

NORMAN ALAN GREEN

MB BS 1950; MS 1964;
MRCS LRCP 1950; FRCS 1954; FRCSEd 1990

2nd July 1927 – 4th May 2015



Consultant Surgeon and Urologist, Norfolk and Norwich Hospital 1964-1990
Member, Travelling Surgical Society 1970-2015
President 1989-1992, Archivist 1997-2015

Alan Green was the backbone of the Travelling Surgical Society for many years, in many capacities. He first travelled with the Travelling Surgical Club, as it then was, as a guest to Holland in 1970 with his wife Doreen. Introduced by Norman Townsley of Norwich (who was the Editor of the Annual Report from 1948-1956), he joined Malcolm (and Sheila) Gough of Oxford, who was also 'on trial'. The rules of the TSC at the time were that one should travel as a guest first and then be considered for membership at a later date. Both 'G's' were formally elected at the home meeting held at Haslar in autumn 1970. Alan was the third in a continuous line of surgeons from Norwich, which began with founder member A Jasper Blaxland (1924), through Norman J Townsley (1948), one of six new recruits after the Second World War, and then David Ralphs (1992) who like Alan was elected President of the TSS. Doreen and Alan made many friends at home and abroad travelling with the 'Club'. Over the years he has given short papers at TSC/TSS meetings, the first being in Norway 1971 on 'Cryosurgery of the prostate gland' on which he was later to give a Hunterian Lecture at the Royal College of Surgeons in 1974. Other topics included 'The Episcopal Licensing of Medical Practitioners', 'Anatomy - the forgotten subject in medical education', 'Testicular Tumours' and 'Parathyroid Surgery'.

When Robert Cox of the Westminster Hospital gave up the Presidency after ten distinguished years in office, the active members decided that any future President should be elected for a term of three years and be in active NHS practice. James Thomson, the Honorary Secretary, acted as returning officer and announced that Alan Green had been chosen.

As President Alan gave speeches in the language of the country visited, often being taught at the University of East Anglia. He came to grief in Finland, however, with a word used in proposing a toast: on raising his glass, as taught by his Finnish teacher at UEA, he said 'kipish' --- the word means "see you under the table"! He held the post until 1991, when the Club visited Newport, and managed to say Grace in Welsh at the dinner arranged by Martyn and Deidre Price Thomas. Alan handed the baton to Ivan Johnston at this AGM. In recognition of this personal honour, Alan and Doreen commissioned Nigel Bumphrey of Norwich to make a silver Presidential Badge which is now worn with pride at official functions by each three-year President.

Alan took over as Archivist from Bernard Williams, who catalogued the 'Club's' history and had been joined by Alan in 1997, the first official archivist being James Robinson who collated photographs which now of course are the province of Brian Ellis who as co-archivist has made great strides in the photographic records of each meeting, posting them on websites and in book form. Alan has safeguarded the records of the TSS, retaining one complete set for the Club, and forwarding copies of the Annual Reports and the first two Minute books to the Wellcome Library, as well as a copy to the libraries of the RCS of England and Edinburgh each year. His assiduous collecting as Archivist of the memorabilia received on our foreign travels is legendary.

Alan was born to a non-medical family on 2 July 1927, his father a clerk for the Inland Revenue in Leicester, and his mother, Lilian Rhoda (née Goins), a housewife who had worked in a factory. Both parents had sporting and musical genes. His father was advised to make a living as a professional footballer and cricketer but was badly injured in the trenches at Ypres, invalided home with a plate on his femur and discharged from the Army.

Alan Green was educated at the Wyggeston Grammar School in Leicester, perhaps more famous for the Attenborough brothers. He was awarded Colours for rugby football and cricket, ran for the school at cross country and was the school gymnastic champion for 3 years. He was awarded a place at St Bartholomew's Hospital, all the questions at interview being on sporting activities, and when Barts preclinical Medical School was evacuated during WW II his first two terms were spent in Cambridge where he was resident in Queens' College.

