

# Obituary

## Dr Trevor Stacey Matthews 1934-2010

Trevor was born on 8 April 1934. He decided that he wanted to be doctor at the age of 6, and later went to Epsom College (aka the doctor factory) where he was a Leverhulme scholar. He was entirely happy there, playing all sports obsessively and usually well, indeed he never lost a competitive sprint race at school. It was during these formative years that he met his lifelong friend Anthony Adamson. Together they studied medicine at Cambridge, later sharing a flat and a car in London, and ultimately both becoming consultants in Lancaster.

Trevor passed seamlessly to Caius, Cambridge, having turned down a place at Worcester College, Oxford, which had been offered without an interview. Then on to St Bartholomew's Hospital for clinical teaching and more fun before qualifying. He had decided quite early in his training that paediatrics was to be his speciality and consequently did well-connected jobs at Hammersmith, at St Bartholomew's and at Great Ormond Street as an SHO. He sat the examination for membership of the Royal College of Physicians earlier than usual and passed at the first attempt, a feat enjoyed by few in those days. Equally unusual and possibly unique, was his elevation straight to senior registrar grade, at Great Ormond Street.

He was told by his professor, 'You've made it now provided you don't do anything foolish – like getting married.' Soon afterwards, and disregarding this advice, he married Vivienne, who he had met during his first job at St Bart's where she was a staff nurse on the Children's Ward. The marriage was fruitful, they had five children, who were and are, collectively and individually, their pride and joy. They cut one birth a bit fine on the way to hospital in an ambulance. Later, when attempting to register the birth, Trevor realised that he had no idea where the ambulance had stopped at the time of delivery and therefore did not know in which of possibly three administrative districts the birth had taken place. He solved the problem by a toss of a coin!

The appointment at Great Ormond Street was for five years, which included two hugely influential years on secondment as head of the paediatric department at Makerere Hospital, in the University of Uganda, where he developed his interest in tropical paediatrics.

Returning to Britain, he was appointed consultant paediatrician to the Lancaster and Kendal group of hospitals. He provided cover for five hospitals plus occasional duty in Barrow to cover holiday leave. He was able to live within a reasonable distance of the School of Tropical Medicine in Liverpool.

Trevor threw himself into the reorganisation and modernisation of paediatric services in Lancaster, describing it as fun. At first single handed, and following the maxim of Great Ormond Street 'Child first and always'. He soon got approval for new appointments including an additional consultant post, and with this it became possible to offer a comprehensive service in the district.

Later, he became chairman of the Medical Executive Committee and with the planning of future paediatric services continuing apace the burden of work became ever greater. A visit to Oxford to lecture had to be curtailed when Trevor suffered a myocardial infarction and it was realised that he was physically and mentally exhausted. This setback caused him to seek early retirement, this ending his clinical career.

Trevor interspersed his domestic commitments with trips abroad, mainly to the Middle East to study, lecture, examine and teach. On one occasion, he was trapped for a year in Iran during the revolution. Eventually, he was airlifted to safety by the RAF, although the take off was delayed while some poor individual was executed by revolutionaries on the tarmac. He was asked by HMG to advise on the organisation of medical services to the Turks and Caicos Islands – 'a tough assignment'. 'In many ways these were the fun bits', Trevor writes, 'Always an adventure and often a war or other emergency.' Trevor was co-editor of 'Tropical paediatrics', which is a standard British textbook.

Retirement gave him time to enjoy his family, his dogs, perpetual renovation of large houses, and his love of gardens, abbeys and cathedrals and the creative arts. Above all he was in love with language, and perhaps most satisfaction came in the last decade through poetry. A particular pleasure came in 2009 with the publication of 'West Coast, North Hill', a collection of the work of three poets, including 30 of his poems.

Trevor Matthews was a profoundly happy man, quiet and self-sufficient, blessed with a wonderful family. I suspect that he would have excelled at anything he turned his hand to. We are fortunate that he chose medicine.

He died on 3 August 2010.

Gordon Hamilton