

RYDE WOMAN'S DEATH FROM GANGRENE.

Insufficient evidence to show the cause.

We regret to announce the death of Mrs. **Ethel Mary DUFFETT**, which took place at her residence, Beau-Cote, Wood Street, early on Wednesday morning last. Mrs. DUFFETT, who was 58, years of age, was the second wife of Mr. J.G. DUFFETT, who carries on business at High Street. For ten years they resided at Beanacre, Ashe, and only recently returned to live at Ryde. Mrs DUFFETT had been ill since July, and underwent an operation a short time ago. Her passing will be greatly regretted by a wide circle of friends to whom her generous and unselfish disposition had endeared her. She leaves a family, but has been a mother to the children of her step-daughter who died some years ago. She had done such unostentatious work for others, almost her last labours being on behalf of the bazaar for Dr. BARNARDO'S Homes.

THE INQUEST

On Friday afternoon last the Acting Deputy Coroner (Mr. Francis A. JOYCE) sat with the jury at High Street Methodist Schoolroom to enquire into the circumstances surrounding the death. Mr. G. FARDELL watched the proceedings for Mr. James George DUFFETT, deceased's husband, and Mr. L.F. GLANVILLE representing the Matron of the Nursing Home, Mrs. M. POWELL. Inspector H. ROGERS attended on behalf of the police. A jury was empanelled with Mr. H.V. TAYLOR as foreman.

The deceased's husband said he resided at 3, Wood Street, Ryde. His wife had been subject to illness since July 1932, and among other things was suffering from diabetes. She suffered from pains in her breast and it was considered advisable that she should undergo an operation. She was removed to the Vectis Nursing Home where the operation was performed on November 5th. Witness understood that hot-water bottles had been placed at her feet during the operation. He went to the Home to see his wife after the operation. He first heard that she had strange burns on her feet a day or two after the operation which he understood were caused by hot-water bottles. As he understood it, it originated gangrene from which she died. His wife did not tell him she had been burned, but mentioned it to friends. She had no burns before entering the Nursing Home. Her skin was very tender and she informed those at the Nursing Home of that. To his knowledge she had not two bruised toes when she entered the Nursing Home, but he did not at any time see her feet.

Dr. Langdon Percival Lorimer FIRMAN-EDWARDS said that he made a post mortem examination on the external appearance of the body on Tuesday. The right foot showed extreme gangrene and the whole appearance was of advanced gangrene. Death was due to gangrene due to injuries to the foot. Witness could not find traces of burns owing to gangrene, but if there were any they were confined to the foot. A very trivial injury might cause gangrene in a person such as deceased, but he would not expect gangrene to arise from a superficial burn in a healthy person.

Dr. John DOCKRAY said that he had attended Mrs. DUFFETT since July, 1932. On October 29, in conjunction with Dr. HARLOW, he found that an operation was necessary, and it was performed at the Nursing Home by Dr. HARLOW. He received information from Dr. POWELL late on the afternoon of November 7 that Mrs. DUFFETT had burned her right foot. He examined it and found a blister on all five toes. He regarded the injuries as superficial in character and not likely to have serious results. On November 19 she left for her home, her condition then being that the scar from the operation had healed and the burn was healed, though there was a simple dressing over the foot. The diabetes was checked and under control. Gangrene was diagnosed on November 22. Had the patient been in normal health it was more than likely that no results would have come from the burns.

The Coroner: Do you still trace the origin of the gangrene to the burn? –No, I cannot definitely. There are points that are suggestive and points which are against.

The Coroner: I see in the medical certificate you gave you don't refer to the injury to the foot all. Don't you think that was an error on your part, and that it was due to the medical profession and the necessity of exactitude in regard to the circumstances of death that you should have disclosed it or alternatively have rung up the Coroner and informed him ? --I apologise. I might have rung you up.

The Coroner: The position might have been a serious one. I might have had to get an exhumation order and have the body exhumed. It was your duty either to disclose it on the certificate or alternatively to have rung up the Coroner: --I agree, but I considered the burn such a trivial matter.

The Coroner: You recognise that now ? --Yes I agree.

The Coroner; The medical certificates are something on which the public rely, and if they do not get accurate information on them it shakes the faith of the public in the medical profession. But for the intervention of the Registrar, who happened to hear of it. I might have had to get an exhumation order and then I am afraid you would be morally responsible for it.

Dr. DOCKRAY was asked by Mr. FARDELL from what other cause he suggested gangrene arose, and he replied that he had no other alternative. One factor suggesting it was that the burns were on the foot affected, and one factor against it was that it was not usual to get a latent period as 14 days between the healing of the burn and the beginning of gangrene.

Asked by the Coroner if he could agree with the opinion of his medical colleague at that point, Dr. EDWARDS said he could.

In reply to the foreman, Dr. DOCKRAY said when gangrene was discovered the question of an operation was discussed, but it was considered that the patient was not equal to it.