Returning to London he lived in 'digs' previously occupied by Gordon Ostlere - aka Dr. Richard Gordon who wrote 'Doctor in the House'. At Barts he played for the First XV, scoring the opening try against Penzance on the Barts West Country tour before sustaining a dislocated knee. A Sunday newspaper account of the match opined: "Penzance did well in the first half to keep the score at Penzance 0: Barts 3. But Barts played much better in the second half with 14 men when Green had been taken off the field, the final score being Penzance 3 Barts 3." What an epitaph to a promising sporting career!

Paradoxically, a cancelled rugby match in 1947 had meant that Alan instead spent the afternoon as a dresser on the wards, and in the sluice met student nurse Doreen Wright: four years later he married her!

He was awarded two undergraduate prizes: the Wix prize for an essay on the 'Life and Works of John Abernethy' and the Bentley prize for a dissertation on 'Congenital Cardiovascular Defects' in 1948. He became Secretary and later President of the 'Abernethian Society'. He qualified in 1950 and house appointments followed at St. Bartholomew's Hospital. The next year (rejected for National Service because of his unstable knee) he became a Demonstrator in Anatomy for three years at Barts with Professor A.J.E. Cave. After passing the Primary FRCS he decided on surgery as his career, although he enjoyed working in general practice for several months at a time. He worked as a junior registrar (SHO) at Barts to John Hosford and Edward Tuckwell, then as a registrar in Norwich where he accrued much experience from being on emergency call every second day at the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital and on the other days at the Jenny Lind Hospital for Children.

Working with two Consultants he was tutored in major, intermediate and minor surgery. Norman Townsley trained his registrars in cold and emergency neurosurgery in addition to the wider aspects of general surgery. Prefrontal leucotomy was performed in a mental hospital on a Sunday morning. All forms of open prostatectomy were undertaken (from Freyer, Wilson Hey to Millin and a few endoscopic resections) and the resident staff often performed emergency prostatectomy late at night. Gastric surgery was still common, but Alan was unpopular when he performed a simple mastectomy and axillary clearance, as taught by (Sir) Edward Tuckwell (1958 Member of the TSC), as opposed to the accepted radical procedure. Perforated peptic ulcer admissions were very common as were cases of small and large bowel obstruction. Splenic rupture, intussusception and paediatric pyloric stenosis seemed almost as common as acute appendicitis.

Doreen and Alan were married in the Church of St. Bartholomew- the-Less on 17 March 1951. They had three daughters (Kathryn Ruth, Sarah Elizabeth and Rachel Margaret) who showed considerable musical and sporting talent. Their son David Alan James is a structural engineer.

In late 1955 Alan returned to Barts as Chief Assistant to John Hosford and Edward Tuckwell, and inevitably looked after their private patients at weekends. Saturday mornings were spent at St. Mark's Hospital in City Road, London with (Sir) Hugh Lockhart Mummery, an excellent mentor to clinical assistants. Then in 1958 with the help of a Fulbright Scholarship, the family set sail on the 'Mauretania' for a year in America where Alan gained experience in cancer chemotherapy with Dr Sidney Farber, the father of folic acid antagonists, and other pioneering work, including liver transplantation with Dr Francis ('Frannie') Moore at the Peter Bent Brigham Hospital.

Returning to the UK, Alan was seconded from Barts to Chase Farm Hospital, Enfield. On emergency call most nights and sleeping in the hospital, he also covered all orthopaedic emergencies once a week and the orthopaedic registrar turned his hand to general surgery as a token of gratitude! During this two year period Alan was also a Clinical Assistant at St. Peter's Hospital

to Harland Rees. From Barts he was awarded the Luther Holden Scholarships on two occasions: in 1957 on 'The bacteriology of bile, and lymphatics of the gallbladder' and in 1960 on 'Regional perfusion of anticancer agents'. His MS Thesis on 'Regional Perfusion of Anticancer Agents' was accepted in 1964.

