

OBITUARY

Professor Sir Robert Shields

Kt. 1990; *DL County of Merseyside* 1991; MB ChB Glasgow 1953; MD Glasgow 1965; FRCS Ed.1959; FRCS Eng. 1966 FRCPS 1993; FRCPE 1996; Hon. DSc. (Wales)

8 November 1930 – 3 October 2008

Professor Robert Shields (Bobby to his friends) was elected to the Travelling Surgical Society (when it was still 'The Surgical Club') in 1972. Despite a busy medical career, Robert and his wife Marianne supported The Club whenever they could, and the Travelling Surgical Society was delighted when he agreed to become its President (2001-2003) following James Thomson's retirement. His high profile in the surgical world at home and abroad brought many connections, and he gave papers and contributed much to the scientific discussion at our meetings as well as being an authority on surgical training.

Robert Shields was Professor of Surgery and Chairman of the Department of Surgery and Honorary Consultant Surgeon to the Royal Liverpool and Broadgreen University Hospitals from 1969 to 1996. He was Dean of the Faculty of Medicine to the University of Liverpool from 1982-85 and at the outset he invited the Club to Liverpool. The Report for 1982 recorded that "On Thursday, September 30th a coach took us from the Atlantic Tower Hotel near the Mersey and the famous 'Liver Building' now up for sale, to the delightful opening ceremony that Bobby and Marianne had arranged in their home in the Wirral - a truly joyous occasion where many friends swapped news. Present also was Professor Alan Clarke, an accomplished New Zealander of great charm." On the following day "Friday 1st October - at a commendably early hour on near enough its fourth birthday and Bobby Shields' first day as Dean of the Medical School, we assembled in the new Liverpool Royal Infirmary for the weekly Grand Round." A very full, varied and interesting programme followed. Some two years later at the Diamond Jubilee meeting held in Norwich (1984) he delivered his paper 'Musings of a Dean' - a model of clarity and commonsense. Bobby had what Dean Swift called the capacity to use 'Proper words in proper places', to 'make the true definition of style', as befits one who became editor of the *Scottish Medical Journal* and vice-chairman of the *British Journal of Surgery*. Certainly his short papers at 'in-house' meetings were instructive and always welcomed.

Born on 8 November 1930 in Paisley, Robert was educated there at John Neilson Grammar School. At Glasgow University he won the Asher-Asher Medal and MacLeod Medal, qualifying in medicine in 1953. Following house appointments at the Western General Hospital in Glasgow, he entered National Service with the rank of Captain as a Regimental Medical Officer to the first Battalion of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders (1954 – 1956), and retained a Territorial Army connection as Major with the 7th Battalion of the Regiment until 1961, later becoming Honorary Colonel, University of Liverpool Officer Training Corps from 1994 -2001. He was on the Executive Committee

and Council of Military Educations Committees of the Universities of the UK from 1990-1994.

In 1957 he married (Grace) Marianne Swinburn and resumed his civilian medical career as Hall Fellow in the University of Glasgow, followed by a year as Foundation Research Fellow at the Mayo Clinic, Rochester, Minnesota. Returning to the UK he became Lecturer in Surgery at the University of Glasgow (1960-1963) and worked at the Western Infirmary under Sir Charles Ilingworth before moving to the Welsh National School of Medicine in Cardiff as Reader with Honorary Consultant status on Sir Patrick Forrest's unit until 1969.

His career was illustrious, with Presidencies of the Surgical Research Society (1986-87, following many years as secretary), the Association of Surgeons of Great Britain and Ireland (in 1987), the British Society of Gastroenterology (1990-91) and finally President of the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh from 1988-89. He received numerous accolades from Colleges of surgery worldwide, and lectured at many of them. He had been on the Council of the Association of Surgeons from 1966-69, and had won its prestigious Moynihan Medal in 1966. He was also a member of various national bodies including the General Medical Council and its Education and Professional Conduct Committees (1982-94), and the Medical Research Council and its Strategy Committee (1987-1991).

