

**FREDERICK GEORGE THOMSON (1874-1940). M.D. (Lond.), M.R.C.S. (Eng.), F.R.C.P. -
President of the British Medical Association.**

"He spent his holidays fishing, acquiring that mellow personality which seems to characterise the devotees of that art."

British Medical Journal (1940)

Frederick George Thomson (1874-1940) [Epsom College 1889-1892. Doncaster Scholarship] came from a famous medical family. His brother, Herbert Campbell Thomson, F.R.C.P. (1870-1940) [Epsom College 1883-1888], was a distinguished neurologist and Dean of the Middlesex Hospital Medical School, while his cousin, Sir St Clair Thomson (1859-1943) was a renowned ear, nose and throat surgeon and Professor of Laryngology at King's College Hospital. At Epsom College, 'F.G.' as he was affectionately known, was Head Prefect, winner of the Propert and Watts Science Prizes, and a member of both the Rugby XV and Cricket XI. He won a Scholarship to Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge, before being awarded the Freer Lucas Entrance scholarship to complete his medical education at the Middlesex Hospital. At the Middlesex Hospital he had such a distinguished career, winning so many scholarships and prizes that he might have looked forward to joining the staff. However, he was not attracted to London life. He travelled to Portugal where he served as medical officer to the British Hospital at Oporto. Shortly before this he had won the gold medal for the M.D. Examination (1907). During the First World War, Thomson served in France and Mesopotamia, and afterwards he took up the appointment of Consultant Physician at the Royal United and Royal Mineral Water Hospitals in Bath, with primary interests in cardiology and rheumatic diseases. It was during this period that he introduced the method of closed drainage in cases of empyema (a collection of pus in the pleural cavity) to his hospital with such success that no operation of rib resection, the previous treatment of choice, was recorded during the next ten years.

In 1925, Frederick Thomson was elected President of the British Medical Association, but illness prevented him from reading his presidential address, and this was read for him by his son. The following year he was elected a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians. Thomson was soon recognised as one of the leaders of the medical profession in the west of England, and he was President of the Bath, Bristol and Somerset Branch of the British Medical Association and Chairman of the Bath Division on two occasions. Other honours soon came his way. He was President of the Section of Physical Medicine of the Royal Society of Medicine (1931-1932), and was appointed Consultant Physician at the British Red Cross Clinic for Rheumatism in London.



'F.G.' Thomson was immensely popular in the Bath area. He was a good shot, and much in request in the country around. But, his chief interest in sport was fly-fishing, and for many years he used to join his father fishing in Scotland. It was said in his obituary that "his chief characteristic was a sterling common sense, and a wit if sometimes mordant, never unkind. He did not suffer fools gladly and rogues earned his contempt. The infinitely better understanding of the spa physician at the present day compared to that enjoyed even a few decades ago owes much to Thomson's efforts and example." In his writings he was at pains to examine old theories and explode myths resting on no assured basis, before attempting to lay down rules for treatment that had clear-cut reasons behind them.