Experience in London accrued in major thoracic surgery as his wide general surgical experience was consolidated: he learned the art of bronchoscopy having already mastered gastro-intestinal endoscopic techniques. In Norwich he had used an old thoracoscope for peritoneoscopy. Working with Alan Birt was a bonus in the field of direct vascular surgery as opposed to all forms of sympathectomy, in which he had been well trained. When the resident surgical officer post became vacant in Norwich he returned there in June 1964 to replace J M Ridley Thomas as a general surgeon with a urological interest, forming the second of two firms with Alan Birt, the other being headed by Norman Townsley. All surgeons had beds at the separate West Norwich Hospital, some three miles away where ward rounds and operating took place on a regular basis. In view of his paediatric experience, Alan had sessions at the Jenny Lind Hospital for Children, joining his mentor Norman Townsley and taking emergency admissions on alternate days. Peripheral clinics and operating were the norm: lists in North Norfolk commenced after the outpatient clinic finished at 6 pm and lasted three hours with the help of GP anaesthetists. Life was busy as in so many provincial consultant posts.

Following the recommendation that Norwich should start a specialist Urology Unit, Alan became the first pure urologist in East Anglia, in the fine tradition of his 18th century predecessors who as the famous Norwich School of Lithotomy had been 'cutters for the stone'. Nonetheless he still covered general surgery when his colleagues were away (performing his only right hepatic lobectomy at this time, and repairing an aortic aneurysm presenting as renal colic!). Michael Ashken joined him in 1968 as a urologist, and Christopher Gaches in 1972 for vascular access and organ retrieval supporting what was the first urology and renal unit in East Anglia.

A number of medical and para-medical managerial posts followed, including secretary of the Norfolk branch of the BMA and numerous regional committees. A keen anatomist, he examined for the FRCS Primary Examination and in Edinburgh as well. He led examining teams for the English College in Khartoum and Sri Lanka and served as chairman of the core group setting multiple choice questions. At times over fifteen years he was external examiner for the Royal College of Surgeons in Edinburgh where he was warmly welcomed by the examiners there. For the Edinburgh College he travelled to Hong Kong, Malaysia and Saudi Arabia to examine in the Primary and Final FRCS, and taught on postgraduate courses in Nepal, Singapore and Kuwait. He was awarded the FRCSEd for services to the Edinburgh Royal College. In East Anglia, he was an external examiner over many years for the MB BChir in Cambridge.

In 1981, Alan hosted a meeting in Norwich of the British Association of Clinical Anatomists and he subsequently became the Association's President. He was also President of the Section of Urology, The Royal Society of Medicine, in 1985/86, and also the Norwich Medico-Chirurgical Society. In

2004 he was elected Freeman of the Worshipful Company of Barbers of London.

Retiring early from the NHS in 1990, he continued to engage in private urological practice with some medico-legal work until the age of 66. In retirement he was able to enjoy the close proximity of Norwich Cathedral in which he and Doreen, both committed Christians, had worshipped for many years. Their retirement home is in the Cathedral Close, from which they had an unrivalled view of the spire and found attendance at Choral Evensong a sheer joy. Archival duties for the TSS and writing 'tributes' for 'Lives of Fellows' of the RCS occupied much leisure time as did Episcopal reflections. He and Doreen attended what meetings of the TSS their health permitted, and have always been a fund of reminiscences and humour.

Mr Tim Williams FRCS, President of the Travelling Surgical Society, writes:

The source of these autobiographical recollections of a life well lived was purely – in Alan Green's words – his 'own memory'! His scholarship and contributions to the Travelling Surgical Society were sustained to the end. He, and his many e-mails, will be much missed. The condolences of the whole Society are extended to Doreen and their family, with a bottomless depth of gratitude for the friendship that this god-fearing, gentle man extended to all around him.

12 May 2015