

Henry Allen

Isle of Wight County Press – 29 August 1938

DEATH OF MR. HENRY ALLEN, OF NEWPORT.

OVER 50 YEARS A MEMBER OF THE "COUNTY PRESS" EDITORIAL STAFF.

Everyone associated with the production of the "County Press" fully shares with his family and hosts of friends in a very keen sense of personal loss at the death on Saturday of Mr. Henry Allen, of Indiana, Fairlee-road, Newport, for half a century, until failing health caused his retirement about three years ago, an outstanding and greatly esteemed Island journalist, who had rendered this paper loyal and extremely able service since its establishment in 1884.

Mr. Allen, who had just passed his 70th birthday, had unfortunately been a martyr to rheumatism for many years. This gradually weakened his heart and as a result he died somewhat unexpectedly on Saturday morning.

Henry Allen was a remarkable man in many respects. The son of a Gatcombe farm worker (Mr. Samuel Allen) he would probably have followed his father on the soil, but for the fact that in infancy he lost the use of his left arm. This necessitated a different calling, and when the "County Press" was about to be launched he was given a clerical post. He quickly mastered shorthand, supplemented by his own efforts the somewhat meagre education he had received in the village school, and under the wise and sympathetic instruction of the first editor of the "County Press" (the late Mr. Thomas Lee) soon showed a rare aptitude for the work of a reporter and from then onward followed that calling with marked success, his genial and tactful manner, sympathetic outlook, loyalty (the dominant note of his life), careful attention to detail, and a natural gift for felicitous expression with the pen, making him a notable example of an efficient provincial journalist. He was not a specialist, but one who could turn his hand and pen to any of the manifold tasks which fall to the lot of a local Pressman and do them full justice. He did all this and many other things under the great physical handicap already referred to, and the wonderful way in which he triumphed over his disability won the admiration of all who knew him, while his wise discretion and good taste in his profession secured for him to an unusual degree the complete confidence of all with whom he had to deal in the performance of his duties. His colleagues of the "County Press" will ever remember him as a staunch friend, one who was always courteous and ready to help another out of a difficulty and who, amid even the most trying circumstances, never lost the quiet good nature which was an outstanding trait in his lovable character.

Naturally in such a long experience Mr. Allen had seen great changes, and his observant nature and retentive memory gave him valuable recollections on which he often drew for interesting notes on the past which have appeared in our columns. He was keenly interested in all phases of local government administration, and his knowledge of local

public affairs was probably unique. His recollections of early days as a journalist were extremely interesting. He would often attend meetings late at night in Newport or the surrounding villages and then walk home to Gatcombe. On one occasion he accompanied the first editor of the "County Press" to a meeting at Freshwater on a publishing evening, and during the journey home in a cab held a lantern to enable his colleague to write a column report which appeared in the next morning's issue. That was smart journalism in those days. For many years he was the chief reporter at the head office of the "County Press" and then acted as assistant editor for some time until the rheumatism which troubled him for many years led to his retirement about three years ago. Even then his active association with the paper did not cease, as he regularly contributed the interesting "Fifty Years Ago" notes, which he compiled from the files of the paper, and left behind him ready for publication each week's quota until the end of March. One of his most notable later works was the writing and collecting of a good deal of the material for the Jubilee Supplement of the "County Press," published in November, 1934, his able contributions to the publication including the very valuable record of happenings in the Island during the half century, given in diary form. For about 30 years he had been the local correspondent of "The Times" and other daily newspapers, and he acted for some years as the official shorthand-writer to the I.W. Bankruptcy Court.

The busy life of a journalist leaves little time for other activities, yet Mr. Allen found opportunities for a good deal of voluntary service to worthy causes, and for gardening and sport. Until his health failed, in spite of his having only one hand, he tilled his garden very skilfully, and was a great lover of horticulture. He was a member of the I.W. Horticultural Association and at one time a regular attendant at the monthly meetings, the gardeners of the Wight being among his closest friends. He was also a clever bowler, as a member successively of the old Carisbrooke Club, when they played on the green at the back of the Eight Bells Hotel, Carisbrooke, of the Newport Conservative Bowling Club, and of the Newport Club. He often played in matches for these clubs and his good sportsmanship made him a popular figure on the green. He was one of the original members of the Newport Conservative Club, having been a member of the committee for some years. A few years ago, when his health prevented his further active association with the club, the members marked their appreciation of his good service and comradeship by electing him a life hon. member. He had also been a member of the Newport Literary Society for many years. A devoted churchman, he was an unassuming but ardent worker for St. Paul's Church, Barton. He served for many years on the Parochial Church Council, acted as hon. secretary of the committee who raised the war memorial tablet in the church, and was one of the founders, and a former hon. secretary and joint leader with Mr. W. Ouseley, M.B.E., J.P., C.C., of the St. Paul's Brotherhood.

