

DEATH OF GEN. FETHERSTONHAUGH, C.B., OF RYDE
A DISTINGUISHED VICTORIAN

With sincere regret we record the death of Major-General Richard Steel Rupert FETHERSTONHAUGH, C.B., which occurred at his residence, Gwydyr House, Ryde, early on Saturday morning. His passing severs a lifelong connection with the Island and removes a distinguished and charming personality, one of the old Victorian gentlefolk so rapidly decreasing in numbers. He was taken seriously ill on Thursday week, when he had a seizure from which he never regained consciousness, and passed peacefully away as stated.

Born at Rockview, County Westmeath, Ireland, on October 24th, 1848, he was the son of the late Richard Steele FETHERSTONHAUGH, and came of old Irish stock. He entered the 60th Royal Rifle Corps in 1868, and was promoted to captain in 1880, major and brevet lieutenant-colonel in 1885, and colonel in 1889. He served in the Zulu war in 1879. He was with the Nile Expedition in 1884-5, with the Mounted Infantry of the Desert Column, when he was mentioned in despatches, was awarded the medal with two clasps and the bronze Khedive's Star, and was promoted to the brevet rank of lieutenant-colonel. In 1899-1902 he first commanded the 9th Brigade, and was severely wounded in the shoulder at the Battle of Belmont. After this he returned home and was with the Mounted 6th Brigade at Aldershot, but was soon back again with the fighting forces. He was mentioned in despatches and made a C.B. (military division) in 1900. In 1901 he returned to the Western Transvaal, where he commanded the Mobile Mounted Columns, and later the troops in the Eastern Transvaal and Natal until the following year. While in South Africa he was engaged for a period on the staff as station commandant, and afterwards became special service officer graded as a major-general on the staff for distinguished services. He was promoted to full colonel in 1889, and about that time was stationed at Parkhurst, the consequence was that when the troops were mobilised for a review he was in command of his own colonel. He accompanied General WOLSLEY on his perilous journey to the relief of General GORDON at Khartoum, an expedition which failed in its object as the General always averred through the dilatoriness of Mr. GLADSTONE's government. He was a very efficient and fearless soldier with a generous and sympathetic heart for his men, by whom he was greatly respected and beloved. A great admirer of the Volunteers, he was always a keen supporter of and did much for their well-being. His great bravery during the South African campaign was a source of constant encouragement to his officers and men. He retired in 1904 and was appointed colonel-commandant of the 3rd Battalion the King's Royal Rifles until 1917, when he retired.

During his residence at Gwydyr House, which had been in his wife's family for some years, he won a wide and ever-increasing circle of friends. He was a personal friend of Queen Victoria, and she often visited him when she was at Osborne. The Royal Governor, Princess Beatrice, was also a visitor at Gwydyr House. Until very late in life he was a member of the I.W. Hunt, and a regular attendant at their meets. He was an excellent rider and a good judge of horses, for which he had a great passion. He was also a supporter of the I.W. Steeplechases at Ashey.

The I.W. Conservative and Unionist Association have lost a very staunch adherent and generous subscriber by his death. He was a life vice-president of the Association. Essentially a soldier, he was no politician, and never was known to give a political address, yet his heart and soul were in the interests of the party. He was elected a vice-president of the Ryde Conservative Club in February, 1905, and president in 1919, which position he retained until February, 1926. As president of the Ryde Conservative Club he was greatly respected and was one of the most munificent supporters to the cause in the Island. He was a member of the Royal Victoria Yacht Club for many years, although he took no part in the sport, and also of the Naval and Military Club, from which he resigned last year. He used to be a member of the exclusive Rifle Club at Winchester. Local societies and charities found him one whose generosity knew no bounds. He was the first commandant of the I.W. branch of the British Red Cross Society.

He belonged to the old school of Victorian aristocrats. One found in him a generous, kindly, and charming man, one who hated humbug; above all he was a perfect English gentleman. His straightforwardness and ready sympathy combined with many other delightful qualities and his soldierly bearing made him a very popular personality. In the Ryde streets he was a tall upright familiar figure, wearing his grey bowler hat, and with military carriage, and he will be sadly missed.

In 1886 he married Florence, youngest daughter of the late Capt. George Collingwood DICKSON, and a cousin of Lord ISLINGTON. Her death in 1920 came as a great blow to him, and he never fully recovered from it. His elder son, Richard, a lieutenant in the 60th Rifles, died of wounds in France in 1916, and the younger, George, a second-lieutenant in the Royal Fusiliers, was reported missing in the previous year. His only daughter married Major H. FORDYCE-BIRCH.

Researched by
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