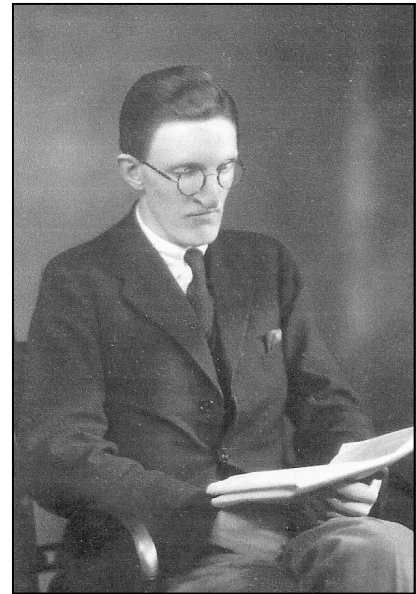


**THOMAS PHILIP AYRE (1902-1979). M.R.C.S., L.R.C.P. (Eng.), F.F.A.R.C.S. (Eng.). - A pioneer who revolutionised the practice of anaesthesia for babies and children.**

*“Paediatric anaesthesia in those days was a protracted and sanguine battle between surgeon and anaesthetist with the poor unfortunate baby as the battlefield.”*

*Thomas Philip Ayre (1934).*

It was said of Thomas Philip Ayre (1901-1979) [Epsom College 1914-1917; re-entered 1918-1919] that “he had administered about 2000 anaesthetics before he qualified in 1933 in London,” – a curious and possibly disturbing fact. He was the son of Dr F. J. Ayre of Llantwit Major, Glamorgan, and from Epsom College he entered St Bartholomew’s Hospital where he qualified M.R.C.S., L.R.C.P. (Eng.) in 1933, at the advanced age of 32. He then joined the staff of the Royal Victoria Infirmary, at Newcastle in 1934 as a house officer anaesthetist, and anaesthetised patients for W. Wardill, a surgeon who specialised in paediatric cases, and to whom the celebrated paediatrician Sir James Spence sent all his paediatric cases. Much of this early work was performed at Blagdon Hall, a large country house ruled over by the autocratic Lady Ridley, who provided the space and the amenities. In 1937, Philip Ayre made his name by inventing a technique which revolutionised the practice of anaesthesia for babies and children, and ‘Ayre’s T-piece’ is still universally used in paediatrics. As well as for paediatrics, Ayre used his techniques for adult patients, particularly in neurosurgery.



Philip Ayre spent all his working life in the Newcastle region, and for over 45 years anaesthetised at most of the city’s hospitals. He became head of the Department of Anaesthetics at Newcastle General Hospital and the Newcastle Hospital for Babies in 1950, posts that he held until his retirement in 1966. He was appointed Regional Adviser in Anaesthesia and helped in the organisation of anaesthetic services in areas served by the Newcastle Regional Hospital Board. In his obituary it was said of him that: “his capacity for work was amazing, for he also found time throughout his working career to cope with a large dental anaesthetic practice. In this he was the acknowledged master. None of those he taught ever approached the skill of his techniques, developed in the early days before modern anaesthetic drugs were available. The North of England Society of Anaesthetists has long been proud of this humble man’s achievements, and in 1974 honoured him by presenting him with a gold replica of his original T-piece, and creating in his honour the Philip Ayre Medal for presentation on rare occasions to any anaesthetist considered eminent enough to merit it.” Philip Ayre had a poorly repaired cleft palate, making his speech somewhat difficult to understand. He also had ginger hair, replaced in his latter years by a ginger wig.