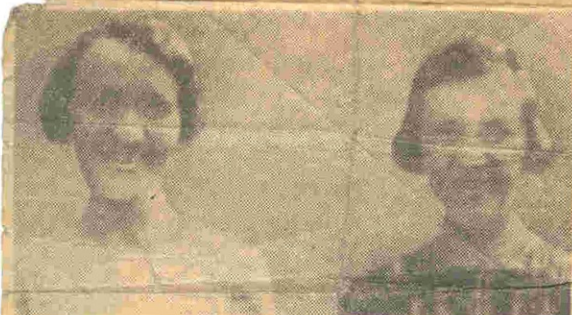


# Brethren drove two to death, says <sup>8</sup>wife



The sisters who died, Winifred (left) and Elsie Rhodes.

JULY 24<sup>th</sup>  
By Daily Mail Reporter

**A 50-YEAR-OLD** housewife has written to the Home Secretary urging a full investigation into the Exclusive Brethren—because she believes that the sect's teachings drove two cousins to suicide.

Mrs. Norah Cox, of Ravensdale-gardens, Eccles, Lancashire, talked yesterday of how her cousins, middle-aged spinners, neglected their chicken farm and let the family business run down until it was unsaleable.

They cut themselves off from relatives who could have helped them out of financial trouble and finally walked to their death in a pool—because they were Exclusives, she claims.

"That was the reason," she said. "They were brainwashed in a fantastic way.

"Their lives had become directed in every detail by the Brethren—but when it came to material help at a crucial time there was none.

"They changed from happy people into dispirited recluses.

"They would not turn to members of their own family even to help them out of financial difficulties that were by no means insurmountable."

## Letters

The two spinsters, Elsie, 58, and 53-year-old Winnie Rhodes, died in Gailey Pool, near Cannock, Staffordshire, not far from their run-down chicken farm three weeks ago.

At the inquest the coroner said: "I do not think we will ever know why they did it."

But their suicide came only two days after they had put their farm up for auction to obey the rule that reportedly forbids females to work for their living—and failed to sell it.

"We had many nappy times together, even though they were members of this sect all their lives, until a year ago," Mrs. Cox.

"Then we went to visit them, by appointment, and we were asked to eat at a separate table. We were shocked by their way of life—and the farm, once a prosperous family business, was neglected.

"The hen pens hadn't been cleaned out and gates were hanging from their hinges.

## Homes split

"Their advisers, fellow Exclusives, led them to believe that they could get about £7,000 for the farm, but at the auction there was only one bid of £4,000. It's a heartbreaking business."

That was the last time Mrs. Cox saw her cousins—or heard from them direct. Her letters to them were unanswered, her pleas for a meeting ignored.

● Mr. Emrys Hughes, Labour M.P. for South Ayrshire, will take to Parliament next week a 1,000-name petition asking for an inquiry into the Close Brethren.

It was collected by two Cannock men whose homes were split by the sect's strange rules.

Mr. Hughes will meet the two men, railway clerk Ian Coughtrie, 21, and miner Sam Chamberlain, 39, in his Cannock home at the weekend to discuss the letters they have received from victims of the Brethren all over Scotland.



Mrs. COX

"Brainwashed"