

Berry, Richard James Arthur (1867-1962)

Richard James Arthur Berry (1867-1962), anatomist, neurologist and anthropologist, was born on 30 May 1867 at Upholland, Lancashire, England, son of James Berry, coal merchant, and his wife Jane, née Barlow. His father died before he was born. Supported by his grandfather, he received his early education at Southport, first at a dame's school and then in 1877 at a private school for boys. Having passed the University of Cambridge local examination at honours standard, he was apprenticed to a firm of shipbrokers in Liverpool. After several years he decided that he wanted to do a medical course at the University of Edinburgh and, having received permission to break his contract, matriculated there in May 1886. In 1891 he graduated M.B., Ch.M., and became house-surgeon to Thomas Annandale, Regius professor of clinical surgery at the Royal Infirmary. In the same year he was president of the Royal Medical Society of Edinburgh, a student group. His prize-winning thesis for his M.D. in 1894 was on the vermiform appendix.

In 1895 Berry became a fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh and next year was appointed lecturer in anatomy at the school of medicine of the Royal Colleges, where he soon showed his outstanding ability. In 1897 he was elected a fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh. He was by now a widely recognized teacher with well-established classes. For relaxation he took to mountaineering, conquering most of the Scottish peaks; he also toured much of Scotland and northern England by bicycle. On 7 August 1900 he married Beatrice Catherine, daughter of Sir Samuel Brighouse, who was also a cyclist and mountain-climber. Berry made several cycling tours of France and Germany with her, for they were both keenly interested in art; moreover he was anxious to improve his German.

In December 1905 Berry was appointed to the chair of anatomy at the University of Melbourne. His typescript autobiography, 'Chance and circumstance', contains an amusing account of his arrival in February 1906, and of the run-down condition of his department: (Sir) Harry Allen, who has been professor of both anatomy and pathology, did not like teaching the former and was much more interested in the latter. Berry found little in the way of museum specimens, teaching models, microscopes or other facilities, although he had a keen but small staff—nor did he think much of the university. His students found themselves facing a short, wiry figure with upstanding hair, a grating voice, a forceful personality and a profound knowledge of anatomy which he proceeded to instil with great vigour and stern discipline, stressing the practical aspect. He revolutionized the teaching of anatomy in Melbourne. Eugenics remained an interest throughout his working life.

Before Berry left Edinburgh he had published a book on surface anatomy and another work, in three volumes, on regional anatomy. The latter formed the basis for his locally published *Practical Anatomy* (1914), which remained the text for Melbourne students for some twenty-five years. He received the Melbourne M.D. (*ad eund.*) in 1906. Once he had reorganized his department he became very interested in the Australian and Tasmanian Aborigines and the metrical and non-metrical features of their skulls. Another of his principal scientific interests was mental deficiency, particularly in children; this resulted in his appointment as consulting psychiatrist to the Melbourne and Children's hospitals and later, when he left Australia, was to become his main subject of research.

Berry designed a new building for the department of anatomy, opened in 1923 and known as 'Berry's Folly', because of its size, but in fact it was a clear example of his far-sightedness for it accommodated without modification the very large classes which followed World War II. In 1925-29 he was dean of the faculty and a member of the university council, and during this time he pressed for expansion of the medical school. In particular, he strongly advocated the move of the Melbourne Hospital to Parkville so that it could be alongside the medical school, for which he planned a building in the south-west corner of the campus across the road from the hospital site. In 1914 he had suggested moving the school to the hospital, but this plan was shelved with the outbreak of World War I.

Berry regarded the close association of hospital and medical school as a vital necessity. However, he ran against considerable opposition, notably from Sir James Barrett and others, and his vigorous criticism of those who did not have his depth of vision and ideals lost him many friends. He was impatient, intolerant and often sarcastic with many of his colleagues. In contrast, to his students he was both sympathetic and compassionate.

In 1927 Berry was invited by the Rockefeller Foundation of New York to tour medical schools and hospitals in North America; he was accompanied by (Sir) Stanley Argyle. Their report firmly favoured rebuilding the Melbourne Hospital on the Parkville site. Berry's plans for location of the medical school were in fact ultimately carried out, just as he had envisaged, but long after he had left Melbourne.

In 1929 Berry unexpectedly resigned from the university to accept the position of director of medical services at the Stoke Park Colony at Stapleton, Bristol, England, and chairman of the Burden Mental Research Trust. There he carried out extensive research into mental deficiency until his retirement in 1940. While in England he served on the council of the British Medical Association, representing the Queensland and New South Wales branches.

Berry's published work may be divided into two categories: an early part devoted to topographical anatomy and physical anthropology and, later, the brain, both normal and mentally defective. His work on physical anthropology was published in the *Transactions of the Royal Society of Victoria* in two large volumes: on the Tasmanian crania (1909) and on the Australian crania (1914). In 1911 he published *A Clinical Atlas of Sectional and Topographical Anatomy*, which remains an outstanding authority. *Brain and Mind* appeared in New York in 1928, followed next year by his excellent report on mental deficiency in Victoria. The result of his work at Stoke Park Colony was published in London in 1938 in his *Cerebral Atlas* of normal and defective brains. Berry also showed talent as a broadcaster: his shrewd and lively talks given in Melbourne after his American tour were published at Bristol in 1930.

When Berry left the university, the council had not conferred on him the title of professor emeritus, as was usual. In 1959 Sir William Upjohn, the chancellor, persuaded council that this should be done. Now quite blind, but retaining his impish sense of humour, Berry thanked council for 'this almost post-humous honour'. He died on 30 September 1962 at Clifton, Bristol. His wife had died in 1949; they had one son and two daughters of whom Beatrice married (Professor) Ian Maxwell of Melbourne.

Berry made a notable contribution to medicine in Victoria. His teaching produced a generation who left their mark on Australian surgery, the foundation of their knowledge being gained in his dissecting-room and museum. Berry was a stimulating and far-sighted administrator, over-shadowed in his earlier years in Melbourne by Sir Harry Allen who, however, agreed with many of his plans; it is regrettable that these were frustrated by lack of support from his colleagues. His portrait by Justus Jorgensen hangs in the department of anatomy, University of Melbourne.

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