

# *LIVES OF FELLOWS of the RCS*

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| Title           | Ballance, Sir Charles Alfred (1856-1936)                                 |
| Dates           | 1896-1935  |
| Extent          | 3 boxes and 2 oversize volumes   |
| Name of creator | <a href="#">Ballance, Sir Charles Alfred, 1856-1936, Knight, surgeon</a> |

## **Content and context**

BALLANCE, Sir Charles Alfred (1856 - 1936). K.C.M.G. 1918 ; C.B. 1916; ~ M.V.O. 1906; M.R.C.S. 23 July 1879; F.R.C.S. 8 June 1882; M.B., B.S. London 1881 ; M.S. 1882; Hon. LL.D. Glasgow 1927; Hon. M.D. Malta; Hon. F.A.C.S. 1928.

Born at Clapton, Middlesex, on 30 August 1856, the second child and eldest son of the four boys and four girls born to Charles Alfred Ballance (d. 1873), of Taunton, where he had been in business as a government contractor for timber, and his wife Caroline Hendebrouck

Administrative or biographical history Pollard. Sir Hamilton Ashley Ballance, F.R.C.S. was his youngest brother, and his youngest sister married Sir John L. Myers, F.B.A.,

was sold and the family moved to Stanley House, Clapton. Charles Ballance was educated at Taunton College under the Rev. William

Hospital where he served as house-surgeon and was for a time demonstrator of anatomy. At the University of London he gained one of the gold medals at the examination for the B.S. in 1881, the other being won by Victor Horsley, and had similar success at the M.S. in 1882.

The department was then at a very low ebb of efficiency but Ballance quickly developed it on both practical and scientific lines. He went to Germany, visited nine German clinics, and was among the first to perform the radical mastoid operation with ligation of the jugular vein and drainage of the lateral sinus. He thus followed the treatment recommended by H. Schwartze, by Kuster, and by L. Stacke. He further improved the operation by lining the cavity in the mastoid with an epithelial graft. In December 1891 he was made assistant surgeon after a severely contested election with W. H. Battle, F.R.C.S, when Battle was placed first and an additional assistant surgeoncy was made for Ballance. In December 1900 he became surgeon to the hospital and held office until April 1919 when he resigned and was appointed consulting surgeon. He was elected surgeon to the National Hospital for the Paralyzed and Epileptic in Queen Square, Bloomsbury, on 17 February 1891, Victor Horsley being his surgical colleague, and resigned on 19 May 1908, when he was elected consulting surgeon.

From 1912 to 1926 he was chief surgeon to the Metropolitan Police, Clinton Dent, F.R.C.S. being his predecessor in the office. Having already accepted a commission as captain *a la suite*, to which he was gazetted on 23 December 1908 in the newly formed R.A.M.C. branch of the territorial force, Ballance was called up on the outbreak of war in 1915 and was then attached to the second London (City) general hospital. He was promoted temporary colonel A.M.S. on 15 May 1915 and was ordered to proceed to the Near East. Here he was posted as consulting surgeon at Malta with Sir Charters Symonds, F.R.C.S. as his colleague. The two surgeons organized, supervised, and inspired with enthusiasm the large number of emergency hospitals required during the Gallipoli campaign. For his services he was given an

honorary M.D. by the University of Malta, became a Knight of Grace of the Order of St John of Jerusalem, was decorated C.B. (military) in 1916 and was made a K.C.M.G in 1918.

At the Royal College of Surgeons Ballance was an examiner in anatomy 1887–91 and a member of the Court of Examiners from 1900 to 1919. He served on the Council 1910–26 and was a vice president in 1920. He was Erasmus Wilson lecturer 1888–89, when  
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received the Lister memorial medal for his distinguished contributions to surgical science. Finally he gave the Macewen memorial lecture at

president of the Medical Society of London in 1906 and was the first president of the newly founded Society of British Neurological Surgeons in 1927. He only held office for a year, but on resigning he was elected honorary president.

