

Surgeon Vice Admiral Ian Jenkins,

CB 2006; CVO 2000; QHS 1994; MB BCh (Wales) 1968; FRCS (Eng.) 1973.



12 September 1944 – 19 February 2009

It is with great sadness we report that Ian Jenkins died suddenly on 19 February 2009, depriving us of an outgoing, courteous and highly successful military surgeon, the embodiment of the roots and activities of the Travelling Surgical Society. A more delightful man one could not meet. The Queen was said to be devastated by his death and the flag on the Round Tower at Windsor Castle was lowered to half-mast as a mark of her respect.

Ian Lawrence Jenkins was born in Cardiff on 12 September 1944, the son of Gordon Eaton Jenkins MBE and Edith Jenkins (née Rouse). His father had served in Airborne Forces during the Second World War and was a senior hospital administrator for Wales. Ian was educated at what was then the Howardian Grammar School in Penylan before entering the Welsh National School of Medicine where he qualified in 1968. Later that year he married Liz (née Lane), an occupational therapist.

Ian passed the FRCS (Eng) in 1973 and joined the Royal Naval Reserve, attending the Britannia Royal Naval College Dartmouth as a Reservist - for 2 weeks! This did not deter him from taking the Dartmouth Passing-Out Parade years later, to the bemusement of senior colleagues. He specialised in urology under Surgeon Captain (later Professor Sir) Norman Blacklock and Mr Keith Yeates (Newcastle) and became a Consultant in 1979. His naval service included spells with HMS Ark Royal, the Royal Naval Hospitals at Haslar, Plymouth and Gibraltar, and HMY Britannia – the Royal Yacht. He was also part of the surgical support team for the Royal Marine Commando Unit, sharing the tough training which included an Arctic survival course in Norway of which he said: "I have never regarded anything as being really cold ever since. Once you have learned how to dig out and survive in a snow hole you never complain about the weather in Wales again."

He returned from Gibraltar to RNH Haslar as Head of Urology in 1982. In 1988 he was also appointed Professor of Naval Surgery, and then became the Medical Officer in Command at RNH Haslar (1990 – 1996) and hosted a meeting for the TSS there in 1992.

Ian first came as a guest of the Travelling Surgical Society to the Diamond Jubilee Meeting held in Norwich in October 1984. Surgeon Commander Ian Jenkins was proposed by Surgeon Vice-Admiral Sir James Watt as a possible new 'Service member', and ratified at the AGM in Whitehaven the next spring. At the autumn 1985 meeting at RAF Hospital Halton, he presented a paper in his capacity as urologist at the Royal Naval Hospital Haslar on *56 cases of malignant testicular disease in the Royal Navy*. As to the meeting he arranged at Haslar in 1992, the Report for that year observed that "*The Programme was varied and of great interest -- we owe Surgeon Captain Ian Jenkins and Elizabeth a big debt of gratitude for a meeting that went like a dream*". At the next TSS meeting at Haslar, in 2000, he gave a paper detailing the life and wounds of Lord Nelson.

Ian's career progressed by leaps and bounds. As a Surgeon Commodore he became the first Defence Postgraduate Medical Dean and Commandant of the new Royal Defence Medical College (1996-1999). This coincided with the launch of the Calman initiatives for specialist training. He was a member of the Conference of Postgraduate Medical Deans (COPMED) under the vibrant Chairmanship of Professor (later Sir) John Temple. In April 1999 he became the Medical Director General (Naval) as a Surgeon Rear Admiral directly responsible to the Second Sea Lord for maritime medical strategy and for the delivery of medical services to the surface and submarine flotillas and to the Royal Marines. In October 2002 he became Surgeon General of Her Majesty's Armed Forces with the rank of Surgeon Vice Admiral, and might thus be said to have been the first 'General' in the Royal Navy! He was responsible to the Secretary of State for Defence and to the Chief of the Defence Staff for the quality and standards of defence medicine, medical intelligence, defence medical research and education and for the leadership and strategic direction of all three Defence Medical Services. Despite all these achievements, he would have been touched by the comments on naval websites that he was known for being a caring consultant and a real gentleman.

Ian had been appointed Medical Officer Overseas to the Household of His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales in 1982. He attended their Royal Highnesses the Prince and (late) Princess of Wales on a number of foreign official engagements and private events in various countries, some occasionally unsavoury with hostile diseases. On a visit to Australia the BBC mistook him for a royal bodyguard! In 1994 the Queen made him her Honorary Surgeon. The Christmas cards from Liz and Ian were often watercolours painted by the Prince of Wales for his charities, and Ian himself also enjoyed painting but declared he did not have the talent for or access to the scenes painted by his 'Boss'.

Ian relinquished the baton of Surgeon General at the end of October 2006 but work did not cease. His interests in retirement included Chairmanship of the Council of Portsmouth Cathedral, Co-patron of 'Children and Families of Far East Prisoners of War', Governor of Sutton's Hospital in Charterhouse and a Trustee thereof (with TSS Senior members and Past Presidents, James Thomson and William Shand), Director of the White Ensign Association, Trustee of the Queen Alexandra's Hospital Home and Chairman designate of Seafarer's UK (King George's Fund for Sailors), in which capacity he endorsed Gales Seafarers Ale for the money it would contribute to support those falling on hard times having worked at sea. In February 2008 he succeeded Sir Richard Johns in the unpaid position of Constable and Governor of Windsor Castle; when he died plans had been in hand for the Travelling Surgical Society to visit this Royal residence in 2009.

Ian and Liz attended many of the meetings of the Travelling Surgical Society despite their numerous official commitments, and always radiated warmth and conviviality. Ian once wrote that they "have greatly appreciated and enjoyed both the professional and social attributes of the 'Club' and will never forget the welcome they received as new travellers. Both firmly believe in the Club's aspirations and endeavours for British surgery and for the advancement of our profession both scientifically and in the alliances we forge with overseas comrades." The same could be said, with heartfelt conviction, of their own contributions to our Society as well as to the nation at large. Ian is survived by his wife Liz, their daughter Georgina and son Michael, and five grandchildren, and our sympathy goes out to them all.

Alan Green,
Tim Williams,
21 February 2009

