellent workman, but he was perhaps a little too confident on that occasion, as he did not secure the ladders quite as he should have done.

The jury returned a verdict of accidental death, and in recording it the Coroner expressed deep sympathy with the widow and with Mr. Alderslade in the loss of such an excellent workman. – Mr. Green, on behalf of Mr. Alderslade, expressed deep sympathy with the widow in her very tragic loss. Deceased was held in very high esteem by the firm. He also thanked the police and nurses. – Mr. Cool, on behalf of the widow, acknowledged the expressions of sympathy and also tendered he thanks to those who assisted.

Isle of Wight County Press – 16 July 1938

EX-SERVICE MAN'S FUNERAL AT CARISBROOKE

THE LATE MR. W. C. EWENS.

The funeral of Mr. Walter Charles Ewens, of Overewe, Alderbury-road, whose death at the age of 50, as the result of an accident, was reported last week, took place at Carisbrooke on Saturday amid demonstrations of respect from three ex-Service men's organisations. The first part of the service was held in Carisbrooke Church. The coffin, draped with the Union Jack, was carried into the church along a path lined by representatives of the Newport and Carisbrooke branch of the British Legion (men's and women's sections), the I.W. Old Contemptibles' Associations, and the South African War Veterans' Association. The service was conducted by the Rev. H. Ewbank (vicar), assisted by the Rev. J. W. F. Wayet (rector of Gatcombe), chaplains to the Newport and Carisbrooke British Legion. The hymn "O God, our Help," was sung. In a tribute to the deceased Mr. Ewbank said his special quality was his extreme willingness to help anyone at any time, even to his own hurt. Members of the British Legion, particularly, would miss his cheery presence and fine figure. The presence of so many of his old comrades that day proved the respect and esteem in which he was held. The mourners were Mrs. Ewens (widow), Mr. Roy Morris (son-in-law), Mr. and Mrs. Hawkins (father-in-law and mother-in-law), and Mr. T. Seal. Mrs. Roy Morris, Mr. and Mrs. A. Wheable, of Portsmouth, Mr. and Mrs. E. Smart, and Mr. and Mrs. W. Dugan, of Gosport were prevented from attending. Deceased's employers, Messrs. J. K. Alderslade, Ltd., were represented by Messrs. W. Alderslade and H. E. Day (directors), and Mr. C. Hudson (director and secretary). The representatives of ex-Service organisations present were: Newport and Carisbrooke branch British Legion ; women's section British Legion ; Old Contemptibles Association ; South African War Veteran's Association The Ryde branch of the British Legion sent their standard, borne by Standard-bearer J. Price.

The interment was at Carisbrooke Cemetery, where three Legionists and three Old Contemptibles acted as bearers, and Bdr. Bloomfield of the 219th A.A. Battery sounded the Last Post and the Reveille. After the committal members of the Legion dropped poppies on the coffin as they filed past the grave, which was lined with roses and evergreens.

There were numerous wreaths...

The arrangements were carried out by Messrs. H. and F. Damp.

The witnesses at the inquest last week surrendered their fees to the widow, who has since given them to the Police Orphanage.

*Transcription by Tony Barton for the Friends of Newport and Carisbrooke Cemeteries,
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