

OBITUARY

SIR ALAN BARLOW, Bart., G.C.B., K.B.E., F.S.A.

JAMES ALAN NOEL BARLOW was born in 1881, the son of Sir Thomas Barlow and Ada Helen Dalmahoy of Edinburgh. His father who was physician to Queen Victoria, Edward VII and George V, was created a Baronet in 1901; he was President of the Royal College of Physicians and died in his hundredth year in 1945. Alan Barlow entered the Civil Service after education at Marlborough and Corpus Christi College, Oxford and had a most distinguished career, serving at the Board of Education and the Ministries of Munitions and Labour until 1933 when he became Principal Private Secretary to the Prime Minister. Next year he moved to the Treasury where he remained until his retirement as Second Secretary in 1948.

He thus reached the summit of his profession but despite the immense strains imposed on a senior civil servant, particularly in wartime, he actively cultivated many other interests throughout his life. Probably he will be best remembered as a collector of Ceramics; in this field he had an infallible judgement and flair and his collections of Islamic pottery and Chinese porcelain were of national importance. In later life he made generous gifts to the Ashmolean, the Fitzwilliam, the Victoria & Albert and British Museums, and the University of Sussex. He also interested himself in old books and modern printing.

He had a deep interest in archaeology from an early age and helped our Society in numerous ways. When he was elected President to succeed Lord Mackinnon in 1945, the Society's activities were at a very low ebb. He saw quite clearly, before most others, that a voluntary Society could not hope to maintain a worthy museum in the post-war world and, with the active help of Colonel Guy Crouch, persuaded the County Council to become a partner with the Society. In 1957 after several years

of negotiation—and frequently acrimonious argument in our Council—the Museum was finally leased to the County Council, thus leaving the Society free to develop its other activities. During all this period his tact, wisdom and firmness was of immense value to the Society. When he finally retired from the Presidency in 1962, he generously marked his term of office in the most practical form, by giving £500 to finance the Ivinghoe dig.

He married Nora Darwin, who has also rendered great service to the Society, and leaves five children and sixteen grandchildren. Many members will always associate him with his house at Boswells, Wendover where he farmed and gardened extensively and enjoyed walking in the Chiltern beechwoods.

Honours of course came to him. He was made K.B.E. in 1938, G.C.B. in 1947, Hon. LL.D. of Glasgow University, F.S.A. and was Chairman of the Trustees of the National Gallery, 1949–51. He died on 28th February 1968. At the memorial service Dame Evelyn Sharp, in her address, paid eloquent tribute to his personality and went on to say . . .

“Perhaps his greatest contribution to the work of the Treasury was his standing in the world of the arts, the sciences, the universities, and his knowledge of that world. In days when the Treasury provided directly the money for these things, Alan established the position that there was somebody there, close to the top, who knew about these things—knew and cared. He sought the advice of the experts and he had their confidence; he also had the confidence of successive Chancellors of the Exchequer. So he brought the two together, and it worked—and worked well. His wide knowledge of people in the artistic, scientific and academic worlds was invaluable. If you needed advice he could not give, he nearly always knew someone who could give it—and if he didn’t he would find out. Armed with his introduction you would always get the help you needed. Another old colleague of his has told me that one result of the wide circle of his friends was that during his years in the Treasury the prime method of establishing a Commission or Committee was to ask Alan for names. And he added further that no better method has been evolved since.”

The Society will always remember his help and leadership and records its sympathy with Lady Barlow and her family.

E.V.

We also record with regret the deaths of the following members:

Colonel W. F. Challinor, D.S.O., High Sheriff of Bucks in 1944, W. G. Chowles, J. Collins, E. I. Danvers, Gerard Harris (of The Bell, Aston Clinton), Lt-Col. M. A. Lloyd and Mrs. L. H. Davies the widow of Dr. Morley Davies.