

Thomas Lee

1851 England, Wales & Scotland Census The Market, Wisbech St Peter, Cambridgeshire, England

| Name | Relationship | Status | Age | Occupation | Birthplace |
|-------------------|--------------|---------------|----------|-----------------|---------------------------|
| Henry Charles Lee | Head | Married | 38 | Bootmaker | Snettisham, Norfolk |
| Lydia E. Lee | Wife | Married | 35 | | Norwich, Norfolk |
| William H. Lee | Son | Single | 10 | Scholar | Wisbech, Cambridge |
| Thomas Lee | Son | Single | 8 | Scholar | Wisbech, Cambridge |
| Henry C. Lee | Son | Single | 4 | Scholar | Wisbech, Cambridge |
| John S. Lee | Son | Single | 2 | | Wisbech, Cambridge |
| Lydia E. Lee | Daughter | Single | 9/12 | | Wisbech, Cambridge |
| Elizabeth Wiffin | Servant | Single | 18 | General servant | Walpole, Norfolk |

1881 England, Wales & Scotland Census 3 St John's Terrace, Carisbrooke, Isle of Wight, Hampshire, England

| Name | Relationship | Status | Age | Occupation | Birthplace |
|---------------------|----------------|----------------|-----------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Thomas Lee | Head | Married | 38 | Newspaper reporter | Wisbech, Cambridge |
| Julia Lee | Wife | Married | 38 | | Wisbech, Cambridge |
| Horace S. Lee | Son | Single | 13 | Scholar | Sudbury, Suffolk |
| Ethel M. Lee | Daughter | Single | 11 | Scholar | Newport, Hampshire |
| Edwin H. Fradd | Brother-in-law | Married | 22 | Interest income | Natal, South Africa |
| Martha Fradd | Sister-in-law | Married | 21 | | Walsoken, Norfolk |
| Beatrice M.N. Fradd | Niece | Single | 6 mo | | Natal, South Africa |
| Mary A. Barnett | Servant | Single | 22 | General servant | Wooton, Hampshire |
| Ellen P. Royce | Servant | Single | 15 | Servant (nurse) | Langham, Rutland |

1911 England, Wales & Scotland Census Medina Avenue, Newport, Isle of Wight, Hampshire, England

| Name | Relationship | Status | Age | Occupation | Birthplace |
|-------------------|--------------------------|----------------|-----------|-------------------|--------------------------------|
| James Warder | Head | Married | 78 | Market gardener | Northwood, Isle of Wight |
| Harriet V. Warder | Wife | Married | 61 | | Portsmouth, Hampshire |
| James A. Warder | Son | Single | 22 | Market gardener | Newport, Isle of Wight |
| Evaline I. Warder | Daughter | Single | 19 | Dress maker | Newport, Isle of Wight |
| Thomas Lee | Separate Occupier | Widower | 68 | Journalist | Wisbech, Cambridgeshire |

Isle of Wight County Press
8 January 1921

DEATH OF
MR. THOMAS LEE

With profound regret we have to record the death, which took place last evening at his home, Medina-avenue, Newport, in his 79th year, of Mr. Thomas Lee, the first Editor of the County Press, and since 1908 its Consulting Editor. He had been in failing health for a considerable time owing to advancing years and bronchial trouble, and he was tenderly nursed by his only daughter during his last illness, which set in a week before Christmas. His only son, Mr. Horace S. Lee, arrived from Liverpool on Wednesday, before his father became unconscious, and remained till the end.