The true and deep sympathy of all who knew him goes out to his widow, two sons, and daughter in their irreparable loss.

THE FUNERAL

took place on Tuesday. The service, in St. Paul's Church, was attended by all Mr. Allen's colleagues of the "County Press" staff who could be spared from duty, and a large gathering of representatives of the general life of the town, and of the organisations associated with St. Paul's Church. The Rev. H. G. Kelsey (vicar) officiated, and Mr. G. R. Barrett (works manager of the "County Press") was at the organ, and accompanied the singing of the hymns "Abide with me" (sung as the coffin entered the church) before the sentences of the Burial Office had been said, "Peace, perfect peace," and "The strife is o'er" at the conclusion. Psalm xxiii was chanted.

The Vicar said he was only giving vocal utterance to what was already evidenced by the large gathering when he expressed deep sympathy with the widow and family in their very sudden and sad bereavement. Mr. Allen's passing was a great blow to them all. The large gathering there proclaimed the heavy loss, and proclaimed, too, that the Christian gospel meant something to them, and therefore that the expression of sympathy, however, sincere, was not enough. They should remind themselves of the confidence with which they could face that experience in life, with which they all had to come face to face sooner or later. They knew this was not the final word, and that there was something to follow, to which they could look forward. There were represented in the congregation many different walks of life. That revealed how many sided was Mr. Allen's life, and it bore testimony to his character, which made them say "Yes, I have known many occasions when we wanted to say 'Thank God for his example.'" It was most interesting on the previous Sunday to hear Mr. Ouseley reveal certain facts about Mr. Allen's connection with the Brotherhood, and to realise how, in spite of the suffering and pain, which had been his for a long period, he was a person who always greeted one with a smile. One always felt as a result of coming into contact with him that it did one good. They should thank God for what his life had meant to so many. A life of the kind which could stand the greatest test of suffering and still keep smiling was a life triumphant, bound to be an inspiration to all. They were all aware of how he carried on, encouraging, helping, and cheering people, in spite of his affliction. Therefore he wanted triumph to be the concluding theme of that service, and for that reason he had chosen the hymn "Alleluia" to be sung as the cortege left the church.

The chief mourners were : Messrs. R. H. and G. S. H. Allen (sons), Miss I. Allen (daughter), Mrs. R. Allen (daughter-in-law), Mr. S. Allen, of Chillerton (brother), Mrs. H. C. Cross and Mrs. J. Brooks (sisters), Messrs. A. J. and A. H. Cross, P. and H. Allen, of Gosport, and A. Arnold, of Sandown (nephews), Mrs. H. Hoverd (sister-in-law), and Mesdames P. Simmonds and J. Buckett and Mr. E. W. Brading (cousins).

The following members of the "County Press" staff attended : Lt.-Col. C. W. Brannon, M.C., T.D., D.L. (manager), Mr. W. H. Dann, J.P. (editor), Messrs. W. G. Sibbick, E. F. Brown (Ryde), W. H. and K. Findon (Sandown), H. W. Minns (Cowes), and L. F. Rodaway, A. W. Fry, and L. G. Way (Newport), members of the editorial staff, Messrs. C. S. Crowther and C. W. Blee, and

Miss J. Bartlett (office staff), Mr. T. Smith (artist), Messrs. E. Melhuish, C. Eldridge, S. E. Leigh, P. Morgan, and B. P. R. Smith (news composing staff), R. T. Lawn, sen. and jun., C. Gifford, R. Montgomery, J. Coombes, and R. Dore (machine staff), P. Appel, J. Edwards (and Mrs. Edwards), T. Saunders, and J. Rolf (jobbing dept. Staff), and W. H. Baker, W. P. Wickenden, and A. W. Spanner (former members of the staff). Mr. Sibbick represented the Conservative Club, of which he is chairman.

