



The CAULDRON

Witchcraft, Paganism & Folklore

No 147 February 2013

www.the-cauldron.org.uk ISSN:0964-5594

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DOROTHY CLUTTERBUCK AND A CAR ACCIDENT

William Wallworth

Back in November 2012 I found this article from the *Western Gazette* of Friday June 26th 1925 in the British Newspaper Archive online at <http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk>. I have read Philip Heselton's book *Wiccan Roots* and now have *Witchfather* volume one and two. In the former he researched Dorothy Clutterbuck in detail. The following article opens another window on her life. Whether it changed her in anyway, it is an incident that would have had a profound effect on some people if it happened to them. While driving her car Clutterbuck was involved in the death of a cyclist at the Toller Down crossroads in Croscombe. The inquest into the incident was reported in the newspaper as follows:

Toller Down Fatality

Bridport Cyclist Rides into Car

Inquest at Holywell – the Jury's Rider

Christchurch witnesses evidence.

The adjourned inquest on Miss Edith Smith (22), the Bridport [Dorset] domestic servant, who died on Sunday week as the result of an accident at Toller Down cross-roads, Croscombe was conducted by the West Dorset Coroner (Mr S.E. Howard) at Holywell, near Evershot on Friday.

Miss Smith was cycling to Holywell to visit her parents, in company with her fiancé, Mr W.L. Tuck, of Chidcock. Evidence given when the inquest was opened on Tuesday, showed that on approaching the main road, Tuck warned the deceased of a car coming from Maiden Newton.

He stopped dead, but was horrified to see her go straight across the road and collide with a car coming at about 15 miles an hour. Miss Smith fell clear of the car, which pulled up in about 30 yards. The unfortunate young woman was taken into the house of Mr W.T. Childs, Hill Farm, and later removed to her home. She died in the evening from inter-cranial hemorrhage [sic].

Miss Dorothy Clutterbuck, of the Mill House, Highcliff-on-Sea, Christchurch, the owner of the car, stated at Friday's proceedings that she was driving from Highcliff towards Exeter with a lady as passenger. They were going quite slowly, as they were just going to stop to have some lunch, and were looking for a shady place.

She sounded the horn as she approached all cross-roads, and twice as she approached the Toller Down cross. She first saw [the] deceased as she passed the house on the corner. She swerved into the ditch on her right over some stone chaps, applying the brake at the same time, but [the] cyclist seemed to follow her.

Had she not swerved she would have run over [the] deceased's body, but the front wheel of the bicycle caught her mudguard, and this knocked [the] deceased into the road.

Fell Clear of the Car

Miss Smith fell quite clear of the car. Witness stopped the car at the first moment possible, and helped to carry her into the house. She stayed with [the] deceased having had nursing experience right through the war, [First World War], while two men undertook to go for a doctor.

She could not stop for more than an hour owing to a business appointment at Exeter, and she was astonished on returning the next day to find that [the] deceased had been moved. She had begged them not to move her. Miss Smith was conscious when she left.

Replying to Superintendent Beck, witness said she released her brakes after she had mounted the stone heaps, as she could see that by proceeding she would not go over the girl's body, and she could not stop where she was. She was bound to get on the road again. She and the friend were covered with broken glass from the windscreen.

Had she not served as she did, the car must have gone over the girl's head. She did not want to suggest that the accident was attributable to the presence of the stones.

Witness continued that Miss Smith was riding with her head down, and came straight for the car. She had room to turn to one side. Witness did not agree that Miss Smith was going very slowly. She had driven a car for the past five years in every county in England except Essex and Suffolk, and all over France and Italy, without meeting with an accident before.

That she did not give her name at the time was an oversight owing to her distress, and she fulfilled her promise of returning. She thought [the] deceased was suffering from slight concussion, but if kept quiet and in the dark she hoped she would be all right.

The Foreman of the Jury said at the time in question Miss Smith would be facing the sun, which might have accounted for her riding with her head down. She was wearing spectacles, which had been picked up undamaged.

Dangerous Corners

Miss Elizabeth Slatter, Highcliff-on-Sea, deposed to being with the previous witness in the car, and collaborated her evidence.

P.S. Day spoke to seeing Miss Clutterbuck drive slowly through Maiden Newton about 11.10 a.m. He estimated their speed at 8 to 10 miles an hour.

The Coroner remarked that evidence at the previous hearing showed that Miss Smith's temporary return to consciousness was due to shock having arrested the hemorrhage [sic] for the time being, and in this particular case its recurrence would not have been prevented even if she remained without being moved.

The Jury returned a verdict of "Accidental death". They added a rider that precautionary measures should be taken further to protect the public against the daily increasing motor traffic on the highways, more especially at very dangerous junctions such as Toller Down Gate, where this fatal accident occurred. The occurrence would now add greater responsibility to those elected for the purpose.

The Coroner expressed the sorrow of Miss Clutterbuck and himself at the accident, and their sympathy with the family of the deceased.

In his opinion those present did everything possible in the circumstances both before and after the accident. He especially mentioned the kindness of those who received her into their house - The jury and witnesses handed their fees to the relatives of the deceased.



Dorothy Clutterbuck