

## ROBIN A. L. AGNEW, CONSULTANT CHEST PHYSICIAN

*Dr Robin Agnew. Born 1926, qualified 1950 BA, MA, MD Dubl., FRCP Irel. Died 19th February 2022.*



Consultant Chest Physician Liverpool (b 1926 q 1950 BA, MA, MD Dubl., FRCP Irel.), died in his sleep from a cerebrovascular haemorrhage on 19<sup>th</sup> February 2022.

Robin was born in Dublin and graduated from Trinity College Dublin with a BA in 1948 and then an MB in 1950 with honours in medicine.

He worked as a house physician in St Steevens' Hospital and it was here he witnessed the use of pioneering antibiotics for tuberculosis, and began a lifelong passion for treating patients with this deadly disease. In 1953 Robin left Ireland and travelled to Chichester. It was during his interview in the board room at Royal West Sussex Hospital, (where he was accepted for position of medical registrar), that a portrait of Sir John Forbes with a welcoming expression, caught his eye. Later in his career, Robin paid tribute to this historic figure through publication of several articles and books commemorating his works.

In 1956, he was accepted for a short service commission in The Royal Navy. This coincided with liability for national service and he joined the shore establishment of HMS Victory in Portsmouth. Following training he then served as Surgeon Lieutenant. Early in 1957, he was drafted urgently to serve on HMS Murray, one of two guard ships assigned to The Bay of Biscay to cover The Queen's, visit to Portugal. The same year, he moved to the Royal Naval Hospital at Plymouth where he met his future wife, Ann, who was a nursing sister in the Queen Alexandra's Royal Naval Nursing Service. Promotion in 1959 to surgeon lieutenant-commander meant a move to HMS Ganges in Ipswich. In 1962 he became a senior registrar in the chest unit in the West Norwich Hospital, and in 1964 Robin was elected President of the Irish Society of East Anglia. In Norwich he learnt the art of bronchoscopy to diagnose lung cancer. Having been appointed consultant chest physician in Liverpool in 1970, Robin and his family moved to Ormskirk, Lancashire, and he enthusiastically took up management of tuberculosis patients once more.

He worked at Fazakerly Hospital Aintree, Newsham Hospital and, until it closed in 1977, at the Central Chest Clinic. Here he set up a clinic for the diagnosis and treatment of patients with tuberculosis. He worked closely with tuberculosis Health Visitors and the Public Health Department. The clinic treated patients from a deprived area of Liverpool, a city still suffering from bombing by the Luftwaffe during the war. Poor living standards and overcrowding favoured the spread of the disease. Later he helped set up the first combined

clinic at Newsham Hospital and later Broad Green Hospitals Cardiothoracic Centre where patients with lung cancer were seen together by a physician and surgeon.

Robin retired from the NHS in 1990 and was appointed Emeritus Consultant Chest Physician in Liverpool. He worked for Medical Appeals Tribunals all over the North West, seeing patients appealing against their disability awards and also carried out medical examinations for recruits for the Gulf War.

Finally, after fully retiring in 1999, Robin authored numerous publications. He was asked to contribute to the Dictionary of National Biography on Sir James Clark and Sir John Forbes. He published two books on the life and naval career of Sir John Forbes and has also written on the life of the Victorian publisher, George Smith, and his connection with Charlotte Bronte. He submitted a paper to The Bronte Society the day before he died. Much loved and missed by his family, he leaves his wife, three daughters and six grandchildren and one great grandchild on the way.