

JOHN EDGAR DALBY

Consultant Radiotherapist, Clatterbridge Cancer Centre. Born 1926. Qualified Trinity Hall, Cambridge 1946; M.A; F.R.C.R. Died after a short illness on 13th November 2019.

After qualifying at Cambridge he served in the Royal Army Medical Corps (RAMC) for two years after the war. Later, he started training in radiotherapy at the Christie Hospital in Manchester under the world renowned radiotherapist Professor Ralston Paterson who was the first director of Christie. The external beam radiotherapy was in its infancy with only ortho voltage (low energy) machines available to treat many advanced cancers. Due to its low energy the penetration of radiation was poor and it was not effective, most of the time. Brachytherapy was the main mode of treatment that help cure some of the advanced cancers in those days. This included patients with carcinoma of the cervix, breast and head and neck cancers. The Christie was the world leader in brachytherapy and young Dalby learnt many brachytherapy techniques from Prof Paterson using radium needles implanted according to the famous Manchester system. While as a trainee in Christie, he wrote a pivotal paper on management of anal carcinoma jointly with Dr Pointon, which is still used as a reference for all major publications on anal cancer.

The only son of John and Maggie Dalby, he attended Manchester Grammar school before the war and continued his medical studies at Trinity Hall, Cambridge. He started his training in radiotherapy at Christie in the fifties and in 1962 he was appointed as a consultant radiotherapist at the regional cancer centre at Clatterbridge Hospital (former MRCRO) [Mersey Regional Centre for Radiotherapy and Oncology] where he spent the rest of his career, retiring in 1988. He also held weekly clinics in Southport and the Royal Liverpool University Hospital where he met Professor Philip Stell who was an eminent surgeon and researcher in head and neck cancers. Stell's obituary in the British Medical Journal described him as "a dominant figure in head and neck surgery in Europe" (BMJ, 2004). Dalby had an opportunity to work with worked with Stell until his retirement and published many research papers as a co-author on head and neck cancer. He did joint clinics with Prof Stell and contributed in the management of head and neck cancers with brachytherapy (which he learnt at Christie) for many head and neck cancers in patients who were not suitable for surgery. These were the early days of brachytherapy and the ends of his fingers showed the effects of the radium and iridium in his later life.

He was a member of the elite 'Twenty Club', a Liverpool-based gathering of senior physicians. John was a very popular member of the team and was well respected by all of his colleagues and the nursing staff. Outside of medicine he was a keen golfer, traveller, gardener, with a love of classical music, history, architecture, food and wine.

Survived by his wife Dr Muriel Dalby and his sons Jonathan, Timothy and Simon. He was much loved by his family, friends, and colleagues. He will be greatly missed.

Arthur Sun Myint, Jonathan and Simon Dalby