

Professor Brian Ellis

Consultant Urological Surgeon Professor Brian Ellis died on 23 December 2018 aged 71. He had been a most energetic Officer of the TSS, proving a conscientious and talented Secretary and Archivist, combining both to photograph our academic and social activities and posting the beautiful results on a password-protected internet site. He also used them as a record for posterity in his annual illustrated book of our visits, published by Blurb. His equipment and our group photos became a staple of our meetings (which he attended with Loveday), and he still found time to deliver informative presentations on urology, photography, aviation, planned visits and much else.

Brian had retired from the Ashford and St Peter's Hospitals Trust in November 2007 after 25 years of service. Educated at Harrow, he qualified at St Mary's Hospital Medical School in London and spent a year at Ashford in 1976 as a Registrar before returning to St Mary's Hospital as a Research Fellow on the Surgical Unit under Professor Hugh Dudley, to whom he acted as right-hand man with involvement in numerous research projects.

At Professor Ellis's farewell event in 2007, Consultant Surgeon Mr Joe Horner said that he himself had written the job description for the role at Ashford of general surgeon, with a special interest in urology, that Brian Ellis had applied for in the early 1980s. Commenting on Brian's persistence, loyalty and determination to do the best for his patients and colleagues over the years Joe said: "Brian is a most dedicated person and for people that want help he is more than happy to assist - doctors, junior doctors and nurses and all those who need his time."

He had led his team to pioneer the new Nurse Practitioner role in the UK and this was then taken up all over the country; the innovative role of Nurse Practitioner has now expanded into many other medical disciplines. In 1998 Brian and his colleagues at Ashford Hospital

scooped the Urology 'Team of the Year' national award in recognition of the overall excellence of the service offered, supported by pioneer Nurse Practitioners Alison Gidlow and Alison Roodhouse.

The Ashford and St. Peter's Hospitals NHS Trust had won recognition from the Modernisation Agency in 2006 when Professor Ellis had led a team of urologists and radiologists from the Trust investigating the logistics of teaching every urology trainee how to interpret diagnostic ultrasound. He went on to produce a medical video teaching young urologists how to do their own ultrasound scanning.

Brian had always been a keen teacher and researcher; he published over 150 academic papers and several books during his thirty clinical years. It was in his role as teacher that he was appointed as visiting Professor at Middlesex University in 2006. He managed to combine his love of teaching with his hobby of digital film making, enjoying editing them on a computer. Two of his four medical videos won prizes.

Above all he was dedicated to his patients. Professor Ellis himself once said: "Working in the NHS is tough these days because of the enormous amount of regulation and the constant challenge from targets. However, as doctors we must never lose sight of the fact that we are here for our patients; they must always come first. Nothing must deflect us from giving sound advice, clearly communicated, with sensitivity and compassion."

He added: "Looking back over the years the first and greatest thing that springs to mind is the honour and privilege of dealing with patients. To deal with patients and to solve their problems with courtesy and compassion is a great thing. To practise, every doctor needs a cohesive team to work with and I couldn't have done it without all and everyone of the wide range of support staff I have been proud to call colleagues."

On retirement Brian maintained his teaching and his private practice, yet found time to be a very active member of our Travelling Surgical Society of Great Britain and Ireland, for which, as already mentioned, he was Assistant Archivist and 'Society Photographer', using his considerable photographic expertise to catalogue the visits twice a year to other surgical centres, which he published as an annual hardback book through Blurb. By the time of his death he had accumulated an archive of several thousand password-protected photographs available to his fellow travelling surgeons. In 2007 he and his wife Loveday went with the Society to China and Salisbury. In 2014 he became Secretary of the TSS, organising the visits with zest and competence. He handed on this baton in 2017 and, though his health was deteriorating, he attended the TSS visit to Cardiff in September 2018, a farewell gesture to those he had served so well. Brian's efficiency, modesty and courage were just a few of the characteristics admired by, and endearing him to, his colleagues.

In retirement he had not let up. He bought Tangle Mount in Hampshire, knocking down the existing house and replacing it with one that was state-of-the-art to his own design, and which he was able to enjoy with Loveday for several years. He was a keen follower of the aviation industry, and gave talks on what surgeons could learn from it about safety. He was an early purchaser of a drone which he used to observe the construction of his new house, sharing the pictures with his friends on email at which he was adept.

His photographic expertise was put to good use at Lambeth Palace (which we had visited as a Society): he produced a book of photographs of its stained glass windows with fellow TSS member and retired surgeon James Thomson, who wrote the text. The pictures were much admired, and one was used by the Archbishop of Canterbury for the annual Christmas card to all Anglican clergy.

Several years ago Brian underwent surgery for obstructing bowel cancer that had eluded the Bowel Screening Programme, and he tolerated the considerable side effects of adjuvant chemotherapy with good humour, eventually succumbing to widespread disease just before Christmas 2018. He is survived by his wife Loveday, their daughter Rebecca, and son David.

Brian's life is being celebrated on Saturday 22nd June, at 2 pm in a service at Christ Church, Ottershaw (KT16 0PB), arranged by the Ellis family who had lived in Ottershaw for over thirty years. Details have been circulated to family, friends and colleagues by Rebecca and passed on to TSS members by our TSS Secretary, Simon Mellor.

There is a MuchLoved tribute site at: <https://prof-brian-ellis.muchloved.com> where stories about his life can be read and others added.

Tim Williams
With thanks to Joe Horner