

David PRATT (1930 – 2006)

David Pratt was a popular member of the TSS, which he joined in 1971 (after being appointed to St James' Hospital in Leeds), at the same time as Professor Sir James Fraser of Southampton. Both new members travelled with their wives to Lisbon where dos Santos and his team expounded on venous problems. Libby and David attended both home and overseas meetings regularly and with enthusiasm. David was not long in giving his first paper: in 1972 at the Rikshospitalet in Oslo he described his approach to Compression Sclerotherapy for varicose veins by the technique popularised by Fegan, for which David found 75% of his patients with varicose veins were suitable. He presented 300 consecutive cases with good results.

David had a First Class BSc in Anatomy (1951) from Leeds whence he graduated in 1954 with First Class Honours in Finals also. He gained the FRCS in 1962, and won the William Hey Gold Medal. His surgical interests were catholic: he wrote on aortic homograft replacement in 1961, on the significance of rectal bleeding (1962) and in 1987 on the TSS visit to Gibraltar and Southern Spain he gave a paper in Cordoba on 'Delorme's Procedure' beautifully illustrated using his own pastel drawings. He was a talented watercolour painter, honing his skills with lessons in retirement. A keen photographer, he was often seen with his camera on our various forays. He was also an excellent cook, though it was not known whether he personally did any of the catering when the Society visited Leeds in October 1979 for a meeting at St James' Hospital. 44 people attended that visit, for which the Report recorded that "the curtain raising reception and buffet supper in David and Libby's beautiful home in Horsforth was both heart-warming and a gourmet's delight."

The 1979 visit to Leeds was only the second there, though it was of course the home territory of our first President, Lord Moynihan who in 1924 had entertained the twelve founder members to dinner as they discussed the founding of what began as the Junior Surgical Club, became the Travelling Surgical Club (the TSC or simply "The Club") and is now known as the Travelling Surgical Society. David Pratt's 35 year membership was something of a record, for he and Libby attended regularly from his appointment in 1971 and continued to do so after his retirement in 1995. Indeed, they were in fine form when they hosted a dinner for some close friends to celebrate David's 75th birthday at a restaurant in Amsterdam during the TSS visit in 2005.

Behind his unassuming demeanour there was a lively mind and gentle sense of humour. Generous and approachable, his advice was much sought after by those working in the Leeds hospitals whatever their status. In our company he was respected as a surgeon with wide interests, who saw the lighter side of life. David died suddenly on 23 May 2006 at his home near Leeds at the age of 76. The sad, unexpected news was relayed to the TSS whilst on a coach in Berlin. The funeral service (with donations to Yorkshire Cancer Research) was held at Rawdon Crematorium in Leeds on Thursday 1 June. It was well attended by TSS members from all over the country, in tribute to a surgeon whose friendship was highly valued and whose insights and sense of fun will be much missed. Our thoughts and condolences are very much with Libby and her family, and it is hoped she will continue to join us on our visits.

Tim Williams and Alan Green