

We deeply regret to announce the death of Sir **Henry SWEETMAN**, J.P., of Eversley, Queen's-road, Ryde, which took place on Thursday morning at the age of 86. Until less than three weeks ago Sir Henry had enjoyed fairly robust health for his many years. He then entered a local nursing home and successfully underwent a minor operation to his ear, made excellent progress, and was able to receive visitors until last Saturday, among them being Capt. Peter Macdonald, the Member for the Island. In the early hours of Monday, however, he unfortunately developed a heart attack of greater severity and, his condition steadily deteriorating, he passed peacefully away as stated. By his death the Island loses one of the most outstanding personalities in its public and political life for the last 70 years. He was a man with great strength of character and a commanding figure. Dowered with considerable intellectual and social gifts, a kindly nature, engaging bonhomie, and genuine friendliness he was singularly popular among all classes of the community, and his valuable contributions to the general weal of the people of the Wight throughout an exceptionally busy life will long shine lustrously in the records of Vectis. He was never known to take an office without accepting its obligations and responsibilities in the widest and fullest sense and fulfilling them with self-sacrifice and great benefit.

Sir Henry was born at Ryde on March 31st, 1858, and after being educated locally entered the brewery business of his father, Mr. Edward SWEETMAN. Developing great business acumen and versatile aptitudes, which subsequently marked his whole career, he rapidly forged to the forefront in business circles. With his abundant energy and unflagging zeal it was not surprising that he soon sought to place his talents at the disposal of his native borough, for which he ever showed an ardent love. His devotion to its interests was expressed by entry into its public life at the early age of 26; and from his first entry into the Council-chamber in 1884 he continued in its service for 32 years. During that long period he served on practically every committee of the Corporation. For many years he was chairman of the Public Works, Sanitary and Health Committees, positions which he retained until his retirement. With the clear vision and practical foresight for which he was notable, he took a very active part in the promotion of public improvements, including the planting of the fine avenue of trees on the Esplanade, and the laying out and planting of the Eastern Gardens, bowling greens and tennis courts, and was chiefly instrumental in the efforts made for the formation of the fine sandy beach. He presided over the Council's Electricity Committee, which successfully opposed an application by the I.W. Electric Light and Power Company, which was practically EDMUNDSON'S Ltd., for power to establish themselves in the borough. The Government Inspector, who held an inquiry into the application, hinted that unless the Town Council themselves applied for power, it was unlikely that a further application by the Company would be refused. Under his guidance the committee prepared a scheme for the town's supply and after a strenuous fight it was approved and in 1899 a Provisional Order was obtained. At the election in that year Sir Henry lost his seat on the Council and the newly-constituted corporation transferred the working of the Provisional Order to the applicant company. In 1904 Sir Henry was re-elected to the Council. Three years later he was promoted to the aldermanic bench and on his retirement in 1920 he was the senior alderman. There is no doubt that he could have been mayor of the Borough had he desired the office. During the well-remembered coal strike he was hon. emergency officer for Ryde and was presented with a silver salver and letter of thanks from the Town Council. In March, 1898, he was made a borough magistrate and until about two years ago was one of the most regular and ablest attendants at the Court. In March 1884, he joined the I.W. Volunteers as a subaltern, retiring as senior captain 15 years later. As mess president in 1895 he was presented by H.R.H. Princess Henry of Battenberg with a silver beaker on behalf of H.R.H. Prince Henry of Battenberg, the hon. colonel, and other officers of the battalion, and in 1897 was awarded the Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee Medal.

It is in the realm of politics that Sir Henry will be best remembered throughout the Island, for no one has done so much or done it so efficiently for the Conservative cause in the Wight. For 70 years he has been an exceptionally active member of the Party and was proud of his record of

having assisted at nearly every general election since the passing of the Ballot Act. He was chairman and a vice-president of the Island Association and chairman of the Ryde polling district for some years prior to 1899. It was largely through his exertions and those of his brother, the late Major Charles SWEETMAN that the great Conservative majority in Ryde made possible the defeat of the Hon. A. WODEHOUSE by Sir Richard WEBSTER (afterwards Lord Alverstone) in 1895 by a majority of 446. Shortly before Sir Richard became Master of the Rolls and consequently ceased to be a member for the Island, he wrote a cordial letter of thanks to Sir Henry, stating that he owed him a debt he could never repay. At each subsequent general election the experience and enthusiastic services of Sir Henry led the campaigns. A strong and vigorous fighter, an eloquent speaker, and a capable organiser, his dynamic personality was invaluable. His love of his country and faith in the future and that of the Empire were the sources of his success as the Party leader. On the platforms of the Conservative Party in every part of the Island, in season and out of season, he was a tower of strength. His convictions were deep and abiding and he proclaimed them in fighting speeches of great lucidity and power. In 1928 he was elected chairman of the Island Conservative Association and under his able leadership the Party has maintained its strong position against all political assaults. Sir Henry's political ability has been valued in the higher councils of the Party. For nearly 20 years he has served as a member of the Executive of the National Union of Conservative Associations, attending regularly, and on occasions making valuable contributions to the debates. Until he resigned in 1940 he was president of the Wessex area of the National Union of Conservative and Unionists Association, and held a similar position in the Wessex area of the National Union of Conservative Agents. He was president of the Island Conservative and Unionist Clubs Association, has been president for many years of the Ryde branch of the Conservative Association and of the Conservative Club, and was a vice-president of the Newport and Sandown Conservative Clubs. In 1885 he joined the Ryde Habitation of the Primrose League, being elected its ruling councillor two years later, and served it devotedly until its disbandment some years ago.

