

Dr Thomas Ashby Barron DSO TD

Dr T A Barron lies in Spondon Cemetery, his untended grave located towards the top end of the 'old' part of the cemetery, beyond where the Mortuary Chapel was. His memorial stone declares he was a Colonel in the Royal Army Medical Corps (RAMC), had been awarded the Distinguished Service Order (DSO) and the Territorial Decoration (TD) and that he was Physician in this Parish for 28 years. So who was Thomas Ashby Barron?

He was born in Borrowash on 3 September 1872. His father was John Barron (1844-1906), proprietor of Borrowash Nurseries, and was grandson of Scotsman William Barron (1805-1891), founder of the firm, and previously landscape gardener for the 4th and 5th Earls of Harrington at Elvaston Castle. His mother Mary née Ashby (1845-1896) was born in Derby and lived in Spondon and later Borrowash. He went first to Ockbrook School, and then in 1881 age 9 with his elder brother William (age 13) moved to the St Andrew's Middle Class School, Litchurch. We next read of him in the 1891 census where he is a student of medicine, and from the press of the day see he graduated in April 1893 from St. Bartholomew's Hospital in Physiology, and in 1895 was Licensed by the Royal College of Physicians (LRCS), and became a Member of the Royal College of Surgeons (MRCS).

At some time around 1897 he became a physician in Spondon, where at the 1901 census he was living at 42 Oxford Street, Spondon with his 73 year old housekeeper, Lydia Rose. By 1912 he was living at 13 Potter Street, from where one night had his car stolen from his garage. The car was a 12hp two seater Sizaire, registration LD8997 and valued at £250. After sightings Ashbourne, Hayfield and Chester it was finally recovered from Aberystwyth with the culprit apprehended.



As for his military career, in 1908 he joined the 1st Field Ambulance (part of the Territorial Force) as a Lieutenant and went overseas in February 1915 as a Major and second in command of a Field Ambulance. He served with the unit all through the Great War in France and Flanders, being mentioned in despatches and awarded the DSO in 1918. He came home after the armistice in 1918 and was promoted to Lieutenant-Colonel and Officer Commanding the Field Ambulance. When the Territorial Army was formed in 1920 by the reorganisation of all the volunteer forces, he raised the 137th (North Midland) Field Ambulance and held this command until promoted to Colonel and appointed ADMS in 1924 of the 46th (NM) Division. However, due to failing health he was compelled to resign in 1925, and sadly died after a heart operation in Glasgow Royal Infirmary on 14 August 1926, aged 53.

His funeral service was held in St. Werburgh's parish church on 18 August and was attended by many uniformed Army officers and men and civilian dignitaries. His coffin was draped with the Union Jack and was borne on a gun carriage of the 245th (N Derby) Battery of the Royal Artillery to Spondon Cemetery through the streets of the village, followed by a large cortege of mourners. Hundreds of parishioners had also gathered at the church and at the cemetery to pay their last respects. The six pallbearers were fellow Army officers. RIP Spondon war hero.

Paul Walpole August 2016

