

Leigh Thomas

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HEAD OF WELL-KNOWN FIRM OF GRAIN MERCHANTS

DEATH OF MR. LEIGH THOMAS, OF RYDE

A member of a family whose name has become a household word among the Island's agricultural community, Mr. Leigh Thomas, of Five Ways, West Street, Ryde, chairman and director of the well-known Newport firm of grain merchants, Leigh Thomas and Co., died on Sunday aged 76. The son of Mr. James Thomas, J.P., C.A., Mr. Thomas was born in Ventnor, and moved to Carisbrooke at an early age. Following his marriage at Penarth, South Wales, in 1907, he took up residence at Ryde and for the last 40 years had been at Five Ways.

Following several years' apprenticeship to the grain trade, Mr. Thomas joined his father's flour miller's and grain merchants business at Newport. By 1920 the firm had expanded to such an extent that it joined with Messrs. Gater and Bradford, bringing in two more mills at West End, Southampton and Stockbridge. The firm, known as Thomas, Gater, Bradford and Co., Ltd., with head offices at Newport, continued to expand and was acquired in 1934 by Messrs. Joseph Rank, Ltd. In February 1935, Mr. Leigh Thomas re-purchased the grain merchant's side of the business and formed Leigh Thomas and Co., Ltd., at Pan Mills, Newport, also taking back his original firm's property at Emsworth and Wellington, Somerset. Under Mr. Thomas's energetic and skilful direction the concern made rapid progress and in 1941 a mill was taken over in the Southampton area. Seven years later the warehouse of Crown Wharf on the River Itchen at Southampton was also purchased. Mr. Thomas was also chairman of the Vectis Shipping Co., Ltd., which originated with Thomas, Gater, and Bradford. In addition he farmed Great Pan Farm for many years during and after the war.

An enthusiastic and talented sportsman, he excelled at lawn tennis, and with his wife was a leading member of the Ryde Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club. He was also a keen golfer and yachtsman and until a few years ago owned the sloop Grebe II, and was a member for many years of the Royal Victoria Y.C. At Ryde he was a prominent worker for the Congregational Church, of which he was for many years hon. treasurer. He is survived by his wife and a daughter and four sons.

THE FUNERAL

Many business men and members of the farming community were among the large and representative attendance at the funeral service at Ryde Congregational Church on Wednesday. The Minister (the Rev. G. J. Nelson) conducted the service and Mrs. K. Ingram (organist) played "Solemn Melody" (Walford Davies) as the cortege entered the church. The hymns "The King of Love" and "Lead, Kindly Light" and Psalm 23 were sung. At the conclusion the organist played "O Rest in the Lord" (Mendelssohn). In a tribute Mr. Nelson said that Mr. Leigh Thomas was a great Christian gentleman. His business life had brought him in touch with the hard, materialistic world, but he had never allowed it to materialise his spirit and outlook. He was a member of the church for over 50 years and had held various offices, including that of treasurer, and his gracious dignity had always been an inspiration. In recent years failing health limited his attendance but his love for it never waned. He was a man of many and varied interests, but his greatest was in his home and church. Mr. Thomas's character was best summed up in Wordsworth's poem "The happy warrior."

The family mourners were Mrs. Leigh Thomas (widow), Mr. and Mrs. Neville, Mr. and Mrs. V., and Mr. and Mrs. Norman Thomas and Major C. Thomas, D.S.O. (son and daughters-in-law), Dr. and

Mrs. W. Ogle (son-in-law and daughter), Mr. M. Thomas (grandson), Messrs. I.F. Tillet, R. and D. Cory, G., C. and B. Cottam, Mr. and Mrs. B. Tipple, Mrs. M. Collins and Miss M. Cottam (nephews and nieces), Mr. and Mrs. W. Cottam, Mr. and Mrs. L. Dyer and Mr. D. Burns (brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law) and Mr. W. E. Griffin and Mrs. C. W. Osmund.

Among those present were the directors and employees of Leigh Thomas and Co., Ltd., the directors and staff of the Vectis Shipping Co., Ltd., and representatives of Messrs. J. Sheath and Co., James Foot, Ltd., Dittman and Malpas, Ltd., Bartholomew (Chichester), Ltd., Imperial Chemical Industries, P. J. Millard, Ltd., Messrs. Fisk and Fisher, F. W. Linington, Dunn's Farm Seeds, Ltd., Spillers, Ltd., Joseph Rank, Ltd., S. Guy, Ltd., R. Silcock and Sons, Ltd., Sir Francis Pittis and Son, Edmunds and Co., J. W. Wooldridge, Ltd., W. B. Mew, Langton and Co., Ltd., Messrs. Fardell, Upward and Rich, Ltd., Newport Marine and General Engineering Co., Ltd., and Spirella, Ltd. Other organisations represented included the National Farmers' Union, I.W. Farmers' Trading Society, Borough of Newport Allotments Association, the County Club, Midland Bank, Newport, Ryde Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club, the deacons of Ryde Congregational Church, All Saints' Parochial Church Council, I.W. Grocers' Association, and Ryde Toc H.

The interment was at Carisbrooke Cemetery. The arrangements were made by Messrs. Langson of Ryde.

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