

# Obituary

## F. C. Durbin, FRCS

Freddie Durbin began his career in orthopaedics in 1939, when, after completing a surgical registrar appointment at St Thomas's, he became a registrar at the Robert Jones & Agnes Hunt Orthopaedic Hospital at Oswestry. When war broke out, he joined the RAMC, seeing service with the BEF in France and later in the Middle East, where, in 1941, he contracted a severe attack of polio, as a consequence of which he was later invalided out of the Army. He returned to orthopaedics in Britain, being then powerfully influenced by Rowley Bristow and George Perkins. He became Deputy Director of the Rowley Bristow Orthopaedic Hospital and Chief Assistant in the Orthopaedic Department at St Thomas's in 1942.

In 1946, he joined Norman Capener at the Princess Elizabeth Orthopaedic Hospital in Exeter and, two years later, set up the Accident Service at The Royal Devon and Exeter Hospital. He was exposed to the best of North American practice in Orthopaedics as the holder of a Nuffield Travelling Scholarship in 1948, and as one of the first of the ABC Travelling Fellows of the British Orthopaedic Association. This experience, coupled with unusually astute clinical acumen, superb hands and a seemingly inexhaustible capacity for work, made him an outstanding influence on his juniors, to the training and welfare of whom he was devoted, and on the younger members of the consultant staff of the Princess Elizabeth, for whom he was an ever-ready source of advice and help.

He became a leading figure in British Orthopaedics from the early 1950s until his retirement in 1978, shouldering a vast clinical workload but nevertheless finding time to make important original contributions, particularly to the management of injuries of the cervical spine and slipped upper femoral epiphysis. He was President of the Section of Orthopaedics of the Royal Society of Medicine, Chairman of the Accident Services Sub-committee of the British Orthopaedic Association, and a member of the Association's executive committee, as well as playing a full part in local and regional medical administration, including the affairs of the then fledgling Postgraduate Medical School in Exeter. He was responsible for founding the South-West Orthopaedic Club.

In 1966, he was instrumental, with



Frederick Charles Durbin, Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon to the Princess Elizabeth Orthopaedic Hospital, Exeter, and the Royal Devon & Exeter Hospital 1946-78, died May 19. Born January 23, 1913; educated Merchant Taylors School and the University of London (St Thomas's Hospital) (MB, BSc, 1935). Surgical Specialist in the RAMC 1939-41. Deputy Director of the Rowley Bristow Orthopaedic Hospital, Pyrford, and Chief Assistant to the Orthopaedic Department, St Thomas's Hospital 1942-46. President of the Section of Orthopaedics of the Royal Society of Medicine. Member of Executive Committee of the British Orthopaedic Association and Chairman of the Accident & Emergency Services Sub-committee of the British Orthopaedic Association 1972.

Professor Josef Mulier of Louvain, in setting up what has become one of the longest-running surgical training exchange schemes in Europe, that continues to this day and has been of inestimable benefit to orthopaedic trainees both in Exeter and in Louvain. In 1987, he founded a Charitable Trust to promote a Research Fellowship jointly at The Princess Elizabeth Orthopaedic Hospital and the School of Engineering of the University of Exeter.

In his younger days a vigorous second-row forward who represented St Thomas's for many years, he later became a Fourteen Foot International Dinghy sailor of distinction. Subsequently, he took to sailing of a more leisurely nature, and his Nicolson 26 lay on a mooring just in front of his lovely home in Dartmouth. His boundless energy and good humour belied the severe handicap bestowed on him by polio, to the extent that few of his colleagues even knew it existed. His wife, Sue, who survives him with their four children (one a doctor and one married to an orthopaedic surgeon), was a tremendous support to him throughout his career and in retirement.

R.S.M. Ling