

LADY TALBOT DRIVE NAMED AFTER

SIR REGINALD ARTHUR JAMES TALBOT (1841 - 1929)

Born on the 11th July 1841 in London, third son of Henry John Chetwynd Talbot, later the 18th earl of Shrewsbury, and his wife Lady Sarah Elizabeth, née Beresford, daughter of the 2nd marquess of Waterford.

Educated at Harrow School, he entered the army and was sub-lieutenant, 1st Life Guards, in 1859, colonel in 1885 and commanded the unit in 1885-86. As Conservative member for Stafford in the House of Commons (1869-74), he spanned Gladstone's Liberal reform ministry, speaking infrequently but knowledgeably in support of army interests. He delineated the characteristics of 'so-called Army reformers since they had sprung into notoriety' as 'great carelessness', 'great inaccuracy', frequent 'want of knowledge', and 'great bitterness of expression'. On the 8th May 1877 he married Margaret Jane Stuart-Wortley, granddaughter of the 1st baron Wharnccliffe.

Talbot saw active service in the Zulu War (1879), Egypt (1882) and the Nile expedition which did not rescue General Gordon (1884-85). Military attaché in Paris during 1889-95, he returned to command the Cavalry Brigade in 1896. A major-general from 1898, he led the British army of occupation in Egypt, 1899-1902. He appeared 'the noblest figure of a man of war ever seen' and 'the highest type of Guards' Brigade Officer, haughty, distinguished, yet very human'.

Talbot was appointed C.B. (1885) and K.C.B. (1902). He was governor of Victoria from 25th April 1904 to 6th July 1908, taking eight months leave in England in 1907.

Strongly practical, Talbot quickly appreciated (Sir) Thomas Bent, his constant premier, whose unpolished efforts Talbot recognized as directed to the thrifty improvement of Victoria. Visible improvement mattered for Talbot. His last despatch favourably compared the statistics of Victoria in 1907 with 1903. Perhaps echoing his acquaintance Frank Tate, he deplored backward technical and secondary education. A valedictory report commended his then unusual energy in travelling around Victoria and getting to know its people.

Lady Talbot (1855-1937), far from being that governor's wife, the woman behind the man behind the times, actively promoted advanced social welfare projects. First president of the subsidized charitable institution the Talbot Colony for Epileptics, opened at Clayton in 1907, she had 'ensured the success of the new venture'. From 1908 the Lady Talbot Milk Institute dispensed wholesome, 'pure' but unpasteurized milk to approved needy recipients. In March 1907 she officially opened the College of Domestic

Economy for which she had fought. Premier Bent sighed in her presence, 'I am getting frightened of Lady Talbot now. She is in so many things that are making demands on the Treasury'.

Retirement was not oblivion for Talbot. He welcomed Victorian visitors and worked for disabled World War I servicemen. His name recurred amongst 'Distinguished Invalids' in The Times during the weeks before he died, respected, on the 15th January 1929 in London. He was buried at Medenham, Buckinghamshire. To the end he remained the model of a major-general.

