

Lieutenant General Sir (William) Cameron and Lady MOFFAT
KBE 1985; *OBE* 1975; MB BCh 1951; FRCS (Eng.); *QHS* 1984-1988;
C St. J 1985; Hon DSc Glasgow 1991.



Cameron was born on 8 September 1929, the son of William Weir Moffat and Margaret Garrett. He grew up in Riddrie, Glasgow, and Rothesay on the Isle of Bute. Educated at King's Park School, he went to the University of Glasgow in 1947 and the Glasgow Western Infirmary for his medical training, qualifying with a Distinction in Surgery despite having so proved his worth with a Blue as stroke that he was invited to row for Scotland in the 1952 Commonwealth games (but this was vetoed by his father). After house appointments that year, he became ship's surgeon on the Anchor Line's RMS Circassia to India, an experience which he claimed cured him of sea sickness for life but gave him a taste for curry. In 1953 he married Audrey Acquoroff Watson (d.o.b. 11.8.28). They met at a school play then a university dance. She was proud to be descended from John Acquoroff, an emigré Russian hairdresser from St Petersburg who came to Scotland in 1829; after leaving school she herself also briefly worked as a hairdresser, and was a county standard hockey player.

Called up for National Service at Fort George, Inverness, Cameron served as a Lieutenant in the Royal Army Medical Corps as Regimental Medical Officer to the Seaforth Highlanders. On promotion to Captain he converted to a Short Service Commission and his final posting in 1956 was to Edinburgh as Senior Medical Officer, Edinburgh district, in the rank of Major. During 1957-8 he joined his brother in Carlisle as a GP then moved as such to Orpington where he gained the impression that the only treatment offered, rather indiscriminately, was steroids, antibiotics or admission to hospital, the latter enforced by the most dramatic diagnosis consistent with the presenting symptoms! Eschewing general practice himself, he returned to the RAMC as a Captain in 1960, passing out second overall in the junior officers' course

exam at RAM College Millbank and winning the Mitchiner, Tulloch and Parkes prizes. He gained the DTM&H in 1960 and his primary FRCS in 1961 – more of this later – then took up training posts at Queen Alexandra’s Hospital Millbank, Royal Herbert Hospital Woolwich and the Cambridge Military Hospital Aldershot. Registrar posts at the Hammersmith in London and the Birmingham Accident Hospital exposed him respectively to the inspirational influence of Iain Aird and Peter London. After that, in 1964 he was sent out to Malaya by the Director General and acquitted himself well as surgeon in a small military hospital, though the Chief of Police on whom he operated for abdominal wounds died post-operatively through inadequate nursing care, causing him to resolve lifelong that he would ensure his whole team was adequately trained.

On his return he gained the FRCS in 1965, and was then posted to BMH Taiping in Northern Malaya as senior surgical specialist towards the end of the Malayan crisis. He was subsequently attached to the RAAF Hospital at Butterworth where he first came across battle casualties from the Vietnam War. He so impressed the Australians (he introduced external fixation to the Tropics) that he was invited to serve in the Vietnam War itself, but this was vetoed by the British government.

After two years in West Germany as Consultant Surgeon to the British Military Hospital in Rinteln, in 1970 he was appointed the youngest-ever Joint Professor of Military Surgery to the Royal Army Medical College and the Royal College of Surgeons for five years, at the end of which he became a Colonel and received the OBE. During this time, in 1972 he became a ‘Service’ member of the Travelling Surgical Club – as the TSS was then - with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. He travelled with his wife to the Oslo meeting and then to the London one (held at the Westminster Hospital under the Presidency of Robert Cox), chairing the Saturday morning session at the Royal Army Medical College, Millbank - the first new member to do such a thing so soon after election to ‘The Club’. That year of 1972 was tinged with sadness as Sir Clement Price Thomas, the longest serving President of the ‘Club’, died in March. The Westminster Hospital had contributed four members by that time: G T Mullally (1925), Sir Clement Price Thomas (1931), Frank d’Abreu (1948) and Robert Cox (1951). However, this was the first time that the ‘Club’ had actually visited the Westminster Hospital itself.

Posted back to BMH Rinteln as Consultant Surgeon in 1975, three years later he was appointed to command the hospital which meant that he had to relinquish his clinical commitment (to the dismay of those working with him). He proved to be an excellent Commanding Officer, and in his first year (1978) as such it was to Berlin and Rinteln that members of the Travelling Surgical Club (later Society) and their ladies travelled for the Spring Meeting. As the TSS Report for that year noted: “Those that had the good fortune to be able to attend the meeting in Germany will doubtless agree that it must rank among the best in memory. The organisation of both professional and social sides by Cameron and Audrey Moffat was faultless, and they had the full co-operation of the Army of the Rhine.....The Club travelled in a small party to one of the best meetings held over the last few years”.

