

Obituary

Dr. Percy Lazarus-Barlow died on 13 November 1967 after a short illness at his home Gillside, Millbeck, Keswick; he was 72 years of age. He had been a member of the Association of Clinical Pathologists since 1930.



Lazarus-Barlow was one of the old school of clinical pathologists who regarded the methods of the laboratory as fundamental to the practice of clinical medicine and strove to bring them closely in touch with each other. He went up to Downing College, Cambridge, in 1917 with the full intention of following in the footsteps of his father who had been Lecturer in Pathology under Professor Roy of Cambridge and later became pathologist to the Westminster Hospital and thereafter in 1904 Director of Cancer Research at the Bland Sutton Institute, the Middlesex Hospital. There was a tradition in his father's family, probably entirely authentic, that it was in direct descent from Moses Maimonides, physician to Saladin the Saracen.

On the outbreak of the First World War in 1914 Lazarus-Barlow volunteered for active service and was attached to the West Kent (Q.O.) Yeomanry as a medical orderly; as at that time there seemed little prospect of the regiment seeing service abroad, and in 1915 he got himself transferred to the R.A.M.C. and became attached as a laboratory technician to No. 9 Hospital, Rouen, to which the pathologist was Dr. A. F. S. Sladden. With one senior technician Lazarus-Barlow constituted the whole technical staff; a large part of the work was bacteriology.

In January 1918 there appeared to be a shortage of doctors in training and Lazarus-Barlow was returned to his medical studies at Cambridge. He went down to the Middlesex Hospital in October 1918 and qualified in

1920. In 1921 he joined the staff of the Bland Sutton Institute under Professor James McIntosh and remained there until 1926. In this post he considered his training as a pathologist to have commenced. He recalled with pride that until 1924 both he and his father were together on the staff of the Bland Sutton Institute. During his tenure of this post Lazarus-Barlow conducted much research, mainly on the bacteriological aspects of dental caries and pyorrhoea.

In 1926 Lazarus-Barlow left the Bland Sutton Institute for the Metropolitan Asylums Board which at that time did pathological investigations for all the London County Council hospitals; there he became associated with J. D. McCartney. His post with the Metropolitan Asylums Board was one of those to come under the famous Geddes axe, and he then regarded himself as fortunate to obtain the post of honorary pathologist to the Royal East Sussex Hospital, where he found his true métier as a clinical pathologist.

This was one of the earliest of the 'voluntary' hospitals in Great Britain to take a pathologist on to its staff and to provide a laboratory in which he could work; true this was a room only 15 × 22 feet at the bottom of a well with no external lighting and the technical staff consisted of one completely untrained 'lab. boy'. On this foundation Lazarus-Barlow built up a highly efficient department; he was early asked to take on the work of the Buchanan Hospital of the Hastings Corporation and in 1933 of the newly opened Bexhill Hospital. So highly was the work of the laboratory valued that in 1936 the Board of Management provided new accommodation within the hospital which made it possible to separate the work of the various departments. In July 1937 Lazarus-Barlow accommodated the summer meeting of the A.C.P. Members, including the writer, who attended that meeting, will remember it as one of the most pleasant occasions in the history of the Association.

Like so many of the pathologists to the old voluntary hospitals Lazarus-Barlow very early instituted a blood transfusion service centring round his department. From 1940 to the end of the war he reckoned that he and his team had collected 40,000 bottles of blood (and only broke two). Just before D Day he was instructed to lay on 200 bottles of group O blood; none of these was actually required. An invaluable member of this team was Miss Jean Papillon who later became his wife.

Lazarus-Barlow was the most modest and unassuming of men but he did with might whatsoever his hand found to do. He was a steadfast supporter of the A.C.P. of which he served on the Council and on various committees; he always regarded the years spent in building up the laboratory of pathology of the Royal East Sussex Hospital and extending its service to the whole of the Hastings area as the most fruitful and rewarding of his life. That service remains an enduring monument to him. On his retirement he went to live near Keswick in Cumberland; he loved the fells, of which he had an extensive view from his house, and until his last short illness took joy in walking over them and planning in the company of his wife which of the 'tops' they would next assail. He is survived by his wife and three children by his first marriage.

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