

DEATH FOLLOWS ATTACK BY FAMILY DOG
Inquest on Octogenarian

Injuries sustained when the family's three-year-old Alsatian dog "Winston" sprang at her were described at the inquest on Saturday on Mrs. Mary Ann BLANE, a widow aged 82, of Ravenswood, Appley Rise, Ryde. Mrs. BLANE died at Ravenswood during Thursday night.

The Island Coroner (Mr. R. E. A. WEBSTER) conducted the inquest at the house, and Sergeant A. MAYBURY represented the police.

Dr. Helen B. SUTHERLAND said she was told that Mrs. BLANE had been knocked down by the dog at the house on August 31st and sustained certain injuries. Dr. L. P. L. FIRMAN EDWARDS attended Mrs. BLANE, and since from returning from her holiday on September 11th, witness had attended her. Mrs. BLANE was suffering from injury to her ribs, the right side of her chest and bruises, and contracted hypostatic congestion of both lungs.

On the day before she died witness found Mrs. BLANE cold, collapsed and rather delirious and realised she was not going to get better. During the night she passed away in her sleep. The following day witness examined her, and found she had died from hypostatic congestion of the lungs following injuries to the ribs and shock.

Sprang Without Warning

Ernest William DALE, a waiter living in the basement flat at Ravenswood, said that at 10.40 a.m. on August 31st he was standing in the hall with his wife talking to Mrs. PURSSELL, a daughter of Mrs. BLANE. He had just taken the dog for a walk and it was lying down just outside the main partition doors near the front door steps. Mrs. BLANE came out of the breakfast room into the hall and asked if the papers had come.

"The dog seemed to get up in a casual sort of way," said Mr. DALE. "He seemed to take two or three casual steps, and then, without any warning, sprang through the air and caught Mrs. BLANE on her right shoulder, pushing her with considerable force against the banister rail which broke."

Mr. DALE said the dog neither snarled nor growled. He did not get the impression of the dog being playful or roused. He had not known the dog to attack anyone before, except that he did hear it had attacked Mr. BLANE once before.

When witness took him out for a walk, the dog was very well behaved. It was very good with children.

Dog Destroyed

After the dog had sprung at Mrs. BLANE she complained that her right leg and right side hurt. Witness did not have to use particular force to drag the dog away - he really came quietly. He could give no reason why the dog should do that. The same evening it was destroyed.

Bernard Arthur Charles PURSELL, an inspector of British Railways, of 115 Montague Road, Walton, said that at 5.45 a.m. on Friday, having got up early to go to the mainland, he went in to see how his grandmother was. From her appearance he concluded she had passed away in her sleep.

Mrs. Mary PURSELL, of Ravenswood, said her mother (Mrs. BLANE) had been living with her for the past three years. Her mother was the widow of Charles BLANE, a master butcher, and considering her age had enjoyed very good health.

When her mother first came to live with her, they took charge of an Alsatian puppy for its owner, Mr. Arthur ASHE, a son-in-law. Winston was a very friendly dog, but rather temperamental. On August 27th witness's mother was sitting near the dog, which was eating a biscuit. Her mother was going to get the dog another biscuit, but witness said, "Let him get it himself."

Not Friendly

Her mother insisted on getting the biscuit, and the dog seemed to sense it and resent it. He jumped at her and she fell against a coffee table. The dog caught hold of her mother's dress near the shoulder with his teeth, but did not bite her or snarl. Witness pulled the dog off and fetched Mr. DALE, who gave him a beating. Witness gave her mother a little brandy and she seemed all right.

The dog came in and "said he was sorry," said Mrs. PURSSELL, who added that she kept him away from her mother until the morning of August 31st.

"The dog always used to jump up in a friendly way at my mother in the mornings," said Mrs. PURSSELL, "but I don't think he had that friendly feeling that morning. I don't think he had forgotten Friday night."

The Coroner recorded a verdict that death was due to hypostatic congestion of the lungs following injuries to the ribs and shock after the deceased had been knocked down by the family dog on August 31st.

"You cannot tell with Alsatian dogs," said the Coroner.

NB: We note that the surname in the above report was spelt "BLANE" but the correct spelling was "BLAINE" as found in all other records

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