

Obituary

JOHN WALKER BARBER-LOMAX 1914–1998

John Walker Barber-Lomax, always known to family and friends alike as Jack, and to colleagues as B-L, died on 13 April. He was born on 4 December 1914, near Bolton, Lancashire. After Charterhouse and Caius College, Cambridge, he proceeded to St Thomas' Hospital for a medical training but changed course and went up to the Liverpool veterinary school where he took the Golding prize in veterinary anatomy in 1939 and qualified on 8 December 1941. He spent the next fourteen years in practice in Bury where he is still remembered with affection as the cheerful workaholic who cut a dash by driving a 1920s, dicky-seat Rolls-Royce on his practice rounds. In 1952 he sold the large-animal part of the practice and then gave up practice entirely three years later when he was appointed to the veterinary sales division of the Wellcome Foundation Ltd.

Jack had a passionate interest in veterinary history and the move to London gave him the opportunity to pursue it further as his office was in the same building as the Wellcome Historical Medical Museum and Library. He published numerous historical articles in *The Veterinary Record* and in other journals. He was the ideal author, always producing attractively written copy on time. When the *Journal of Small Animal Practice* was founded in 1960 Jack joined the editorial board and regularly contributed historical articles, as he did later to *The Veterinarian* and *Animal Health*. He was justly proud of being awarded the J T Edwards Medal of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons in 1962 for his contributions to veterinary history. In the same year he was a co-founder of the Veterinary History Society.

His connections with the world of history were further strengthened in 1964 when Noël Poynter was appointed Director of the Wellcome Historical Medical Museum and Library and Jack was transferred from the commercial side to become his deputy. His initial cumbersome title of 'Administrative Officer and Veterinary Historian' was soon changed to the more concise 'Assistant Director'. His urbane and unflappable temperament made him an ideal foil to Poynter's sometimes unsettling dynamism. In addition to keeping the administrative wheels turning smoothly he acted as 'line-manager' for the Museum, as the post of Curator was then in abeyance. His early medical training proved a useful asset and the surgical instrument collection became his particular field of interest. He saw the Museum and Library re-designated as the Wellcome Institute of (*sic*) the History of Medicine in 1968 and participated in the early stages of the installation of the Museum in improved quarters on the first floor of the Wellcome Building, which began later that year, but had set his heart on taking early retirement at the end of August 1969. His post of Assistant Director thereafter provided work for two: Colin Sizer as Curator and Gordon Wilson as Secretary.

Jack retired with his wife, Pat, to Malta, they then moved to the Isle of Man, and finally settled on the mainland in 1985 to be nearer their family. Although Jack had the advantages that eased his way in the world one felt that he had a disproportionate share of misfortune and ill health. His only son died in 1978 and one of his young grandsons died in a tragic accident soon afterwards. He is survived by Pat, two daughters, Sallie and Erica, and seven grandchildren to whom we extend our deep sympathy.

Sherwin Hall and John Symons

(A version of this obituary has already appeared in *The Veterinary Record*.)