

**George Titus Barham (1860-1937) milk wholesaler and retailer, pp 161-63 in Jeremy, D.J. (Ed.) *Dictionary of Business Biography* vol. 1 London: Butterworths, 1984**

By Peter J. Atkins

George Titus was born on 22 March 1860 over the dairy shop in Dean Street, Fetter Lane, London where his father George (qv) had started his own business two years before. Barham Sr became a renowned, respected and very successful dairyman who dominated the London milk trade through his Express Dairy Co Ltd, and his son followed him into this trade after an education at University College School and several years as an invalid in an orthopaedic hospital. In 1878 Titus joined the Express Country Milk Co, as it was then called, and in 1881 he became a managing director and third member of the board.

For many years Titus lived in the shadow of his father's outstanding achievements. He played an important part in helping to build up the catering side of their enterprise and gained a wealth of experience that stood him in good stead when his father gradually relinquished power from 1893 onwards and finally died in 1913. During the First World War there was a dramatic restructuring of the London milk trade, with a realignment of both the wholesale and retail sectors. One group, United Dairies, which was created in 1915 and enlarged in 1917, by the end of the war controlled something approaching two-thirds of London's wholesale supply of liquid milk. Titus abhorred this nascent monopoly and resisted blandishments to join. His brother Arthur (qv) had taken his Dairy Supply Co into the combine and tried to persuade Titus to follow. In 1920, with his traditional wholesale supplies cut off and divorced from the profitable utensil business. George Titus must have been tempted to succumb, but the stubborn streak which characterised his decision-making, coupled with a personality clash with his brother, preserved the independence of the Express Dairy Co Ltd.

Titus Barham was not the strong and influential character his father had been. He did not leave such an indelible personal stamp on the company, one contributory factor being a painful physical disability. Nevertheless the 'Express' expanded during his time of office and, after the initial difficult years, increased its number of branches fourfold and the turnover of milk sixfold between 1913 and 1937. Titus also had his share of innovative ideas. In 1929, for instance, he initiated the first large-scale experiment in the sale of milk in cans, although in the event it was a failure financially. He refused to retire, and in his declining years the Express Dairy Co lost its momentum.

Outside his immediate business interests, Titus Barham was active in trade organizations. He was honorary treasurer of the Metropolitan Dairymen's Benevolent Institution from 1913 until his death, and its president in 1895; he was president of the National Dairymen's Benevolent Institution (Incorporated) in 1934; for many years he was president of the Dairy Trade Protection Society; he served on the Council of the British Dairy Farmers' Association, and was its vice-president in 1916 and president in 1933-34. He was a founder-member of the English Guernsey Cattle Society in 1884, its treasurer until his death and its president in 1918 and 1934. He also presided at various times over the British Kerry Society and the Dexter Society.

Titus Barham lived in Wembley for fifty-six years. He was deeply involved with local activities and became the borough's charter mayor. He was also a founder-member of the Hampstead Lodge of freemasons and was president of the Boy Scouts Association.

Titus's interest in cattle breeding led to the development of a fine herd of pedigree shorthorns, which he kept on one of his farms, at Sudbury Park in Middlesex. In 1908 their milk was among the first to be certified as tuberculin-tested. Sudbury Park was also the home of George Titus Barham's collection of antiques, curios and works of art, which he had built up during his extensive foreign travels and visits to auction sales at Sotheby's and Christie's. In his will he left the mansion, estate and collection to the public.

Titus Barham died on 8 July 1937. He was survived by his wife Florence, née Vosper, but there were no children. The unsettled estate was valued at £515,063 gross.

#### **Sources:**

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