

FROM THE ARCHIVES

Dr Pimple Popper at Roehampton Club 100 years ago



The fascination of dermatology and 'eruptions of the skin' have been at the forefront of medical history from Egyptian times with documented references as far back as 1500BC. More recently, a US Certified Dermatologist, Dr Sandra Lee, known as Dr Pimple Popper, started her own TV series in which the audience is invited to watch her treating patients with unusual cases of facial and skin disorders.

In February 1922, Dr Harold Wordsworth Barber was elected to Roehampton Club. His application form refers to his occupation as 'Physician'. Further research into his background from the history of the British Association of Dermatologists and the Royal College of Physicians recognises his contribution to this field of medical science. He began to contribute to dermatological literature during the latter part of the Great



**Royal College
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War, and his writing attracted immediate attention. Before very long he was to dominate thought in British dermatology and this he did by infusing life and movement into a somewhat sluggish subject, thinking, teaching, and

writing in terms of broad aetiological concepts and rejecting as nearly always useless the 'botanical' attitude of mind towards skin diseases.

Endowed with fine powers of observation and with the ability to speak and write in an interesting and very persuasive manner, he quickly became recognised both at home and abroad as a clinical dermatologist of the first order. This he was without question, even though his reasoning did not always conform strictly to the rules of evidence.

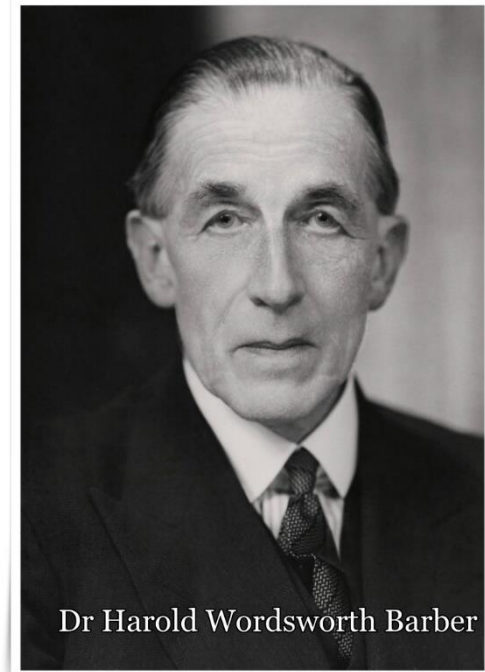
In 1919, he was the first dermatologist to be appointed at Guy's Hospital – one of the last of the London teaching hospitals to take this step. He was to become the pre-eminent clinician in London. His knowledge of general medicine, his retentive visual memory, but above all his charisma, ensured a busy life in his clinical work at Guy's and private practice. He produced papers of unusual interest for his ideas were often novel. He attracted a retinue of devoted acolytes who became enthralled by his teaching and charm, while at meetings or lectures he would always command rapid attention. As a therapist he was incomparable, due in part no doubt to his personal brand of 'magic'. He remained a sincere advocate of the 'art' of medicine, encouraging his pupils to appreciate an attitude he felt was in danger of being lost in the modern scientific revolution. Barber was totally at ease in the drawing rooms of London society. His handsome appearance, his courteous if somewhat aloof bearing, and his wide and cultured interests ensured respectful attention.

With a French wife it was hardly surprising that he displayed an expertise in gastronomy and a critical appreciation of fine wine, but his fascinations for cricket, horse racing and steam trains were unexpected; latterly he became an ardent birdwatcher. He served

twice as President of the Section at the Royal Society of Medicine and twice as President of the British Association of Dermatologists. His memorial service was held in the chapel at Guy's in 1955 and the packed congregation gave his family some idea of the intensity of esteem and affection his colleagues, pupils and patients wished to express. This account of the memorial service written by the Association concludes with the words that the likes of Dr Harold Barber are seen but once in a lifetime.



**BRITISH ASSOCIATION
OF DERMATOLOGISTS**
HEALTHY SKIN FOR ALL



Dr Harold Wordsworth Barber