Mr. Lee, who was a native of Cambridgeshire, was the doyen of Island journalists, having been the first professional shorthand writing journalist who held an appointment in the Island, where he spent over 50 years of his distinguished career. His life-long association with the Press commenced at Wisbech, where he served his apprenticeship on a well-known paper, and there and subsequently on the staff of a Wilts and Gloucestershire contemporary was reporting in the counties named and in Suffolk, Essex, and Middlesex before coming to Hampshire, where he joined the staff of the *Hampshire Independent*. It was as the local representative of the last-named journal that he came to the Island in 1868, and he occupied that position for 16 years, until appointed Editor of the *County Press*, the first county paper to be printed and published in the Island—on November 29, 1884. The great need for a county newspaper which could adequately cater for every town and village in the Island had greatly impressed him for years before the advent of the *County Press*, and when the opportunity at last came to supply that need he threw himself whole-heartedly into an enterprise, the success of which was so dear to his heart. He had already become an outstanding personality in the public and social life of the Island, and his long and intimate experience of local men and matters admirably fitted him for the greater responsibilities which he undertook when he became Editor of this journal. In the negotiations which led up to the launching of the *County Press* Mr. Lee was consulted at every point, and the success which ultimately crowned the efforts of the promoters justified the splendid optimism and confidence as to its future which he exhibited from the outset in this new and ambitious Island venture. That success is an abiding tribute to his outstanding journalistic skill, energy, and unswerving loyalty to the interests of this journal. For close upon a quarter of a century he occupied the Editor's chair, until March, 1908, when, owing to failing health following the death of his wife, he relinquished the active editorship and became Consulting Editor. In his retirement, however, he continued as "Stylus" his contribution of "Occasional Jottings", which had been a most popular feature throughout his long association with the *County Press*. In this and in many other ways he manifested his deep attachment to the paper and all associated with its production, and in the peaceful eventide of his long and eminently useful life he was exceedingly happy in his delightful journalistic reminiscences and in the continued success of the paper which he had raised to such a high standard of excellence among prominent provincial journals.

A striking public tribute, unique in local annals, was paid to the late Mr. Lee in April, 1886, when he was entertained by leading public men, representing all parties, professions, and pursuits, at a banquet at Newport, in recognition of his services to Island journalism. The late Lord Alverstone, then Sir Richard Webster, the Attorney-General, who just over a year before had been returned for the first time as Member for the Island, presided over the memorable proceedings and in eloquent terms bore testimony to the genuine worth and exemplary work of Mr. Lee and to the outstanding skill and energy evidenced by him in connection with the inauguration of a new era of journalists in the Island. Among the many letters of appreciation which Sir Richard read on that occasion was one from the Hon. Evelyn Ashley, a former Member for the Island, who was defeated by Sir Richard in 1885, in which he wrote of Mr. Lee as being "Impartial and straightforward as a journalist, keen and pointed as a writer and reporter, and courteous

and obliging as a friend". On the same occasion his old friend "G.H.R.D." (Dr. Dabbs) paid him the following deserved and happily expressed tribute:--

Our friend, in many and in various ways,
We yield him here this tributary praise—
That all the teapot storms of local strife
His pen has lifted into laughing life;
That all the serious ills of rich and poor
Obtained at once his advocacy sure;
That though his feet in Party might be found,
His wider vision sought the higher ground,
And left to Politics the baser part,
And gave to Human Kind his loving human heart.

The concluding part of Mr. Lee's reply to the toast of "Our Guest" on that occasion so admirably expresses his conception of the high standard which he always set before himself and the Press generally that we cannot do better than quote it: "Might it (the Press) ever be found contending against the 'wrong that needs resistance; for the right that lacks assistance; for the future in the distance; and the good that it may do'. Might honorable conduct, straightforward dealing,, and that grand old English quality of fair-play ever distinguish it; and might its members, who were so often called upon to enter into the very thick of life, ever remember that while the scathing shafts of Satire might sometimes be good, Truth, kindly and temperately stated, was better, and, as Thackeray had it, Love was best of all". To all younger journalist who came under his direction or influence, Mr. Lee was a true "guide, philosopher, and friend".

