

IN MEMORY OF ALLAN GRANT PIRIE

DIED AFTER THE WAR IN APRIL 1923

Lived at Ashton House, Station Road
NO PLAQUE

Allan was the youngest brother of Dr James Pirie of Harbury (after whom Pirie Close is named), though he was born and educated in Elgin, Scotland. Though we know little of his early life, we do know that he entered a career in law, becoming an advocate in Aberdeen, where his brother James also trained to become a doctor.

Though he and his wife continued to live in Aberdeen, when he enlisted it was with the Royal Warwickshire Regiment, with no indication other than his brother (who also served, in the Royal Army Medical Corps) living in Harbury as to why he would sign up so far from home. During his time with them he was promoted to Captain, but was severely wounded at Beaumont Hamel in 1916 and eventually discharged.

Allan is an anomaly among these stories. He survived his injuries and returned home.

After his war service he became a partner in his law firm in Aberdeen, but in early 1918 moved with his wife Elizabeth to Harbury. The couple moved in with Dr James Pirie, Allan's brother, and their two sisters, all living in Ashton House.

Allan died in 1923, seven years after his severe wounding in France. It was believed that Allan's death was as a direct result of his experience in France, perhaps thinking that the cancer that actually killed him was an effect of those two splintering bombs, which resulted in Allan having part of his arm amputated. Though medical understanding now disproves the idea that his bone cancer was caused by these wounds, the painful injuries and their lifelong affect on him could have weakened him, and hastened his death. The truth of his gravestone, which says he 'died of wounds sustained in the battle of Beaumont Hamel in France', hardly seems to

matter - whether or not they killed him, those wounds stayed with him all his life. He deserves recognition for that.

He was still alive when the memorial on the green was erected, hence the absence of his name from it, but had died when the memorial on the inside of the church was made. His name rests there. At Allan's funeral, a union flag was draped over the coffin, in homage to his service in the war. He is buried in Ufton churchyard.

The Aberdeen Press of Thursday, 10 May 1923 gives an insight into the character of the lawyer. It remembered him as a 'mild-mannered man' who nonetheless had great 'strength of character' with true 'Scottish grit and tenacity'. He is painted as a reserved yet determined and compassionate man, always willing to aid any of his comrades who came to him for help, a man who 'first and last thought of the men who served under him.'

In the time between his return from the war and his death, he and his wife had a child. Their daughter, Julia Pirie, born in 1918, displayed the same reserve balanced with grit and character for which her father was praised. After the war she and her mother moved to India, but she returned as a young woman at the outbreak of WWII. She joined the Auxiliary Territorial Service in 1939, serving as a driver, and she was with the first troops to enter the Nazi concentration camp of Bergen-Belsen in 1945. She went on to become a determined member of MI5, serving as a mole in the Communist Party of Great Britain, and later monitoring IRA activities in Barcelona - from a flat underneath their safe house. Fearless and intelligent, she was a daughter of whom Allan would without a doubt have been proud. Her obituary was published in the Times newspaper.



Harbury World War 1 Memorial Trail

Remembering the men of Harbury parish who fell during the first world war in service of their country.