He married on 24 April 1883 Sophie Annie Smart, only daughter of Alfred Smart of The Priory, Blackheath. Lady Ballance died in 1928, they had five daughters and a son. This son, Alaric Charles Ballance, M.B.died in February 1933, a man of much promise (Lancet, 1933, 1, 552

grandson was a stud

killed in action as a leading aircraftman R.A.F. on 1 June 1941, aged 24. A daughter, Aline, married in 1919 the Rev. F. M. Rolland, principal of Geelong College, Victoria, Australia. Ballance died on 8 February

1936 and his remains are cremated at Golders Green crematorium.

Charles Ballance was perhaps the first English surgeon to re-introduce Hunterian method of experiment into surgery. The pupils of Hunter were perhaps more interested in anatomy, morbid and comparative, than in the living patient. Ballance started afresh on the lines followed by John Hunter and to some extent by Charles Bell, and there can be no doubt that he was a pioneer in experimental surgery when most of his generation were engaged in extending bacteriology and developing the methods of Lister. But he founded no school, for he was not able to devote all or even the greater part of his time to the laboratory. He lived, however, to see that his example was bearing fruit when the laboratories were enlarged at the Royal College of Surgeons and the Buckston Browne Research Farm was opened at Downe.

His first piece of research work was begun in 1885 when he went to Leipzig and worked under the guidance of Birch Hirschfeld upon the changes occurring in the coats of arteries tied without previous division. The work was continued at the Brown Institute in the Wandsworth Road, then under the control of Victor Horsley and Charles Sherrington and was concluded in the medical school at St

published in 1886, and in book form in 1891. The value of the work was recognized at once and placed Ballance and Edmunds high amongst the surgical investigators of their time.

The parasitic theory of cancer was exercising the attention of many pathologists during the years 1888 to 1896. Ballance, in conjunction with

S.G. Shattock, spent much time in investigating and testing the

evidence, but without result. He was also occupied about the same

cells which enable tissues to be repaired after inflammation. The results were published conjointly with Charles Sherrington in 1889. The repair of nerves began to interest him about 1903, when he united the hypoglossal and the facial nerves and in five cases joined the facial with the glossopharyngeal nerve. From 1899 to 1901 he was engaged in studying the processes of degeneration and regeneration of the peripheral nerves and in 1901 he published the results in collaboration with Sir James Purves Stewart. The rest of his life was spent in experimenting with the anastomizing of nerves. The experiments were always tried upon animals before they were applied to human patients. He was often sorely tried and his work was hampered by the restrictions of the Vivisection Act, and during the last years of his life the work was carried out in the United States where he held a research fellowship at Columbia University. Here with his friend and co-worker, A. B. Duell of New York (d. 1936), he was engaged on facial nerve repair by the use of grafts. In conjunction with W. G. Spencer, F.R.C.S. he wrote letters to The Times in 1919 and 1927 expressing his views

Ballance was a man of fine presence, somewhat above middle height, with a large and well-developed head. He moved with deliberation and spoke slowly in a very soft voice. A slight shyness made him seem austere at first but as soon as the outer husk was penetrated he appeared as a warm-hearted friend and a highly educated gentleman. He was particularly well read in the classics and in English literature. He was, too, a good linguist and could converse readily in French and in German. It is some-what remarkable that his family history showed no trace of any scientific leaning, but all his brothers entered the

medical profession. He worked slowly both in the laboratory and in the operating theatre but was endowed with extreme delicacy of touch and movement, so that the most delicate tissues were not injured by his manipulation.

[Source: The Lives of the Fellows of the Royal College of Surgeons, Volume 3, Page 36]

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| Scope and content           | This collection contains notes of experiments carried out by Sir Charles Alfred Ballance, his original drawings and photographs for some publications and papers, and some manuscript and typescript notes of lectures, reports and papers. |
| Language                    | English   |
| System of arrangement       | The collection has been arranged into three sub-fonds: 1) Notes of Experiments, 2) Original Drawings for publications and papers, 3) Lectures, reports, notes on surgery.   |
| Access conditions           | By written appointment only   |
| Copying conditions          | No photocopying permitted   |
| Finding aids                | Library card catalogue  |
| Related materials           | See Sir Charles Alfred Ballance letters in the Autograph Letters Series   |
| Input rules and conventions | ISAD G, NCA Rules   |

### **Index terms**

Date range 1896 to 1935

### **Lower level contextual information**