



DULWICH COLLEGE

EMINENT OLD ALLEYNIANs

Major Herbert John Leslie Barefoot, GC, ARIBA

Born 1887. Died 1958. School No.5662. At Dulwich College 1900-1905



On leaving Dulwich Leslie Barefoot trained as an Architect. During the First World War he served in the ranks with RAMC in Egyptian Expeditionary Force 1916-1919 and was mentioned in dispatches. Demobilised in 1919, he joined the practice of H. Munroe Cautley, an Ipswich architect, lectured on building construction at the Ipswich School of Engineering from 1924 and in 1928 became a partner in the firm of Cautley and Barefoot. He was responsible for the design and construction of numerous buildings in East Anglia, including banks, private houses and hotels. He was

President of the Suffolk Association of Architects, 1936-8 and of the East Anglian Society of Architects in 1938.

War Service 1939-45: Lieut. Royal Engineers 1940 and then Captain, ACRE No. 3 Bomb Disposal Group. His son says; 'I believe he volunteered. He was always interested in the unusual and I recall he was very excited to be on bomb disposal from the beginning'. During the early days of the Blitz, in September and October 1940, Major Barefoot, who was a pioneer in bomb disposal, dealt with some of the first unexploded bombs which fell in Britain. He worked on the first suspended parachute magnetic mine, as a result of which he was able to put invaluable information at the disposal of the authorities. His bravery and devotion to duty were an inspiration to the men under him. He was awarded the George Cross in 1940 'For most conspicuous gallantry in carrying out hazardous work in a very brave manner'. The citation includes the following comments: 'This officer dealt with and defused some of the first unexploded bombs in this country. In these early pioneer stages new types of bombs were constantly being found. Captain Barefoot was, therefore, responsible for the discovery of much new and valuable information. On July 28 he assisted Dr Merriman of London in experimenting on and afterwards defusing three unexploded bombs of a new shape at Great Yarmouth. By then Captain Barefoot had defused thirty or more such bombs of varying types and shapes. On the night of September 1 Captain Barefoot received information about unexploded bombs blocking the LNER main line. There were six live bombs in one place. This was a time when delayed-action time fuse bombs were much in use. In view of the importance of clearing the line at all costs, Captain Barefoot and his men deliberately ignored the safety period

of four days then laid down. By 7am work was begun and continued without cessation in relays throughout the day. Captain Barefoot assisted personally in this remarkably expeditious operation, and by the evening the line had been cleared and at 6.40pm the first train was running. Normally this work would have taken a week to perform. Captain Barefoot worked on one of the first parachute magnetic mines dropped in this country. At the time we had very little knowledge of the mechanism of these mines, and much was learnt in these initial stages'.

He was promoted Major in 1941. He returned to his practice after the war and in 1954 was joined by his third son, practising then as Leslie and Peter Barefoot. He died aged 71 in 1958.