

Article from County Press, 28 January 1911

A RYDE FIREMAN KILLED IN ALDERSHOT

IMPRESSIVE FUNERAL

As announced last week, two Aldershot firemen, Reggie HUGHES and Leonard PERKIS, the latter a native of Ryde, were killed on Wednesday of last week while at drill. When the order was given to stop the practice, which was held to try out a new twin branch, PERKIS was situated on the new fire escape, buckled to it in the usual manner, the escape being extended to two-thirds of its height and utilised for the purpose of a water tower. HUGHES who was manipulating the hydrant had just shut off the water. Just then the escape was seen to sway; those below uttered a warning shout to PERKIS, but to their horror, the escape gave a sudden lurch, and toppled over with its human burden, crashing heavily to the ground. It fell towards the hydrant at which Mr HUGHES was still standing, and before he could be warned the heavy structure had caught him on the head and crushed him to the ground, killing him instantly. PERKIS, who was hooked to the ladder with a Pompier belt, came down with it and was flung unconscious to the ground. Drs COHEN and GIBSON were soon in attendance. PERKIS, who had fractured his spine, was taken to the hospital and death took place a few hours later. PERKIS, who was an artist and sign writer by trade, had made a hobby of fire-brigade work. He leaves a widow and a little boy. At the inquest last Friday sympathy with bereaved relatives was expressed by Mr E.A. UNDERWOOD, the Chairman of the Aldershot District Council, officials of the fire brigade, and police. The jury returned a verdict of "Accidental death" but suggested that the escape should not again be used as a water tower without guy ropes. One fireman in giving evidence said he saw PERKIS shake his right foot over the side of the escape and leaning towards the side on which the escape fell.

The funeral of the late fireman Leonard Alfred PERKIS took place on Tuesday at Ryde and was a very impressive ceremony. Over 100 firemen, representing four brigades from the mainland and seven from the island, were present in full uniform, and the procession from the Esplanade to the Cemetery formed a most striking spectacle. A funeral service had been held on Monday at Holy Trinity Church, Aldershot, the coffins of PERKIS and the other fireman who was killed being carried on separate fire engines. After the interment of Fireman HUGHES at Aldershot, the coffin containing the remains of Fireman PERKIS was conveyed to Ryde. It was brought by train from the pier head to the Esplanade Station where

the members of various brigades has assembled, and it was placed on the Ryde fire engine, which was drawn by four horses. The coffin was draped with the Union Jack, and upon it was placed the deceased fireman's helmet and hatchet, while the fire engine was covered with beautiful wreaths. The driver's whip was draped with crepe. Twelve of the Ryde brigade stood on the sides of the engine in the positions they occupy when on active duty. The cortège, as it passed through the town, was watched by a large concourse of people with sympathetic interest, many of the business establishments exhibiting signs of mourning. At the head of the procession was the Shanklin Town Band, (under bandmaster COMDEN), whose drums were muffled and who played the "Dead March" in *Saul*, on the way to the church and Chopin's "Marche funèbre" while marching to the Cemetery. At the Ryde Parish Church, the coffin was met at the north door by the Vicar (the Rev Hugh LE FLEMING), the Rev C.L. BLAKE, and the Churchwardens (Major J. ELLERY and Mr. J. Benham PURNELL). The service was fully choral, and the organist (Dr. R. Yates MANDER) played "O rest in the Lord" as an opening voluntary and the "Dead march" in *Saul* at the close of the service. The hymns were "When our heads are bowed with thee" and "My God, my Father, while I stray" Psalm xc was also sung. There was a large congregation at the church and again at the graveside, where the committal sentences were said by the Rev. C. L. BLAKE. The coffin was of polished elm and the brass plate bore the inscription " Leonard Alfred PERKIS, died January 18 1911, aged 31years. The mourners were Mrs. PERKIS, widow, Messrs Walter, Ernest, George and Charles PERKIS, (brothers) Mr. and Mrs. William PERKIS (brother and sister in law) the Misses Kate, Annie, and Alice PERKIS (sisters), Mr and Mrs. J. WHEELER, (sister and brother in law), Mr and Mrs E. M. URRY (sister in law), Mrs Arthur MARTIN (sister in law); Mr and Mrs. BLAVER (uncle and aunt), Mr. William PERKIS (cousin), and Mr. H. PERKIS (cousin). The Chairman of the Aldershot District Council (Mr. E.A. UNDERWOOD, J.P.), Mr. HALL and Mr. WARNE (deceased's employers), and Messrs. J. G. DUFFET, J. RASHLEY, A.F. WRIGHT, W. DORE, J.H. OSBORNE, C.J. DE LANNAY, M. WILLIS, J.F. EARLE, W. RICHARDS, G. VANNER, and J. BACHELOR were amongst those present. At the Cemetery the firemen formed a cordon around the grave, and after the service, passed on each side of the grave in pairs, clasping hands over the coffin, and saluting their dead comrade. The various fire brigades represented were: Aldershot – Capt. H.S. MARSHALLSAY, Capt. N. SOLOMAN (superintendent) and Mr Norman CLINTON (assistant superintendent); Alton – Second Officer DEBENHAM; Guilford – Supt. HOLT; Farnborough; Fareham; EMESWORTH; Ryde – Capt. S.C. SAPSWORTH and Mr. A. TEAGUE

(chairman of the Fire Brigade Committee) Newport – Capt. N.H.T. MURSELL; Cowes – Capt. WILLSTEAD; East Cowes – Capt. FARRELL; Ventnor – Capt. W. PEARSON; Sandown – Capt. J. HORE, J.P. (vice-president of the Southern Fire Brigade's Union) and Second Officer Dr BILLINGS; Shanklin – Capt. O. RAYNER. The Church of England Men's Society, of which the deceased was a member, was represented at the funeral.

