

## Dr Laura Veale

Photo credit : Yorkshire Post from British Medical Journal obituary



Plaque, number 77, is to Dr Laura Veale at the site of her surgery, number 3 Victoria Avenue. It was paid for by the Harrogate Medical Society, the Harrogate Civic Society and Richard Eves Architects. Laura Veale was born on 30 August 1867 in Hampsthwaite, a village to the north-west of Harrogate, where she spent her early childhood. Her father, Richard, whose middle name of Sobey she also took, was a native of Cornwall who had studied medicine at Edinburgh. Her mother, also Laura, was born in Heckmondwike. Two brothers, Henry and Rawson Augustus were also to pursue distinguished medical careers. The family moved into Harrogate, living in Victoria Park, one of several elegant neighbourhoods in the town. They were a comfortably off middle-class family: in 1881, for example, served by a governess, nurse, cook and housemaid. Her father died comparatively young, and Laura was a little older than was usual when she began her medical studies. She overcame the considerable degree of opposition to women entering the medical profession in the late nineteenth century to pursue a distinguished career. The medical school in Leeds having shut its doors to her, she went to London for her studies at the University of London, passing the London M.B. In the 1901 census we find her as a thirty-three-year-old medical student with other, younger, women students living in St Pancras. Her medical education was then pursued at the Royal Free Hospital.

Her first post was at the Hospital for Women and Children in Leeds, but she soon returned to Harrogate where she began general practice at the surgery on Victoria Avenue, and was also appointed to a position on the medical staff of Harrogate Infirmary. There she started a department for women and children, the nucleus of which was a dispensary she had set up in New Park, a working-class district of Harrogate adjoining the town's gas works. After the First World War, she achieved her ambition of establishing a maternity department in the hospital, which opened in 1937. She also established infant welfare and antenatal clinics and was medical officer of

the Municipal Babies' Hospital. In addition to her work for the health of women and children, she was a founder member of the Yorkshire Council for Cripples and a member of the Yorkshire Council of the Empire Cancer Campaign. She was elected a Fellow of the Royal Medical Society and was a member of the BMA Federation of Medical Women. She retired in 1936 but continued to play a prominent part in the life of the town. She organised the Women's Voluntary Service for Harrogate during the Second World War and led the campaign to collect scrap metal for the war effort, riding through the town in a car pulled by local scouts, shouting out at the top of her voice. She spent the rest of her life in Harrogate, latterly in Springfield Avenue. She died on the 14 August 1963, aged 95, at Scotton Bank Hospital.

Acknowledgements:

Veale obituary in the British Medical Journal 24 August 1963.

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