Sir Henry had many other and varied characteristic thoroughness. From quite early days in his career he took a deep interest in the Friendly Society movement and was the senior hon. member of the Ryde Court of Foresters and likewise senior hon. member of the Ryde Lodge of Oddfellows. For many years he was chairman of the Ryde Permanent Building Society. For a lengthy period he served on the management committee of the Royal I.W. County Hospital and has devoted a great deal of his time to promoting its welfare. He took a prominent part in the introduction of the voluntary contributory scheme, speaking at many meetings in the Island in support of its successful establishment. He was also chairman of the building sub-committee responsible for the erection of the King George V Memorial Nurses' Home and the pathological laboratory, and in this connection he made admirable contributions to the consummation of both schemes.

Another tribute to Sir Henry's business qualities was his appointment some years ago to the board of directors of the well known firm of Messrs. WATERLOW Bros. and LAYTON, responsible for printing the Treasury notes from which he later retired. In 1920 he was elected a director of the I.W. County Press and two years later, on the death of the then chairman of the Company (Mr. F. Templeman MEW) he was appointed to succeed him. In this capacity his sound knowledge and administrative ability have been of immense value and the steady rise in the circulation of this paper has been an achievement which gave him great pleasure. Throughout his tenure of office he always held the complete confidence of his co-directors and won the esteem and regard of the management and staff, for whose interests and welfare he had every consideration. He was a firm advocate of a progressive policy for agriculture and a past president of the Royal I.W. Agricultural Society. The welfare of ex-Service men also claimed his generous interest and he was a vice-president of the Ryde branch of the British Legion.

Sir Henry's interest in the young people of the Island was also very real and he was president of the I.W. junior Athletic Association. In June, 1935, Sir Henry's conspicuous services were honoured by H.M. the King who bestowed upon him a knighthood. Few honours have come to a man who more richly deserved it and it met with general approval. By his political opponents

genuine satisfaction was expressed that his able public work had thus been recognised. Sir Henry only permitted himself short periods of relaxation. He enjoyed a game of snooker and billiards, and in earlier years was a member of the Rowing Club and enjoyed yachting. When the Ryde Football Club embraced professionalism he was its hon. treasurer and in later years was a member of the Ryde Bowling Club. In pre-war days Sir Henry made periodical holiday visits to the Channel Islands to his daughter, Mrs. C. B. ATYEO, wife of the Rev. C. B. ATYEO, a former curate of the Ryde Parish Church. The fall of those Islands and the subsequent transfer of Mr. and Mrs. ATYEO and their son to Germany was a severe blow. On the formation of the I.W. Channel Island Society he became its first president. He was married three times and leaves a son by his first wife, a daughter by his second, and two daughter by his third wife, who died in 1934.

The funeral service will take place in the Ryde Parish Church at 12.30 on Monday.

A COUNTY PRESS TRIBUTE

Sir Henry SWEETMAN has passed away to the great loss of the Island community and of Ryde, his native town, which he so greatly loved and so long and ably served. At the moment it is practically impossible to realise that so vivid and vigorous a personality with his manifest joy of living to the very last will be seen no more amongst us leading an intensely valuable life. We of the County Press have specially great reasons for deeply deploring his passing. During the absence of the managing director (Lieut-Col. C. W. BRANNON, M.C., D.L.) on military service, Sir Henry, as chairman of the Board of Directors, attended at the office almost daily and helped us surmount many of the difficulties of the times by his wise advice, cheery leadership, and his warm personal interest in each individual employee, from the eldest to the youngest. Sir Henry's very winsome characteristics included his staunchness as a friend and utter lack of snobbishness. The municipal street sweeper in Union-street, Ryde, received as cheery and as sincerely cordial a greeting, often by his Christian name, as the mayor of the town. When serving on the Ryde Town Council he proved himself a vigorous and convincing debater, but however heated the controversy became he ever remained the sincere friend of all, opponent and supporter alike. His nature was large and magnanimous and did not harbour a mean thought. Sir Henry was intensely thorough in all he undertook, whether in business, in social, or in patriotic and political work. No chairman of the I.W. Conservative Association within living memory has been so enthusiastic and so indefatigable as he was. At election times especially he constantly attended every district with inspiring and vigorous eloquence and debating power. He fully merited the knighthood conferred upon him for his services; he was a knight without fear and without reproach. There is no doubt that Sir Henry's closing years were greatly saddened by the fact that his daughter, Mrs. C. B. ATYEO, wife of the Rev. C. B. ATYEO, was one of the residents of Jersey, in the Channel Islands, when it was occupied by the Germans and with her husband was removed to Germany. Well, Sir Henry has passed into the darkness into which we all must go, some soon, some later, our task accomplished, and the long day done. Whether sooner or later, it will be happy for us if we leave behind as pleasant memories and as splendid an example of public service and private kindnesses as our departed and beloved friend and leader.

Requiescat in pace !

Ave atque vale !
