



Mr Thomas Arthur Beale, master of Bruce, the well-known Hospital Collecting dog

Mr. Thomas Arthur Beale and his Dog Bruce, (1905-1915)

Bruce (1905-1915) was well known in the Swindon area, for his charity work with his owner, Mr. T. A. Beale. He had a saddle with a collecting box and together they collected money to help the Swindon Victoria Hospital and other local institutions. Mr. Beale worked on the railway, and with Bruce, travelled over 12,00 miles by rail, and raised more than £900 for charity. Bruce's party trick was to give a little bark every time a coin was dropped into his collecting box.

Thomas was born on January 31, 1878, at 5, Read Street. His father, also named Thomas, was a railway coach body maker in the GWR works, and on his 14th birthday Thomas joined him in the railway factory, beginning a seven-year apprenticeship in the Turning Department.

In 1905 he married Jane Rice and set up home in Nelson Street, with Jane and her 12 year old son. Thomas' fundraising work with Bruce became widely known across the country, and Thomas and Bruce traveled to a variety of different places.

Bruce was awarded 16 gold and silver medals and a solid silver collar, and he was made a member of the Brotherhood of Hero Dogs.

Mrs. de Courcy Laffan, the wife of a former well-known master at Derby School has made Bruce, the wonderful hospital collector dog, a member of her Brotherhood of Hero Dogs. A beautiful collar has been prepared for him by Messrs Pontifex, of Buckingham Palace road. On it are engraved these words, "I

plead for the sick". Tomorrow, at a gathering for the Victoria Hospital, the Mayor of Swindon will place the collar on Bruce, and recount his wonderful achievements. Bruce has altogether collected nearly £200 and no wonder his owner (Mr. Beal) is proud of him.

Derby Daily Telegraph, Saturday, 28 August 1909

Tetbury Show and Fete

Dog Bruce, with Mr. Beale, his master, were present from Swindon collecting for local charitable institutions.

Cheltenham Chronicle, Sat 10 Aug 1912



Bruce with some of his medals



The Certificate which was presented to Bruce and Mr. T. A. Beale in December 1911, to mark their fund-raising achievements for the Victoria Hospital

**“Bruce,” of Swindon,
the famous Collector of £400.**

Death of Bruce

Bruce died in July 1915, and an obituary was published in the **Evening Swindon Advertiser**.

Mr. T. A. Beal, of 16 Nelson Street, informs us his well-known collecting dog, Bruce died last Friday morning, after three months illness, suffering from an ulcerated stomach. Two veterinary surgeons have attended the animal, and did all that was possible to save his life. He will be greatly missed on Hospital collection days and especially by the children, with whom he was a great favourite. By his death Mr. Beal has lost a valuable pet.

Thomas Beale died in 1957, at St Margaret's hospital, built on the site of the former workhouse at Stratton St .Margaret.

Over 60 years after his death, Bruce was included in 1979, in a mural at Prospect Place, of famous Swindonians, painted by Ken White and his students. The mural was repainted in 1985, but unfortunately, no longer exists. You can see Bruce in the shop doorway!

