

GRAVE OF THE MONTH

Frances Ann Ace (1878-1900)

In Memory of a Gentle Soul

Frances Ann Ace, born 6 April 1878 in Llanelli, Carmarthenshire, passed away in Newbury on 15 October 1900, aged 22. The beloved daughter of Elizabeth Ace and the late Thomas Jenkins Ace, Frances belonged to a respected South Wales family renowned for their dedication to education and music.

Raised in a family that valued learning, Frances and her brother Charles both earned scholarships to the Royal Masonic Institutions in London after their father's early death. Frances attended the Girls' Institute at Battersea Rise, a mark of local pride in Llanelli. Following her studies, she tried to make her way as a governess, but found her working life unsettled and sometimes troubling, as reflected in her letters home.

In August 1900, Frances went to stay with her aunt and uncle, Susan and John Morgan, at 3, Burton Terrace, Newbury. Her visit, which lasted more than six weeks, coincided with the anniversary of her Aunt Catherine's death from T.B. at the same home the previous year. Throughout her stay, Frances was described as gentle and generally cheerful, though she grew quieter and more reflective.

On 15 October 1900, just as she was preparing to return home to Llanelli, Frances hanged herself in her bedroom. The inquest found no clear reason for her actions, with her family and community shocked by her sudden passing. The verdict was "suicide whilst temporarily insane," and all who knew her expressed deep sorrow and sympathy.

Frances was remembered in the local press as "a lovely, well-respected and well-known young woman, with a wealth of golden hair and an attractive appearance, who made friends wherever she went."



She was buried beside her Aunt Catherine in Newtown Road Cemetery, Newbury (Plot P(B)7), under the shade of a cedar tree and marked by four marble kerbstones.

Her brother Charles had died a year earlier. He had also attended the Masonic School. Perhaps she felt under pressure from the expectations of her education.

She was described as sometimes high spirited and sometimes depressed so was she Bipolar? Not something really recognised in Victorian Britain.

David Clow October 2025 - Friends of Newtown Road Cemetery