While serving in Rinteln, Cameron was able to attend the 1979 visit to Brussels with his wife Audrey, the home meeting hosted by David and Libby Pratt at Leeds, and then the Guy's Hospital meeting arranged by Randolph and Mary Beard in October 1980, though the Moffats were unable to attend the Spring meeting in Bordeaux.

Cameron's continuing rise of rank in the Armed Forces was in many ways meteoric: after commanding Rinteln Hospital in 1978, as a Brigadier he proceeded to Commander of Medical Headquarters 1 (British) Corps from 1980 to 1983, and then Principal Medical Officer, United Kingdom Land Forces from 1983 for a year. A Major-General in 1980, he was knighted in January 1985. The first ever Tri-Service Senior Medical Officer, he was Surgeon General/Director General of the Army Medical Services to the Ministry of Defence from 1985 to 1987, when he officially retired from the Services. He was successively Surgeon to the Queen's Household (1984-88), was made a Commander of the Order of St John (1985) and was awarded an Honorary Doctorate by his old University of Glasgow in 1991. He 'came back to duty' as the Chief Medical Advisor to the British Red Cross from 1988 to 1994 and was awarded the Queen's Badge of Honour – the highest decoration for service to the British Red Cross Society. His numerous publications included contributions to textbooks and journals on 'Missile wounds and their management' as a result of his elegant ground breaking research into the effects on tissues of high velocity missiles. He subsequently contributed chapters to mainstream surgical textbooks and articles to professional journals on missile injuries and casualty management.

One notable visit to Gibraltar and Southern Spain (1987) is recorded in the Editorial of the TSS Report as: "During the Spring Meeting in Gibraltar we were privileged to see the 'Changing of the Guard' at the Governor's House (The Convent). Resplendent in bowler hats were the President [*Robert Cox*] and Lieutenant General Sir Cameron Moffat, accompanied by their ladies. James and Kate Thomson were persuaded by the Governor to join the party on the balcony for the occasion". The autumn meeting that year was held in London at the Homerton Hospital and St. Mark's Hospital, which was then still in City Road. On Saturday 10 October 1987 "we visited the Tower of London for a partially conducted tour before being taken to the Royal Army Medical College where Cameron Moffat had arranged for us to have drinks followed by lunch in the Mess at Millbank.....providing a fitting finale to a most excellent meeting."

His distinguished career was handled modestly by the man himself, an imposing upright figure who rarely discussed his achievements for which his wife Audrey was, to those who knew both well, 'the power behind the throne' and capable of straight talking (a hapless futures trader was once asked by her if he was 'just a gambler?'). A devoted couple, the Moffats shared many a lighter moment and some periods of hardship. In the early days, at Fort George there were few creature comforts, and Audrey's culinary variations with cabbage were legendary; curry was frequently on the menu as was trout caught from the battlements. Then there was the evening he came home late, and very forlorn, after sitting the Primary FRCS examination which he was convinced he had failed having spent too long on his essay discussing thyroid

nodules. Instead, the expected letter informed him he had won the Hallett Prize. In Malaya he ensured the Brigadier's driver was despatched home urgently to the UK with a swollen neck which turned out to be due to Hodgkin's lymphoma (a differential diagnosis no doubt entertained in his Primary examination).

Cameron and Audrey retired to Kippax, Pound Green, Freshwater, on the Isle of Wight, enjoying bridge and entertaining, and happy in the company of Bess their black Labrador, with Cameron committed to his hobbies of golf and bird watching. He was on the Management Committee of Osborne House (Queen Victoria's one-time summer residence on the Isle of Wight, now open to the public under English Heritage) when it was still a convalescent facility for the Civil Service. He retired from all public commitments in 2001.

Audrey died in hospital on 21 June, from late recurrence of a previous carcinoma treated surgically. Cameron died suddenly on 29 June of a pulmonary embolism having broken his hip whilst his wife was in hospital. Tributes from two soldiers summed up the respect in which they were both held: he "a true gentleman" and she "a true lady, kind and generous, who treated everyone the same, regardless of rank." To his colleagues, Cameron was the consummate general surgeon.

A joint funeral was held at the Isle of Wight Crematorium on Tuesday 15 July 2014, attended by over a hundred people of whom many were past and present senior Army medical staff. After the service a reception at the Royal Solent Yacht Club in Yarmouth was hosted by their only son Christopher (a pathologist in Portsmouth) with his wife Sue, their daughter Georgina being in Hong Kong with a choir from St Swithun's School: to all three we offer condolences.

N Alan Green
Tim Williams