

Obituary



JOHN BARTON BOOTH
AKC, MB, FRCS, 1937–2005

John Booth, Editor of the *Journal of Laryngology & Otology*, 1987–1992 and Consultant Otolaryngologist to the Royal London and St. Bartholomew's Hospitals died suddenly from a massive coronary thrombosis on the 21st July. His death, only a year after the death of his wife Carroll, has deprived our speciality of one of its characters. A strong Christian belief and moral code underpinned his life. He was always immaculately dressed, precise in his manner, thoughtful in his approach to problems and determined in his belief that a job should be well done – and with no half measures. John was always a person who could be relied upon.

Born in 1937, and educated at Canford School, he became an undergraduate at King's College, London where he took the opportunity of becoming an Associate of King's College, an award given by the theology department. While a medical student he flirted with politics (the Conservative Party) and with the law, but in the end he qualified in medicine at King's College Hospital Medical School in 1963. He entered training in Otolaryngology at the Royal National Throat,

Nose and Ear Hospital, and gained his Fellowship of the Royal College of Surgeons of England in 1968. He subsequently became a senior registrar at the Royal Free Hospital, which at that time was in Gray's Inn Road, and worked with John Ballantyne who became his friend and mentor. During his time at the Royal Free he was seconded for one day a week to the National Hospital, Queens' Square, where he was a clinical assistant to Dr Margaret Dix, who was famous as an audiological physician and who had a particular interest in balance problems. The influence of these two people very much guided John into a career in otology and he cemented his position in that field by being elected a Hunterian Professor at the Royal College of Surgeons in 1980–81. His Hunterian lecture was based on his work on Ménière's disease.

There are perhaps four ways of making one's mark in the field of Otolaryngology. Writing papers or books and presenting original work, taking office in one of the two sections associated with ENT at the Royal Society of Medicine, helping to organize the British Academic

Conference or editing either one of the speciality's journals or the bible of the British speciality, *Scott-Brown's Otolaryngology*: John succeeded at all four. He edited the *Journal of Laryngology & Otology* for five years, as well as the volume on diseases of the ear in two editions of *Scott-Brown*. For the Royal Society of Medicine he was a member of Council, Honorary Secretary and subsequently President of the Section of Otology. For the British Academic Conference he was Honorary Secretary of the General Committee for the 8th Conference and Chairman of the same Committee for the 9th. In addition to all these tasks, he was civilian consultant in otology to the Royal Air Force – a post that John very much enjoyed as it enabled him to practise otology in Cyprus for two weeks in June every year. Aside from ENT, John also served the Royal Society of Medicine as Honorary Secretary and subsequently as Vice-President.

John inherited the significant voice practice of his late father-in-law, Ivor Griffiths, and continued his association with the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, the Royal Society of Musicians of Great Britain, the Concert Artists Association and the Musicians Benevolent Fund. In addition, he was Honorary Consultant to St. Luke's Hospital for the Clergy. All these associations, by necessity, tied him very much to his home in 18 Upper Wimpole Street.

John had a great interest in the history of his speciality and in art. He was able, with Sir Alan Bowness, to combine these two interests in a book on Barbara Hepworth's drawings of ear surgery, the bulk of which has appeared as a supplement in the *Journal of Laryngology & Otology*. He and Carroll enjoyed playing golf, either at the RAC Club or, in more recent years, at Peel or Castletown golf clubs in the Isle of Man. John took great pride in his membership of the MCC and of the Royal and Ancient at St. Andrew's.

On retirement, John and Carroll left London and returned to the Isle of Man, where Carroll's family has had a home for over forty years. John switched from ENT and became a physician at St. Bridget's Hospice in Douglas. This required a significant re-learning process, particularly in the field of palliative care and its associated drug treatment. He managed to combine part-time work at the hospice with the care of Carroll, who had been ill for eight years. He rapidly learnt how to shop, how to cook and how to look after the lovely garden that he and Carroll created at their home in Castletown.

He leaves their son, James.

NEIL WEIR, GUY KENYON