He was active within the NHS at national level, advising amongst others the Secretary of State for Health (England) and the Acute Services Review, and he was Chairman of a range of advisory and training committees, as well as working for his own local health authorities. In addition to all these commitments he was in demand as an Examiner in Surgery to many Universities, including those of Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dundee, Leicester, Sheffield, Cambridge, Lagos, Amman, Riyadh and Malta.

His travels as a Visiting Professor and Lecturer took him far and wide both within the UK and abroad: to Bristol, Sheffield University, London, and Hong Kong, as well as back to his native Glasgow. He was Wellcome Visiting Lecturer in South Africa at the College of Medicine and at Witwatersrand, and Alpha Omega Alpha Distinguished Lecturer to the Uniformed Services University Medical School, Washington DC, USA. He had also been visiting lecturer at Cambridge, Oxford, Harvard, Yale, New York, San Diego, Chicago, Toronto, Malta, Sudan, Nigeria, Jordan and Zambia.

A great many academic distinctions came his way. The award of Doctor of Science by the University of Wales in 1990 gave him much pleasure, and he also had Honorary Fellowships of the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland, the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow, the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons, the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh, the College of Surgeons of Hong Kong, the American College of Surgeons, and the College of Surgeons of South Africa. He was given Honorary Fellowships of the American Surgical Association, the Association of Surgeons of India and of the Academy of Medicine of Singapore.

His publications have also been numerous. He contributed to at least five books (including 'Surgical Emergencies' in 1979, 'Textbook of Surgery' by MacFarlane and Thomas in 1983 and 'Gastrointestinal Emergencies' in 1992). Nearly 200 original articles and reviews bear his name in the field of gastroenterology, particularly liver problems and oesophageal varices. Little wonder that he was a member of numerous editorial boards: Gut (1969-76), British Journal of Surgery (1970-1985 and 1989-95) and the International Editorial Board of 'Current Practice in Surgery'. Sir Robert became Chairman of the Merseyside, Lancashire and Cheshire Council on 'Alcoholism' (1992-94) and was Chairman of the Advisory Committee of the British Liver Trust (formerly British Liver Foundation) from 1991-94.

He was knighted in 1990 and appointed Deputy Lieutenant of the County of Merseyside in 1991.

His main home was in Liverpool, although 'North of the Border' the Shields relaxed around Lochgilphead in the Highlands of the West of Scotland. He enjoyed sailing and family activities there, and also took pleasure from walking his dog in the Wirral. His wife Marianne, a former almoner, is a gracious lady (indeed her first name *is* Grace) who loved those around her dearly, and was rightly proud of her husband and her family. A supportive wife who never sought the limelight, she and indeed the man himself were humble about Robert's many achievements which kept them so very busy, and they were a pleasure to be with on our visits, especially in Rome in 2001 when James Thomson passed the Presidency to Bobby Shields in "a small domestic ceremony". This took place during the TSS dinner at the Lord Byron Hotel in the company of 15 guests, mainly Italian but including the British Ambassador to the Holy See, His Excellency Mark Pellew. Bobby Shields was thus our President for the meeting in Tunbridge Wells that September until the visit to Washington, USA, in 2003, after which the TSS Presidency passed to Geoffrey Glazer.

The Shields had three children, two of whom work in healthcare: Gillian Camm – who has two children and an entry in Who's Who – has been NHS Regional Appointments Commissioner for the South West since 2001. Jennifer, the younger daughter who also has two children, is Commissioning Manager for Health and Social Services in the Wirral. Their brother Andrew is a Director of Avis Europe based in London and Paris. All the family have our condolences and our very warm thoughts over the loss of a remarkable man with so many distinctions and honours in surgery, and we are proud that he shared so much with us in the Travelling Surgical Society.

Alan Green / Tim Williams