

JAMES HORSFALL ELLIOTT CARMICHAEL

Consultant Radiologist. Born Liverpool 1923. Qualified MB ChB Liverpool 1945. Died 26th April 2018.

James Carmichael, formerly consultant radiologist at Broad Green Hospital, Liverpool, died on 26th April 2018 at the age of 94. He stood out from the pack in his commitment to service work, teaching and training. His vision of the role of the radiologist was of a doctor dedicated to reaching a diagnosis with speed, accuracy and authority. Furthermore, the x-ray diagnosis should make clinical sense. If more tests were needed to refine or strengthen the diagnosis, they should be done, or at least booked forthwith. Waiting is a cruelty for patients.

Born in Liverpool, he attended the Institute School. He entered the Medical School of Liverpool University in 1940 just before his 17th birthday and graduated in 1945. Only 21 years after the defeat of Kaiser Wilhelm, Great Britain was once again at war with Germany, this time Hitler's Germany. Medical students had to take on decision-making and surgery of a complexity far greater than ever before. They worked hard, guided by older doctors, flushed out of retirement. Liverpool docks were a prime target for the Luftwaffe. A direct hit on the operating theatres of Mill Road Infirmary led to the deaths of over 100 patients and staff in one night of the 1941 Blitz.

In time German arms were defeated. It was time to sort out the Peace.

The immediate post war job scene for young doctors was, at best turbulent and included foundation of the NHS. James knew he wanted to be a consultant radiologist. He obtained DMRD and MD and was appointed consultant radiologist at Clatterbridge in 1954. He moved to Broad Green in 1959. He had come home and was to remain there till his retirement in 1988 committed to its patients and staff.

Broad Green became a major teaching hospital almost by accident. The wards were mostly "temporary" war-time huts sprawled over a large site. There was, however, a talented consultant staff committed to developing specialist services, notably thoracic medicine and surgery. James saw to it that his x-ray department could meet the demands of these key specialist services. In Byron's words, all went merry as a marriage bell.

In the late 1960s his commitment to good quality radiology led to an interest in radiation protection, conscious as he was of the risk to his staff. This work progressed from regional to a national level and then finally to the International Commission for Radiological Protection.

By the early 1980s change was in the air. Ultrasound had become a serious and relatively simple modality. The Mersey Regional CT scanner was installed at the Royal in 1984. He never said so explicitly but the flowery fields of retirement had begun to call. His friends arranged a feast here in LMI to celebrate his career and wish him well in his retirement. He had been an x-ray radiologist, one of the last of the Old School, and was happy for history to judge him as such.

In next to no time, he was back in the fray. He had copious records and a vivid memory of the impact of the war on the provision of hospital services to Liverpool. He lectured extensively on these events. He was always fascinated by steam trains and had many railway stories to tell amongst them the saga of the courageous evacuation of a burning ammunition train from the densely populated city centre. His enthusiasm for opera was infectious and he supported visits to Liverpool by companies such as Carl Rosa and Glyndebourne. He was a regular at the Phil.

He loved this Institution and took great pride in being its President in 1981. His presidential address, From San Domingo to Montserrat, was memorable. It brought together the writings of Dumas, Pere et Fils which formed the libretto of Verdi's La Traviata. There was a play on the name Montserrat/Montsarrat. Keith, who had retired from his practice as a Liverpool Surgeon in 1932 was recalled to be director of Liverpool Hospital services throughout the war. His son, Nicholas was author of The Cruel Sea. We heard a recording of Montserrat Caballe singing an excerpt of La Traviata. Thank you very much for the photo and the memory of my father. The famous disease is TB which was appropriate since dad was a chest disease specialist and his wife contracted TB as a nurse. It was the great artistic condition of the nineteenth century with Keats and 2 Bronte sister dying of it and many operas featuring it. The plot involved TB that a celebrated disease of the chest.

He gave several talks on subjects as diverse as the Arnolfini Portrait and Glyndebourne. He revitalised the LMI Retired Members' Group. His was the largely unseen hand which directed the finances of the Institution and the Merseyside Medical Benevolent Fund.

He married his Broad Green ward sister, Maureen. With their sons, Andrew and Neil they created a most hospitable home. Andrew became an International lawyer. Neil is a consultant gerontologist at the Royal Liverpool Hospital.

James had been almost haunted in his early years by the fact that the men in his family had all died in their early fifties. There was mounting anxiety in the department at Broad Green as the 'fatal' day loomed. He arrived to work on cue, followed by trolley loads of cakes.

Nobody had foreseen that there were four more decades in store.

Dr A Carty and Mr A Carmichael