Those also attending included Mr. and Mrs. H. J. Heal (also representing Mrs. J. W. Marshall, of Edgware), Mr. and Mrs. G. H. Arthur, Mr. and Mrs. E. Huck, Mr. W. Ouseley, M.B.E., J.P., C.C. (leader of St. Paul's Brotherhood), and Mrs. Ouseley, Mr. and Mrs. F. E. Snow, Mr. and Mrs. H. Brown, Mr. W. G. James (instructor of St. Paul's Brotherhood Athletic Club), and Mrs. James, Mr. and Mrs. W. C. Smith, and Mr. and Mrs. S. W. Layley, Mesdames H. J., E. W., and H. M. Way (Mrs. E. W. Way also representing her husband), C. Eldridge, Turner, Foster, T. A. Lloyd, W. G. Sibbick, Warren, Rae, Hebbes, F. B. Sheaf, Diment, W. Smith, G. Brown, King, A. W. Spanner, Arnold, H. Pitman, and Kelsey, the Misses E. Way, Cheek, G. Ouseley, Butcher, Atkinson, Cull, Etheridge, A. Etheridge, Osborne, Dore, Pragnell, and A. Pragnell, Aldermen J. C. Millgate, J.P., and W. Blake, J.P., ex-Supts. of Police W. Ayres and J. Salter, and Messrs. L. E. Dore, C. Dodsworth, W. Coward, W. H. Urry, A. G. Harrison, E. Holbrook (Porchfield), S. F. Moody (churchwarden), R. Turner, A. W. Bishop, H. E. Day (president) and W. T. Collins (hon. secretary), representing the I.W. County Bowling Association, the latter also representing the Newport Club; S. Ramage (district secretary) and W. H. Downer (secretary of the Onward Tent), representing the I.W. District of Rechabites; W. Bullock (Gatcombe), E. G. Barnes, T. Smith, G. Heal (hon. secretary, representing the Newport Literary Society), W. Elliott, F. Turnham, P. G. Jenkins, L. Jordan, J.P., S. E. Whildey (representing the "I.W. Mercury," Ventnor), S. Harrison (representing the "Evening News"), A. G. Harley, J. R. Thomas, and B. H. Edwards (inspector) and A. Diment (cashier), representing the Southern Vectis Omnibus Co.

The interment followed at St. Paul's Cemetery, and [there were a] large number of beautiful floral tributes.

Messrs. H. and F. Damp made the arrangements.

The Directors of the County Press were all unavoidably prevented from attending, as was Captain H. A. Drudge (secretary), and Messrs. A. J. M. Bayes, of Ryde ("Evening News"), and Mr. S. J. Coe, of Newport ("Southern Daily Echo").

The flag at the Newport Conservative Club was flying at half mast.

Mrs. Allen and family sincerely thank the many kind friends who have expressed sympathy, either personally or by letter; all who sent floral tributes, which were so numerous and beautiful; and those who gave and offered such ready assistance in their time of sorrow.

Will those to whom they are unable to write personally please accept this expression of their gratitude.

TRIBUTES.

At the meeting of the St. Paul's Brotherhood at St. Paul's Church on Sunday the Leader (Mr. W. Ouseley) said that it was only a week ago that an old and highly respected member of the Brotherhood, Mr. W. H. Bishop, was laid to rest, and now they had to mourn the passing of another foundation member in Mr. Henry Allen. From 1911 to 1921 he was hon. secretary, and from 1916 to 1932 he was hon. treasurer of the St. Paul's War Savings Association. He was always ready when there was work to be done. On many occasions he conducted the services of the Brotherhood, giving quiet, impressive addresses characteristic of his thoughtful personality and inspired by his wide experience. In spite of the pressure of responsible and exacting professional duties during the war years, 1914-18, he made time to maintain correspondence with many of the boys from Barton who were serving their country, and he long treasured a big pile of letters received by him in reply. He gave splendid help in raising funds for the beautiful war memorial now on the north wall of the church, and he was responsible for seeing that the list of names was complete and accurate. While health and strength lasted he worked, not only for the Brotherhood, but for the general good of the parish and its people, and to the very last he maintained his interest and assisted with his advice – always the wisest and best. "Now the labourer's task is o'er," but his work would live on. Those who enjoyed his comradeship and his personal friendship would find inspiration in the memory of his tact and patience, his genial and encouraging smile, his unobtrusive generosity, and his determination "To speak no slander, nor listen to it." A life of accomplishment such as his would long remain a shining example of real brotherhood.

At a meeting of the Newport Magistrates on Monday, Mr. Leonard Jordan paid a tribute to Mr. Allen, who, he said had faithfully reported the proceedings at the Court for nearly 50 years and was much liked by everyone. He expressed sympathy with the family and with the late journalist's colleagues.

At Thursday's meeting of the Public Assistance Committee, Mr. G. Moody, C.C. (chairman), said that he was sure the members would wish him to refer to the regret they all felt at the passing of Mr. Henry Allen, who had reported the proceedings of the Board of Guardians for so many years. They would like to express to Mrs. Allen their very sincere sympathy in her loss. He had had the privilege of knowing Mr. Allen ever since he was a boy at Gatcombe and his loss both to the County Press and to the Island was a great one. – The tribute was accorded in silence.

Mr. A. G. Harrison, of Newport, formerly clerk to the I.W. Guardians, writes : "The death of Henry Allen fills me with a sense of deep personal loss. Among those concerned with the administration of the Island's public affairs he held a unique and honoured place in their

regard and affection as a front rank journalist and especially as a representative of the "County Press," covering a very long period of his active life. Courteous, kindly, clear-minded, accurate in detail and with a graceful literary style, he inspired a confidence much to be envied and which won for himself universal esteem. Island journalism will be all the poorer for his passing."

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