

Obituary

Editor: Henry R. Rollin

CECIL CLEE BERESFORD, formerly Physician Superintendent of The Retreat, York

Cecil Beresford, a Foundation Fellow of the College, enjoyed a long and distinguished career in psychiatry. This began when, after qualifying from the London in 1931, he commenced work at Netherne. Thereafter he joined the staff of The Retreat in 1934, where he subsequently became Clinical Director and, from 1956 to 1962, Physician Superintendent. During the war he served in the RAMC with the rank of Lieut. Colonel as Adviser in Psychiatry to the Middle East Forces, a post of considerable responsibility. He returned to The Retreat after the war.

When he retired in 1962 the Management Committee of that Hospital commented on the outstanding services he had given since 1934, and observed that to his work as a consultant he brought great gifts which earned the warm appreciation of all those who came under his care. They added that The Retreat had benefited greatly from his administrative ability, a tribute which was well deserved. The Retreat, as a Registered Hospital at the time, catered for clinical and social-psychiatric problems of often more than usual complexity, drawn from a wide area, not only from the North of England. Cecil was a quiet and utterly understanding psychiatrist, quite at home in the most demanding of psychiatric problems, and, in addition, he had the ability to defuse even the most potentially disturbing of such situations.

By the same token he was a shrewdly effective administrator. His undemonstrative approach enabled him to do more work with less fuss than many.

He was a self-effacing man, always tolerant and sympathetic, but who nevertheless saw people and their problems very clearly indeed. Many such, whether patients or colleagues, sought his advice, and their problems were resolved as often as not by his quiet understanding and gentle humour.

Away from psychiatry one of his enduring pleasures was to drive his cars with skill and enthusiasm around his beloved Yorkshire countryside, its villages – and inns (he was something of an expert on Specific Gravity).

He was also a connoisseur and collector of porcelain, but this one found out only as it were by accident – he was a private man and not one to talk about himself.

He was always a most cheerful companion, never complaining, even in his last long illness wherein he was sustained not only by his insatiable appetite for books, but more particularly by the support of his wife, his two daughters and his son.

AB

S. L. LAST, formerly Consultant Psychiatrist to the London Hospital



Dr Last, a foundation Fellow of the College, was one of a considerable number of middle European refugees to Britain who arrived in the pre-war decade and distinguished themselves in medicine. Psychiatry had the good luck to absorb several, Last among them.

He was born in Romania, and his father, an Austrian, was a prosperous corn merchant. His mother, whose parents were Russian refugees, was educated in a French convent. The household was multilingual, therefore, and the children were familiar with French, German and English literature. The family moved to France intending to settle there, but the outbreak of World War I entailed their internment, luckily living with friends. They went to Spain for three months and then repatriated themselves by stages in Italy, Switzerland and Austria to Berlin and then to Hamburg.

Last was medically trained in Berlin, Bonn, Heidelberg and Paris. He later qualified in neurology and psychiatry. In Paris he met his wife Sonia, a Russian emigrée studying piano at the conservatoire. His father died in 1933 and Last, together with his mother and sister, came to England where they were later joined by Sonia.

After requalifying in Cardiff, Last took an appointment at Whitchurch Hospital, which distinguished itself by training many leading psychiatric medical superintendents of the period. In 1936 he joined Runwell, a newly built psychiatric hospital in Essex, which, unusually for a county hospital,