

## Obituary



**Andrew William Morrison MBChB FRCS DLO  
1925–2006**

Andrew Morrison, Honorary Consultant Otolaryngologist to the Royal London Hospital, died on 6th January 2006 following a short illness. His death at the age of 80 has robbed our speciality of one of its most pioneering spirits, one of its most incisive minds and one of its most delightful personalities. He was involved throughout much of his professional life in research into hearing loss and led the field in his work on otosclerosis, Menieres disease and on surgery for acoustic tumours. In retirement he continued to work with members of the University of Glasgow and with colleagues in Cambridge on the genetics of Menieres disease.

Born in 1925, his early life was spent in Spain where his father was a mining engineer. The family later moved back to Scotland and he qualified in medicine at Glasgow University in 1948. Following pre-registration training in Glasgow he joined the Merchant Navy and then undertook National Service in the Royal Army Medical Corps in Germany. There he met and, in 1950, married Maureen Rawlings before he returned to London in 1951 and embarked upon a career in otolaryngology. He was registrar at the London Hospital in Whitechapel and was later first assistant (senior

registrar) at the London from 1956 to 1959, during which time he obtained his FRCS from the Royal College of Surgeons of England. Following his training he was first appointed as consultant at Whipps Cross Hospital in 1959, but he left there in 1964 to return to the London where he was consultant until his retirement in 1986. During the early period of his consultant life he also held an appointment at the Royal National Throat, Nose and Ear Hospital and he was Lecturer at the Institute of Laryngology and Otology until 1979 – and at the University of London until 1986.

With the advent of modern instrumentation for ear surgery Andrew Morrison was in the vanguard of those who developed new techniques for the treatment of a range of middle and inner ear pathologies. He was a pioneer of stapedectomy in Britain and built a reputation for treating carefully selected patients with hydrops by surgery to the endolymphatic sac and, latterly, by cochleostomy. But it is perhaps his work on acoustic nerve tumours that most identified him. In the 1960s he was influenced by the House group in Los Angeles and was instrumental in developing the translabyrinthine approach, and was the first in Britain to undertake this surgery. His development of approaches to the cerebellopontine angle and his teamwork with his neurosurgical colleague, Tom King, influenced a cadre of trainees at the London, which included Bill Gibson, Richard Ramsden and David Moffat. Together with John Booth and a succession of registrars he defined the role of glycerol dehydration in the investigation of patients with Menieres disease and helped to develop the role of electric response audiometry in the investigation of a wide range of disorders relating to the inner ear. From 1980 he was also the chairman and a trustee of the Project Ear Foundation, a registered charity involved in cochlear implantation: he was, therefore, also at the heart of much of the developmental work in this field. It is therefore not hyperbole to suggest that his vision and energy helped to influence and succour the development of many facets of ear surgery and neuro-otology for a generation – both in Britain and beyond.

He wrote over 150 peer reviewed articles as well as a monograph entitled the *Management of Sensorineural Deafness*, which was published in 1975 and is still widely quoted. He served the *Journal of Laryngology and Otology* as a director for many years and was on the editorial boards of *Clinical Otolaryngology* and of the *European Archives of Otolaryngology* – as well as editing Rob and Smith's *Operative Surgery of the Ear*. He gave a large number of lectures to learned societies both in Britain and abroad – and especially in North America,

South Africa and New Zealand – and was a visiting professor in Moscow, Berlin and in Memphis, an honorary member of the American Otological Society, of the American Neuro-otology Society and of the French and South African Otolaryngological Societies. He was in receipt of innumerable prizes including the Gold medal of the Prosper Meniere Society of America, the Harrison prize and the Yearsley, Jobson Horne and Morell Mackenzie medals from the British Medical Association and the Royal Society of Medicine as well as the Abraham Colles medal of the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland. In 1966 he was Hunterian Professor at the Royal College of Surgeons of England and he also served with distinction as a member of its Court of Examiners. He was also, in different guises, on the Council of the Section of Otology of the Royal Society of Medicine for many years and was President of the section in 1979. In addition he was a member of the council of management of the British Academic Conference (and a trustee from 1971) and was chairman of the Academic committee for the 5th and 6th conferences and Master of 9th Academic conference held in Manchester in 1995. From 1971 to 1996 he was also a member of the Council of the Medical Defence Union, and he spoke with great clarity on many of the medicolegal

aspects of medical practice including no fault compensation and informed consent as well as on aspects of litigation arising in our own speciality following ear and sinus surgery. He later became a Freeman of the City of London.

No list of achievements can, of course, entirely characterise the man. Above all else Andrew Morrison was a surgeon of great integrity who commanded both respect and affection. He was congenial, open and friendly and, in spite of his many accomplishments, appeared to eschew the cult of personal vanity. He clearly relished and valued the contacts that medicine gave him with colleagues across the world – and many became his close friends. His personal characteristics also resonated with his patients, who held him in very high esteem. He was passionate about golf and was a member at the Royal and Ancient at St Andrews as well as being a member at Rye. As well as continuing his research interests in retirement he also built a clock, a spinnet and clavichord and his home and garden in Essex continued to give him great happiness. He is survived by his wife, Maureen and by his daughter and his son – also an Otolaryngologist.

GUY KENYON