

Alderley & Wilmslow Advertiser – Friday 27 September 1912

DEATH OF COLONEL THORP, J.P.

AN EX-MAYOR OF MACCLESFIELD

The sad news was circulated in Macclesfield on Wednesday evening that Col. J. W. H. Thorp, J.P., had suddenly expired in London during the day. Knowing the active life which the gallant Colonel had always led, and the superabundant energy which he appeared to possess, many people refused to give credence to the statement, but unfortunately the sad tidings proved to be only too true.

He left Macclesfield on Tuesday, apparently, in good health, for the purpose of attending a meeting of the Rugby Union in London, but was discovered dead in the lavatory of the Junior Constitutional Club early yesterday morning. The discovery was made by one of the attendants at nine o'clock in the morning, and as Colonel Thorp was not sleeping at the club on the previous night it is presumed that he died on Tuesday evening. He was identified without any difficulty from some letters which were found in his pockets.

His relatives at Macclesfield were at once communicated with and left yesterday afternoon for London.

The cause of death is attributed to heart failure.

The deceased gentleman, who was the eldest son of the late Mr Robert Thorp, J.P., devoted many years of his life to the public service. As far back as November, 1877, he first entered the Town Council, and in November, 1889 was elected as an alderman, retaining the position down to the present time.

In 1897 an even greater honour was conferred upon him, namely, that of the mayoralty, and that he worthily maintained the dignity of his high office is beyond question. His long connection with the Corporation rendered his services all the more valuable, and it is safe to say that although he never indulged in that kind of oratory which is known as "playing to the gallery," he was always listened to with respectful attention by his fellow members. Even those who differed from him could not but admire his candour and honesty of purpose.

His most valuable work in the Corporation was probably that which he accomplished as chairman of the Water Committee, a position which he only relinquished less than two years ago, after discharging the onerous duties for close upon two decades. He had a comprehensive grasp of the multifarious details of the waterworks department, and his resignation of the chairmanship was a source of genuine regret not only to the members of the Water Committee but the Council as a whole.

From 1898 to 1904 Colonel Thorp was one of Macclesfield's representatives on the County Council, being twice returned unopposed for No. 2 (Sutton) Division of the borough; but on seeking re-election in March 1904, he was defeated by the late Mr J. Mort, the Labour candidate. A few years ago, however, Colonel Thorp was elected a County Alderman. It was a well-deserved compliment, as most people will admit.

He was appointed a borough magistrate in February, 1886, and was placed on the Commission of the Peace for the Prestbury Petty Sessional Division of the county in 1893.

An ardent educationist, it was not surprising to find him occupying prominent positions on various bodies whose special duty it is to further the educational interests of the town and neighbourhood. For instance, he was the vice-chairman of the Macclesfield Higher Education Committee, and also of the governing bodies of the Grammar School and the High School for Girls. He was, in addition, a member both of the Macclesfield Primary Education Committee and the Administrative Areas Education Sub-Committee, and also of the County Education Committee.

For many years he had been a trustee and governor of the Macclesfield General Infirmary, and was a member of the Parkside Asylum Committee of Visitors.

A loyal and devoted Churchman, Alderman Thorp was a member of the Parish Church Restoration Committee, and also served the Church in various other capacities.

A staunch Conservative, he allied himself more especially with the work in the Knutsford Division, often presiding over the meetings at Rainow, with which his family had had long and happy associations.

A keen advocate of physical drill amongst the young, and an ardent supporter of the theory that every man should be qualified by a course of military training to defend his country in case of need, the late Colonel certainly lived up to his creed, for he served upwards of 30 years in the Volunteers, retiring from the command of the Macclesfield Detachment some ten years ago. He retained his active connection with the 5th Battalion, however, until the advent of the Territorial scheme, when he retired.

In his early days, the deceased gentleman took a great interest in athletics, and was especially devoted to Rugby football, playing for his county with distinction on many occasions. He was a past president of the Rugby Union, and was a generous supporter of healthy, recreative sport of all kinds. He was an ex-president of the Macclesfield Swimming Club, and gave the first cup for the borough championship competition.

As the head of the firm of Robert Thorp and Sons, whose silk mills are amongst the oldest in the town, the deceased's constant aim was to promote the best interests of his work-people, and during the past year or so he had had modern machinery installed, which has involved a considerable outlay. He also carried on a branch silk business at Congleton. He had turned 60 years of age, and was a life-long teetotaller and non-smoker. His unexpected demise has caused something like a sensation in the town, and the sincerest sympathy of all classes will be extended to Mrs Thorp and family in their sudden bereavement.