Mrs. Nellie POWELL, Matron of the Vectis Nursing Home, Ryde, said that after the operation her bed was warmed by three rubber hot water bottles, these were removed and she was covered by two warm blankets. The rubber water bottle with a covering was placed to the left of her foot outside the two blankets and three other blankets were placed on top of the bottle. She was wearing thick operation stockings. She was put to bed at about one o'clock. Nurse PEARSON, Nurse KURETON and Nurse CASEY relieved one another during the lunch period. At about six o'clock on Sunday evening Sister THOMAS reported burns on the patient's toes. Witness examined the toes and found the blisters, but the patient told her not to worry about that as they were bruised before she entered the home. The three hot water bottles were removed from the bed and witness applied one. Nurse PEARSON and Nurse KURETON looked after her and both told the witness that they did not touch the bottles. The bottle was renewed at about six o'clock in the evening. She could not account for the burning because they took a more than ordinary precautions owing to the patient remarking that she was susceptible to burns. Deceased did not move easily and was rather a helpless patient. She did not complain about the foot.

Nurse Margaret CASEY gave evidence that she took the stockings off the patient on November 5th and she was positive that there was no burn. She filled the bottle with water that was not boiling but hot enough for the purpose. The patient had two blankets between herself and the bottle.

Nurse Daisy Mirian PURCHASE, the night nurse, said she went on duty at nine o'clock and was in charge of the patient practically the whole of the night. During that period there was no renewal of hot water bottles.

The Coroner said that the matter was too much in doubt to give a decided verdict. He supposed that the deceased died from diabetic gangrene which was probably due to burning.

The jury returned a verdict that death resulted from diabetic gangrene, but that there was insufficient evidence to show that gangrene had been caused by burning or otherwise.

THE FUNERAL

The funeral took place on Friday afternoon at the Parish Church and was conducted by the Rev. A.H.W. HARLOW. The husband and children were the chief mourners. The interment was at the Cemetery and the grave was covered with beautiful flowers. The remains were contained in a polished elm coffin with brass furniture. Among a large number of sympathising friends present

were Mrs. FRAMPTON (representing the Women Legionaries) Mr. and Mrs. E.J. SALTER, Mr. A.F. WRIGHT, T.C., Mr. and Mrs. M.J. RUMSEY, Mr. J.W. BENNETT, Mr. R. LONG, Mr. B.BARTLEY, Mr. D. HANSON (the Conservative Clubs), Miss TILLEY, Mr. S. ATTWOOD, Mr. J. BACHENO, Mr. G. RUSSELL, Mr. and Mrs. A. YOUNG, Lt.-Col. C.L. ELLERY, Mr. H. WILTSHIRE, Mr. C. STEARS, Mr. C.V. JENVEY (Haylands Horticultural Society), Mr. W. BROOKER (Mission to Seamen), Mr. B.F. HOLNESS, Mr. J.B. PURNELL, Mr. and Mrs. WELLESLEY –HILL, Mr. J. WHITE, Mr. T. CASS, Mr. J. COYNE, Mr. W.T. SMITH, Mr. T.W. KEMP, Mr. R.W.G. RUSSELL.

Beautiful floral tributes were sent from the following: In loving memory of a dear wife; Ralph and Emily; Charlie, Leslie and Mary; Little Jimmy; Walter and Ethel; from Fred (HARVEY); Roland; Harry; Evelyn, and Barbara; mother, Will and Annie; Mr. and Mrs. JOHNCOX, Jack, Marion and Herbert; F.C. FORER and two sons; Nylda and Gordon; Mrs. G. BENNETT; Mr. and Mrs. LOADER and Naomi; Miss COLLYER; from Nannie; L.C.C. RUSSELL; Mr. and Mrs. G. SUTTON; Mr. and Mrs. CARTER; Mr. and Mrs. H. AUSTIN; Mr. and Mrs. E.J. SALTER; WELLESLEY and SALLIE; members Ryde Rowing Club; Mr. and Mrs. BARTLEY; Emmie, Lil and family; Roland, Grace and family; Mr. and Mrs. BURKE and family; Mr. and Mrs. HANSON; Mr. and Mrs. NEWBERRY; Ryde Royal Regatta Committee; Mrs. VANNER and Gordon, Mr. and Mrs. BRADLEY and children; Betty, Tut, and Mary, John, Kath, and “My Peg”; Mr. and Mrs. SUTHERS and Kathleen; Mr. and Mrs. DEWSBURY; Mr. and Mrs. Percy COOMBES; Haylands Red Rovers Boys Football Club; Haylands Horticultural Society; Miss SOUTER; Mr. and Mrs. BRISTOWE; Miss BAIRD; Tommy; Mr. and Mrs. HOLIS; from all at Bournemouth; from Mabel; “Shop Mary”; Mr. and Mrs. A.G. YOUNG; Mr. and Mrs. SHACKLES and family; Mrs. COOK and family; Col. And Elsie ELLERY; Mrs. WILSON; Mrs. WEST and Kathleen; Mr. and Mrs. RUMSEY; Marjorie MINTER; Harry and Tilly, and Arthur; Mr. and Mrs. TIMMS; Mrs. BROOKES; Mr. and Mrs. COYNE; Miss G.C. GAGE; the Women’s Section British Legion; Ann and Ned.

Researched and typed by
Ann Barrett
Diana Wood
Marilyn Newsham