

6 Fred Roberts. Killed in an accident 8 October 1959



Barrow man dies after fall

FRED ROBERTS (27) died after a fall early today, the eve of his wedding.

His parents, who live at 11 Barnard Street, Barrow, were to have attended his wedding in Glasgow tomorrow, but instead travelled to Tyneside where he has been working.

Mr. Roberts was a Rugby Union threequarter with North Durham, and a member of the senior 15 for a number of years. He died before reaching hospital after falling down stairs at the clubhouse.

ROBERTS.—October 8 (suddenly) at Newcastle. Frederick, aged 27, son of Mr. and Mrs. A. V. Roberts, 11 Barnard Street. Funeral arrangements later.

IN LOVING MEMORY
OF
FRED

BELOVED HUSBAND OF
HANNAH HENDERSON

WHO DIED OCT. 24TH 1935,
AGED 70 YEARS

ALSO OF THE ABOVE
HANNAH HENDERSON

WHO DIED MAR 18TH 1956
AGED 88 YEARS

ALSO **FREDERICK JAMES**,
GRANDSON OF THE ABOVE & BELOVED SON OF
VICTOR & ANNIE ROBERTS

ACCIDENTALLY KILLED ON HIS WEDDING EVE
8TH OCT. 1959, AGED 27 YEARS

A poignant story, of a man who died on his stag night. The *North West Evening Mail* reported his death on the 9 October 1959, and the opening of the Inquest the following day:

INQUEST ON BARROW MAN ADJOURNED

After evidence of identification, an inquest on Fred Roberts, 27 year-old North Durham Rugby player, of Barnard Street, Barrow, was at Gateshead today, adjourned until next week.

Roberts died almost on the eve of his wedding. He had been due to travel to Glasgow to marry today.

Roberts had attended a bachelor party in North Durham Rugby Club pavilion, at Gateshead, and during the celebrations fell down some stairs. He died on the way to hospital without regaining consciousness.

The *NWEM* reported on the resumed inquest on 20 October 1959:

Death fall at party – accident

The Gateshead coroner, Mr. L. Heron, recorded a verdict of Accidental death at the inquest last night on Frederick James Roberts (27), advertising clerk, of Barnard Street, Barrow, lodging in Louvaine Place, Newcastle.

Roberts died from a fractured skull in the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Gateshead, the day before he was due to have married Miss Margaret Semple, a clerk at the Ministry of Pensions and National Insurance.

A North Durham Rugby player and a Benwell cricketer, he had given a stag party for his friends at the North Durham Rugby clubhouse, and accidentally fell down 17 steep stone stairs leading from a narrow landing outside the clubroom to the door.

The coroner said it was a sad case but intensive enquiries showed that the party had taken the usual course and he thought there was no clear evidence of how Roberts came to fall downstairs.

It was equally clear there had been no horse play, that Roberts was nothing other than his usual self and that no-one caused him to fall.

‘JOLLY PARTY’

William Myers Green, a clerk, of Langdale Close, Long Benton, said it was a “jolly party”, and everyone had something to drink, but no-one was any the worse for drink or indulged in horse play.

Roberts, he said, was “perfectly sober”. As the party broke up Roberts was leaning against the wall between the room and the top of the staircase about a yard from the steps.

“I spoke to him about the wedding and his fiancé and he seemed to be perfectly all right and was talking quite sensibly. Suddenly I saw him rolling down the stairs tumbling over and over and he struck his head on the cement at the bottom. The only reason I can think of is that he must have moved his feet from where he was standing on to the steps. One second we were talking and the next he was falling down the stairs”.

NOTHING UNUSUAL

Other witnesses said “It was a good party” but there was nothing unusual about it.

Dr. William Locke said the cause of death was shock owing to a fractured skull. The report from the Gosforth Forensic Science Laboratory showed that Roberts had had some drink but not an unusual amount.