The following is a list of the wreaths: With heartfelt sympathy, from Mr and Mrs Glanville PIGGOTT; in sympathy, from the neighbours at Cavendish Road, Aldershot; with deepest sympathy, from the members of the Aldershot troop, Hants Carabiniers; with sincere sympathy from the Guilford Fire Brigade; with deepest sympathy from the hon. members A.V.F.B.; much sympathy from Drs LANDER and LINDSAY; in sorrow and sympathy, from the clergy, choirmaster, and fellow members of Holy Trinity Church, Aldershot; from the Army Fire Brigade, Aldershot; with deepest sympathy, from the officers and men, Farnborough F.B.; with deepest sympathy from the Alton F.B.; from Mr and Mrs F. GILBERT and Gertie, Aldershot; in loving memory of my dear husband from his broken-hearted wife; with sincerest sympathy from the officers of the Aldershot Volunteer Fire Brigade; Mr and Mrs CONSTANT and family, with sincere sympathy; in sincere sympathy, from the Southern District National Fire Brigades union; with deepest sympathy from his sorrowing mother, brothers and sisters; from Supt. HAWKINS and members of the Aldershot Police; from the members of the non-commissioned officers' mess, Royal Engineers, Aldershot; with deepest sympathy, from aunt, uncle and Roy; with deepest sympathy from the Corporals of the 1st Leicestershire Regiment; with deepest sympathy from Mr and Mrs WEEDHATCH; with deepest sympathy from the employees of Thomas White and Co. Ltd; with deep regret, from the Chairman, Vice-Chairman, and members of the Aldershot Urban District Council; Mr and Mrs A. WARNER and family; with deepest sympathy from the Wokingham Brigade; Mr and Mrs F. Benedict TRODD, Royal Engineers' mess, Aldershot; with deep sorrow and regret, Mr and Mrs MARSHALLSAY; from the members of the sergeants' mess, 19th (Prince of Wales Own) Hussars; Mr and Mrs BENNETT; from the officers and men of the Grayshott and Hindhead Fire Brigade; with deepest sympathy, from the Theatre Staff, Aldershot; to the late Fireman Perkis with deepest mark of sympathy from his departed comrade's par(ents), sisters and brothers; in affectionate remembrance Ivy and Arthur; with deepest sorrow from the Lynham Road detachment; in deepest sympathy from the national Fire Brigades Union head-quarters, Bedford; from the officers and men Fareham F.B.; with deepest sympathy from Mr and Mrs J. SALSBURY, Farnborough; Annie, Jack, and Mother; Mr and Mrs WEARTH,

Highgate; Aunt Ellen, May and Charlie; Fred PRICE; Mrs URRY, Ryde; the sergeants mess of the Dragoon Guards; with deep sympathy, from the officers, non-commissioned officers and men of E Company, 4th Hants Regiment; with deepest sympathy from the members of the Aldershot Conservative Working Men's Club; with deepest sympathy from the members of the Fleet F.B.; in loving sympathy, from Ida; Min and Will Norris; Mr and Mrs Arthur HALL and family; with deepest sympathy from members of the Ryde Fire Brigade (S.C. SAPSWORTH, captain); Mr and Mrs THURSTON; Alice and Jack; with deep sympathy G.S JAMES; with deep sympathy, from Mr and Mrs GUBBINS and family; with sincere sympathy Albert and Bee; with fond love to Uncle Len from Betty and Joan; with deepest sympathy from the members of the East Cowes F.B. Among the more noticeable wreaths were those sent by the Aldershot Fire Brigade, of daffodils, snowdrops, and lilies-of-the-valley, and from the Ryde Fire Brigade, which was of laurel, with the initials R.F.B. outlined in red and white flowers.

The members of the various brigades were subsequently entertained to tea at the Town-hall, prior to their departure for their various houses, the arrangements being in the hands of Capt J. DORE and Mr. A. TEAGUE. A number of ladies assisted in attending to the requirements of the men. – After tea, Capt MARSHALLSAY thanked the Island Brigades for their welcome. He spoke of the late Fireman PERKIS as a favourite in the brigade and in the town generally. _ Capt. DORE also tendered the sincere sympathy of the Island Brigades to the family of the deceased and to the Aldershot Brigade in the loss of a fine young fireman. That day's gathering showed the spirit of brotherhood throughout the Fire Service, because it was not done for show, but on account of the sympathy from one brigade to another.

The funeral arrangements were carried out by Messrs FINCH and Sons Aldershot and Mr. C. DUNKINSON (Ryde).

The deceased was formerly a choirboy at All Saints Church, By a somewhat singular co-incidence, his father in law, Ex P.S. MARTIN died a year ago on Wednesday.

The police arrangements during the funeral were efficiently made by the Chief Constable (Mr. Charles GREENS....) assisted by P.S. WATSON, P.S. RYALL, Acting Sergeant REES and a number of constables.

Mrs. Charles PERKIS and family desire to return their sincere thanks for the great sympathy so widely shown to them in their bereavement and for flowers.