As a journalist Mr. Lee had few equals. He could wrest the heart out of a speech or sermon and invest it with an interest and literary merit which often surprised and delighted the speaker or the preacher himself. He wrote as he spoke, with literary charm and dialectic skill. His rhetorical and emotional style was adorned and enriched by his unique acquaintance with the poets, especially with Tennyson. He had a wonderful memory, and once started with any poetical quotation he could give you practically the whole poem from which it was taken. It is an open secret that the verses quoted in his "Occasional Jottings" were often the product of his own fertile muse. Some years ago he was a frequent prize-winner for verse contributions to the old *Weekly Despatch*, *Truth*, and such like papers. He brought great literary ability and practical journalistic experience to the joint conduct of the old *Island Quarterly*, his coadjutors in the editorship of that brilliant but short-lived magazine being Dr. Dabbs, Mr. R. Roach Pittis, and Mr. S. Wheeler, all, alas! like the subject of this notice, now gone over to the majority.

His professional engagements brought him into touch with distinguished men, notably with Richard Jefferies, the famous fascinating writer on natural history, and Herkomer, the celebrated painter. He often recalled with pride an interview he had with the first Lord Tennyson, of whose poetry he was a most ardent admirer.

Keats was one of his favourite authors, and he was intensely interested in tracing and commemorating the residences of the young poet at Shanklin and Newport. He was instrumental in having the inscription "The friend of Keats" engraved on the head-stone of John Hamilton Reynolds, the poet's friend, at Church-litten, Newport.

Mr. Lee was a born orator and did extremely effective work on the platform for the Liberal party in Newport and the Island generally. He was certainly the "Mercurius" of the old Newport Debating Society during its palmyest days. Himself a man of highly emotional temperament, he well knew how to play to good purpose upon the passions and the prejudices of his audience. He was quick to see the weak points in the case of his opponents, and often almost completely concealed the thin ice in his own case by the good-humoured ridicule which he poured upon his adversaries' arguments. Mr. Lee was "all things to all

men”, and his genial sunny nature won him the regard of all in spite of great differences in politics, religion, or outlook on life.

He possessed a tenor voice of great sweetness and power, and often thrilled the large congregations at St. Thomas’s Church during the days of the late Dean Connor’s vicariate by his superb singing of solos. For a considerable period he was a member of Queen Victoria’s choir at Osborne. His personal and social qualities and endowments made him the life and soul of any gathering in which he took part, and no after-dinner proceedings in Newport, in the seventies and early eighties especially, were complete without a toast and song from “Tom Lee”, as he was affectionately known. The Friendly Society dinners, which seem to have become a thing of the past, were always brightened by his telling speech and his singing of “The Men of Merrie England” and “Ring the banjo”. The well-known tones still ring in the memory of the writer of these words.

For upwards of 40 years Mr. Lee held the appointment of official shorthand writer to the I.W. Bankruptcy Court, and on his retirement through failing health three years ago a very high tribute was paid him by Mr. Registrar John Fardell. Bowls and cricket were his favorite sports; he was a trophy winner of the old Newport Bowling Club, and a keen and enthusiastic spectator at local and county cricket matches, as opportunity offered.

Mr. Lee was for many years the correspondent of leading London journals, and also the Island representative of the Press Association and the Central News.

Many an obituary notice in these columns has been penned by our late esteemed colleague, and he always imparted to them a note of distinction and an individuality which raised them from the commonplace and the perfunctory to the life-like portrayal of the excellencies of the personality commemorated. And now it is our sad duty to publish an obituary of Thomas Lee himself. It must perforce lamentably fail in adequately depicting to the full the many-sided excellencies of a very remarkable man. Those responsible for it, however, have the satisfaction of knowing that they have conscientiously sought to pay here, in columns which his writings have ever adorned, and in the paper the success of which was to a very large extent due to his experience and ability, and of which success he was justly proud, a fitting tribute to an inspiring and capable journalistic leader, and an affectionate and ever-loyal friend.

The deepest sympathy of the community will be with his son and daughter in their irreparable bereavement. The former is an able member of the profession which his esteemed father adorned for so many years, and has for many years held an important appointment in Liverpool.

The funeral will take place on Tuesday, the first part of the service being at St. Thomas’s Church, Newport, at 3 p.m.

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