

Group Captain W James L Harries
OBE 1959; MB BS 1945 London; MRCS LRCP 1945; FRCS Eng. 1957.
17 October 1921- May 2018

Jimmy Harries, as we knew him, died aged 96 in early May 2018, with a funeral on 16th May 2018 at Amersham crematorium then a reception at the elegant Ashridge Golf Club. He and his wife Monica were not merely good attenders at TSS meetings: they welcomed new members with open arms.

Born on 17 October 1921, the eldest son of a Pembrokeshire farmer, Jimmy was educated at Haverfordwest Grammar School. Deciding on a career in medicine he entered King's College London and then Charing Cross Hospital where he qualified in 1945. Eighteen months of house appointments followed before he entered the Royal Air Force medical branch on 1st January 1947. After initial medical unit officer posts he was appointed deputy Senior Medical Officer at HQ 22 Group Headquarters at Market Drayton. On being granted a permanent Commission in the RAF, Jimmy attained his wish to study surgery and was posted to RAF Hospital Ely: here he met Monica, a parachuting Nursing Sister (the description is Jimmy's own!).

Jimmy had frequent postings to various UK service hospitals before he proceeded to a temporary hospital at RAF Akrotiri at the height of the EOKA campaign and the build up to the Suez operation.

He returned to the UK as medical escort to injured servicemen on an aero-medical aircraft, then passed the FRCS examination in 1957. After the three month tour in Cyprus, within months of returning finally to the UK in 1959 he was mentioned in despatches and then honoured with the OBE. Yet another three year tour to Cyprus at the permanent hospital in Akrotiri followed in 1964. By this time partition of the Greek and Turkish communities had taken place with the Turks occupying the territory north of the Troodos Mountains and a tentative peace reigned in the island.

When Jimmy Harries returned to the UK in 1967 to Princess Mary's Hospital Halton, he was guided by the Civilian Consultant in Surgery to the RAF, Sir Clifford Naunton Morgan, to further his studies in colo-rectal surgery. Selected as Honorary Assistant in Surgery during 1970 at St. Mark's Hospital he gained an Honorary Consultant contract, working with Sir Hugh Evelyn Lockhart – Mummery.

Jimmy Harries became a service member of the Travelling Surgical Club representing the RAF in 1981 and the following year retired into civilian private practice for a further 6 years in Buckinghamshire, in effect becoming a senior member. He and his wife Monica were regular and popular members who attended most of the home and overseas meetings; many new TSS members recall being warmly welcomed by them. In October 1985 he and Ronnie Brown with Monica and Margaret hosted a well attended and successful meeting at RAF Halton when twenty four members and twenty two wives with three widows of former members enjoyed a successful scientific session. The ladies were taken to Waddesdon Manor, one of the Rothschild mansions where Monica Harries was an official guide: she gave the ladies a fascinating tour of the house and its treasures. In addition to his association with the Travelling Surgical Society from 1981, he became a life member of the Royal Society of Medicine, sometime Fellow of the Association of Surgeons of Great Britain and Ireland. In retirement he played regular golf, kept a well ordered garden and had acknowledged expertise in bonsai growing.

Settling in a delightful house at Butlers Cross, near Aylesbury in Buckinghamshire he continued in private practice for 6 years after he retired from the RAF. Monica and James had two sons, James and Jonathan. Monica died a few years ago and her well-attended memorial service in Halton included strong representation from the TSS. Jimmy's own service in Amersham was attended by seventy (including six members of the TSS, recently back from Hungary) and was a moving tribute to a surgeon for whom the travels of the TSS had been his main annual holiday over many years.

Tim Williams
Editor, TSS
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