

## Peter Mary E Drury

***Consultant Anaesthetist in Central Liverpool, (b 1932; q Liverpool 1958), died on 5<sup>th</sup> April 2017***

Born in Dublin Peter Drury came from an Irish family heavily loaded with doctors. His parents moved to Ghana, where his father was a civil engineer. Put to the piano at an early age Peter became an excellent sight reader and developed perfect pitch, a rare gift and useful in his subsequent choral activities. After Prep school he went on to Ampleforth College: despite family pressure to gear up academically for a medical future, Peter veered firmly towards historical literature and became a Classics Scholar. However, family influence triumphed and he changed course by converting to science at A-level. With his excellence as a pianist (playing solos at school concerts), his talent as a batsman, his enthusiasm for classical language (Latin remained a secular as well as a religious interest), and his successful results in A level science, Peter was received as a pre-clinical student at Trinity College Cambridge in 1951, and moved onto “the wards” at Guy’s Hospital in Bermondsey in 1954. In the era before the modern “diagnosis by image”, clinical training at Guy’s superbly equipped most undergraduates with sound diagnostic skills, though the teaching was, by modern standards old-fashioned and heterodox. Peter played cricket in the first team and became Editor of the Guy’s Hospital Gazette, a significant honour. At that time the monthly “Gazette” had a circulation of 6,000, the biggest worldwide circulation of any teaching hospital magazine. Peter also composed the music, and played the piano for the 1957 Residents’ Play, a three act musical entitled “Doctor Bo” (a “James Bond” take on a Dr Boland, the Guy’s Dean) which included the ever-popular “Night time in Bermondsey”.

Surprisingly, his manifold contributions to student life, usually so valued by the London teaching hospitals, were ignored when it came to the frankly nepotistic handing-out of house jobs. An Editorial in the Gazette adversely reporting the handling of the 1957 ‘flu epidemic may have dished his chances, and Peter finished up at Lewisham Hospital, a second choice for many, but in fact a busy vibrant DGH. The infamous Lewisham train crash during fog on 4th December 1957 killed 90 passengers and 109 emergencies were admitted to Lewisham General. It is a conjectural possibility that the ensuing frantic activity in the hospital may have sown the seeds of his later pioneering work in intensive care, though Peter never mentioned that possible association.

Peter met Veronica Gately in 1953 at the Catholic Public Schools’ Coronation Ball in Grosvenor House, Mayfair. They pledged their life-long partnership immediately, though they waited 7 busy years before announcing their engagement and were married in Leicestershire in 1961. During that time Captain Drury of the RMC did his national Service mainly at Catterick before graduating FFARCS in Anaesthetics whilst working in Bristol at Southmead Hospital. A visit to Liverpool for one of Cecil Gray’s courses led to a consultant Anaesthetist’s post at the Royal Southern Hospital. A Victorian chain of Liverpool hospitals had been built in the city and along

the North bank of the Mersey River, comprising 3 General Hospitals (The Southern, The Northern, and The Royal Infirmary), which, with 3 other specialist hospitals, comprised the United Liverpool Hospitals (ULH). One might ask: United against whom? Whatever the answer, there was a perceptible elitist feel in this physically disparate yet professionally united group and the Southern was up there with the rest in quality and ambition, providing a much-appreciated service to Southern Liverpoolians. Peter pitched in, working, inter alia, with the vascular surgeon Averil Mansfield and also specialising in anaesthetising ENT cases with Robert Pracey. At the Southern, new challenges in aortic and carotid surgery and limb salvage by vascular bypass meant a hazardous level of co-morbidity in their patients, who needed specialised post-operative care: Peter joined Tony Gilbertson and Ronnie Finn in the Southern Intensive Care Unit, one of the first in North West England. A pocket-sized paperback soon followed in 1974: "A guide to the Intensive Therapy Unit" by R Finn and PME Drury, a very early introduction to the subject and a popular aide memoire. Peter had remarkable skills in managing colleagues of all grades as well as providing a good clinical service. He was popular and trusted by all - one distinguished colleague comments on the adoration in which he was held by the nurses and the parish priest-like demeanour which he achieved. This was no more than a natural gentleness and an inner peace, combined with a desire for "team learning". His spiritual world was a place of active worship and devotion to the Catholic Church. His nightly bed-time reading is said to have included St Augustin and Thomas a Kempis.

In 1978 all six ULH centres were closed and decanted into the newly opened but constitutively old-fashioned Royal Liverpool University Hospital. That year Peter started the ITU walking tours, and maintained support and mentorship for medical and nurse trainees in intensive care whilst continuing a busy anaesthetic practice. He also loved hill walking and since 1985 had joined medical friends for family walking weekends all over the UK. He was a keen and very competent navigator, and woe betide anyone who couldn't find a route with an Ordnance Survey map!

He retired from the NHS in 1997 and devoted twenty years to his wife, children and the Church, playing the organ at Bishop Heaton Church on Sundays and retaining a very active interest in the history of medicine and anaesthetics. On September 14th – 17th 2005 the Sixth International Symposium on the History of Anaesthesia was held at Cambridge and Peter undertook the very considerable task of Chief Editor of the Proceedings, which appeared in 2007. During this period he suffered a ruptured abdominal aortic aneurysm from which he recovered, finding a new, slightly slower tempo of life. But the Symposium Proceedings – a magnum opus of 800 pages - came out on time.

In 1972 Peter inaugurated and organised annual recitals of music at the Liverpool Medical Institution, of which he became President in 1989. These concerts ran successfully for 20 years. Music was Peter's continuous joy, and he was never happier than when playing Schubert piano duets, or the double bass in the Crosby Symphony Orchestra, or performing spirituals in a local medical glee group, or singing bass in the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Chorus, of which he was a loyal member for nearly 3 decades. It is rare for an amateur

musician to combine not only a good keyboard technique and excellent sight-reading, with a fine ear for phrasing and articulation. He was a joy to perform with.

When Veronica married him, she brought a relatively vast family with her into Peter's rather solitary life including 34 nephews and nieces and eventually 68 great-nephews and -nieces. Peter warmed to fatherhood; his four children, and the resultant grandchildren were his joy.

He is greatly missed for his diverse skills, his humanity, for the constancy of his religious conviction and its dominant place in his daily life. But perhaps more than anything else, we miss him for his consideration for everyone and his deep affection for his family and friends.

Robert Sells