

## DEATH OF MR. CROUCHER.

Christchurch Times June 3, 1944

On Thursday, May 25th, Charles Croucher, aged 93, died very suddenly at his home, 14, Church Street. His death came as a great shock to many people who knew and loved him, for he had been seen walking around the town in apparently good health the previous day. Mr. Croucher had lived in Christchurch all his life, being a scholar at the school held in St. Michael's Loft, in the Priory Church, which continued until 1869. He attended that school six years before it closed, later serving as an apprentice in carpentry at Burton. After learning his trade he constructed a pulpit for Holdenhurst Church and communion tables for Hordle and Burton Churches. But his greatest achievement was yet to come. He was entrusted with the task of making new oak choir stalls at Christchurch Priory.

If one examines the choir stalls, no doubt is left of the quality of Mr. Croucher's workmanship. Although woodwork was his main occupation, he was proved equally efficient in many other spheres of activity. Though he received no training, he was a painter of considerable ability, the walls of his house being covered with examples of his work.

He had the rare gift of seeing things as they really were, and not merely as they appeared to be.

But there was yet another form of art which Mr. Croucher had mastered, that of modelling clay. He had a large collection of faces, modelled in clay, including one of Greta Garbo.

He had an uncanny ability for perceiving men's character and thoughts. Mr. Croucher was never in doubt as to whether a man was telling the truth. He often pointed out to people that they were not telling the truth, a gesture which sometimes resulted in the offer of a fight by the offended party. But Mr. Croucher, having acquired a thorough knowledge of Ju Jitsu, had little to fear from such encounters.

He motor cycled till he was 80, possessing a "Triumph" motor cycle, made in 1912.

For 40 years Mr. Croucher sung in the Priory Church Choir.

In some ways his most interesting possession was the last bottle of ale sold at the "Eight Bells" Inn, Church Street, which was closed on May 12, 1907.

Some years ago Mr. Croucher and his son, who is now an organist at All Saints' Church, Southbourne, constructed a telephone from their house to the neighbouring "Eight Bells."

At one time he bore a striking resemblance to the late Mr. Ramsay Macdonald, being mistaken on many occasions for that famous statesman.

He scorned "youngsters of 60," who bemoaned their age. Mr. Croucher liked to be with young people, never appearing to get really old.

In his passing, the town has lost a fine old resident and the inhabitants a kind and loving friend.

The funeral service took place at Christchurch Priory on Saturday, May 27th, the service being conducted by the Rev. H. Woodhams, as the Rev. Canon Gay was unable to attend owing to ill-health. The hymn, "Abide with me," and the Psalm, "The Lord is my Shepherd," were sung. Mr. Cardew Buckley and the Choir gave their services.

A very unusual procedure took place at the service. The coffin was taken straight from 14, Church Street up the Avenue to the Priory Church. Usually the coffin is taken right round and in at the west door. The interment took place at the Christchurch Cemetery.

The family mourners were: Mrs. C. Croucher (widow), Mr. and Mrs. F. Croucher (son and daughter-in-law), Miss E. Croucher (daughter), Mr. and Mrs. Hawkins (brother and sister-in-law), Mr. R. Croucher (grandson) and Mr. Ramsay (a life-long friend).

Also present were the Mayor of Christchurch (Alderman D. Galten), Alderman N. Gallon), Alderman N. Barnes, Alderman Tucker, Mr. Llewellyn, Mr. Walter Tucker, and Mr. A. Galton, Mr. Durrant, Mr. T. Blandford, Mr. J. Nutman, Mr. J. T. Hyde.