

Barbara Helen Rawson (1893-1953)

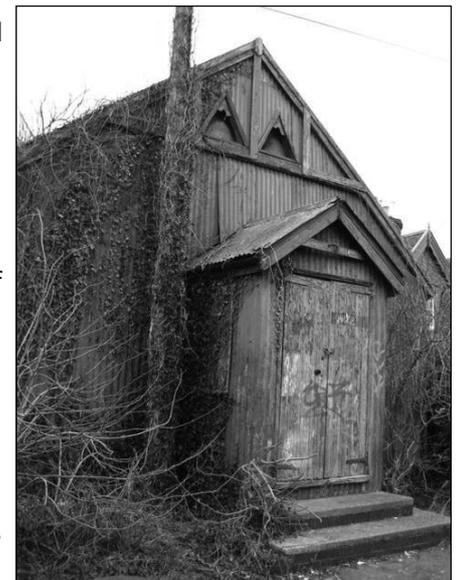
Character in the Sherborne Pageant:

Barbara was one of the four young attendants in the Final Tableau.

Barbara Helen Rawson was the only daughter of Philip Heathcote and Liliac Campbell Rawson (née Clarke-Preston) and she was born in Brand Hall, Norton in Hales, Shropshire in 1893. A three years younger brother Philip Colin made up the family of four. At the time of the 1901 census the family was living at Brand Hall with six servants including a nurse possibly for eight year old Barbara and four year old Philip. Their father was 'living on own means'. Brand Hall is a Georgian country house currently situated in some 200 acres of parkland where regular international horse trials are held. Her father moved the family to Sherborne to join the Blackmore Vale Hunt (according to his obituary) enabling the family to continue with the hunting tradition that they would have known so well in Shropshire. Co-incidental to the move to Sherborne, or perhaps it was an influencing factor, Sherborne Girls' School had opened its doors in 1899 and so young Barbara was enrolled in 1904 and left in 1909. By joining the hunt



it would seem that the family passed immediately into the higher echelons of Dorset society. The Hunt Ball was held in the Assembly Rooms at the Digby Hotel in Sherborne with dancing from ten at night to five the next morning. The newspaper reports, of this annual event, ran to several columns with all those who attended listed by name. Mr Rawson went on to become a magistrate, chairman of the Urban District Council and a master of the Almshouse. His chief delight was in furthering the work of the Church Lads' Brigade Cadet Corps and he purchased a hall where they could undertake their activities. The hall, known as Rawson Hall is sadly dilapidated, but it still stands today. With the outbreak of war there were many changes to both family and local life. Barbara joined the local VAD and became a nurse at the Greenhill hospital, run by Mrs Frances McAdam who Barbara would have known when they both appeared in the Sherborne Pageant. Barbara's brother Philip joined the 1st Battalion Royal Berkshire Regiment from the Royal Military College, Sandhurst at around the time of his nineteenth birthday in June 1915. He was reported missing in France just over three months later. He is remembered on one of the panels of the Loos war memorial and on Sherborne town war memorial. This was devastating news for the family but life had to go on. Barbara's father died two years later.



Rawson Hall in Westbury,
Sherborne

Her mother died when Barbara was 34 and she never married. Like her father she became a magistrate and her name can be found in newspaper reports that reveal the many cases which she presided over. She can also be found helping with the organisation of the Guide Dogs for the Blind, the Red Cross, renovations of the Lady Chapel in the Abbey (where she made the communicants kneeling mats), the Conservative Association, opening bazaars, organising displays of needlework, judging baby competitions, presenting prizes and crowning May queens. She was also a governor of Lord Digby's School. She continued her associations with the Blackmore Vale Hunt and she kept her horses in Long Street in the stables that adjoined Brecon House. Sadly an obituary that might have recorded her full life has not been found. She is buried with her parents in Sherborne Cemetery.

As a postscript her dolls house can be found in Sherborne Museum and a pair of her lorgnettes are held in a private collection.

