



## THE MASONIC HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF NEW SOUTH WALES

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### **Wor. Bro. SIR CHARLES PERCY BARLEE CLUBBE KBE.**

Charles Percy Barlee Clubbe was born on 2 February 1854 in the vicarage of Hughenden, Buckinghamshire, England, son of Reverend Charles Wilshaw Clubbe and his wife, Emily, nee Barlee.

Charles Clubbe spent a happy childhood in the small village of Hughenden and there occasionally met Disraeli, the Prime Minister, who was a friend of his father.

He was educated at Uppingham School and later apprenticed as a doctor to his uncle. During his training he served as a resident medical officer at Pendle Bury Children's Hospital and later trained at St. Bartholomews Hospital, London. Charles Clubbe was admitted as a member of the Royal College of Surgeons, England, in 1876, and later as a Licentiate of the Royal College of Physicians, London, in 1877.

The next year he was appointed Chief Medical Officer to the Royal Manchester Children's Hospital, where his lifelong interest in paediatrics had its beginnings.

On 12 April 1882 at Kiddbrooke, Kent, Charles Clubbe was married by his father to Ethel Marion Harrison. That year, because of a chest complaint, he decided to migrate to Australia. He arrived in Sydney in 1883.

He quickly established a general practice at Randwick.

Charles Clubbe was very fond of horses and dogs, and for years he often made his visits in Randwick, and answered the calls to the hospital, on horseback wearing a tailcoat, top hat and a full beard.

Later Charles Clubbe made visits in a buggy drawn by a beautiful pair of chestnut ponies, sometimes with a driver in livery, but often taking the reins himself. He greatly enjoyed tennis and being ambidextrous, he never played a backhand shot but changed the raquet from hand to hand as he sometimes did with the scalpel.

Within a year he was appointed Honorary Surgeon to the Hospital for Sick Children at Glebe Point, later to be known as the Royal Alexandra Hospital for Children, and five years later he became an Honorary Assistant Surgeon to the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital, then Honorary Consulting Surgeon to both hospitals until 1932.

Sir Robert Wade later maintained that Charles Clubbe was adored by his house surgeons for his loveable, equitable nature, and his prompt attendance at hospital in all times of emergency. It was, he thought, the duty of the Honorary Surgeon to teach his house surgeon and in this he was unique in his day.

By 1900, Charles Clubbe had moved his practice to 127 Macquarie Street, Sydney.

For much of his private work he used a hospital called St. Kilda, which was the first private hospital opened in Sydney and was situated on the corner of Palmer and Cathedral Streets, Woolloomooloo.

His surgical skill was widely recognised by his colleagues, who became increasingly aware of his mastery over various problems of infancy and childhood. His world-famous text book, "*The Diagnosis and Treatment of Intussusception*" was first published in 1907 and a second edition in 1921. It emphasised the great importance of early diagnosis of intussusception (the telescoping of the bowel), and a dramatic fall in the death rate from this condition was achieved in Sydney.

His papers in the *Australasian Medical Gazette* in 1889 on the surgical treatment of club feet and bow legs marked the beginning of the development of orthopaedic surgery in Australia, and was quoted as the standard authority in British and American surgeries. He also contributed much to the treatment of infants and children suffering from diphtheria. He established the Diphtheria Department at Glebe and performed urgent tracheotomies as early as 1888.

Charles Clubbe's last important work was the organisation of a campaign to raise funds for the purchase and distribution of serum for the treatment of infantile paralysis, as he claimed that the only treatment of any value to modify or arrest its ravages was the administration of serum in the pre-paralytic stage.

Charles Clubbe served his profession tirelessly. He was President of the New South Wales Branch of the British Medical Association in 1897-1898 and lectured at the University of Sydney in clinical surgery from 1895 to 1927, and served as an examiner from 1895 to 1907.

Charles Clubbe will be best remembered for his work in connection with the Royal Alexandra Hospital for Children where he held the position of Honorary Surgeon for 36 years. He presided over the Board of Management from 1904 to 1932 and oversaw its dramatic growth from a small converted school building at Glebe Point, containing 50 beds, to a modern teaching institution with 350 beds.

It was the largest children's hospital in the British Empire, and was said by Dr. McEachern, the American hospital expert, to be the largest and best equipped hospital of its kind in the world.

Charles Clubbe also served on the Medical Board of New South Wales as Consulting Surgeon to the Coast Hospital and Sanatorium (later to become the Prince Henry Hospital), the Institution for the Deaf, Dumb and Blind, the Greycliffe Hospital for Babies, President of the New South Wales Bush Nursing Association and the Infantile Paralysis Committee of New South Wales and as Chairman of the Baby Clinics Pre-Maternity and Home Nursing Boards in 1914.

Then as President of the Royal Society for Welfare of Mothers and Babies.

He was a major pioneer of baby health centres and the first Tresillian Mothercraft homes. In all directions where the interests and welfare of the child were

concerned, Charles Clubbe was in the lead, and he earned the gratitude of thousands of parents whose children had benefited by his remarkable skills as a surgeon. Among his medical colleagues, Charles Clubbe was equally popular. Their sentiments were expressed in 1922 when he was presented with an oil painting of himself by the Honorary Medical Staff. On that occasion, Dr. Litchfield remarked that by his fine example, Charles Clubbe had been the means of inspiring with enthusiasm others who had the honour of working with him.

In 1907, Charles Clubbe visited the Mayo Clinic in Minnesota, United States of America, and in 1924 was elected an Honorary Fellow of the American College of Surgeons. In 1927, he was honoured by King George V as a Knight of the British Empire, and the next year a Foundation Fellow of the College of Surgeons of Australasia.

Charles Clubbe had three children by his first marriage, a son and two daughters. His family life was devastated when his wife became addicted to morphine and returned to England taking the children with her. After her death, his two daughters returned to Australia and attended Ascham Girls School.

Both girls had brought back hockey sticks and to them is given the credit of introducing the game to Australia. Both girls were members of an Australian Women's Hockey Team that played against a team from England.

His eldest daughter, Phyllis, achieved fame by being the co-founder of the Frensham Girls School at Mittagong and the assembly hall at Frensham is named in her memory.

Sir Charles Clubbe died of coronary vascular disease at his Rose Bay home in 1932 at 78 years of age. He was privately cremated at Rookwood Cemetery.

*The Sydney Morning Herald* reported his death by publishing these words:

"The death of Sir Charles Clubbe marks the passing of one who has left upon the community, and especially upon the hospital with which he was so closely associated, the impress of a splendid record of public service in humanitarian causes.

The richer for his influential association with them, those movements are also poorer today for his passing.

The multitude of sick and afflicted children who have been able to enter life's battle as healthy assets of this State constitute living memorials of his noble service. His name will always be associated with child welfare and more especially the Royal Alexandra Hospital which he served with untiring energy and devotion. A champion of the helpless sick child and the little cripple.

He endeared himself to thousands of young patients who passed through his hands and whom in innumerable cases he restored to health. His long service fittingly entitled him to become known as the 'father of the Children's Hospital'."

Charles Percy Barlee Clubbe was initiated into Freemasonry in Lodge John Williams No. 148 English Constitution, (now No. 148 United Grand Lodge of NSW and the ACT), on 19 October 1887, passed Fellowcraft on 16 November 1887 and raised a Master Mason on 18 July 1888.

He was appointed Senior Deacon in 1887 and Senior Warden in 1888.

This was the first occasion on which all officers were elected by the members.

He was installed as Worshipful Master on 29 May 1890.

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