



## OBITUARY

### William Mortimer Haigh Shaw 1915–2002

Mortimer Shaw was the son of a General Medical Practitioner in the West Riding of Yorkshire. From early days he showed an interest in medicine, which was encouraged by his housemaster at Oundle.

From school he became a medical student in Leeds, graduating in 1938, when he received the William Hey Gold Medal—awarded to the best student of his year.

When Senior Houseman at the General Infirmary in Leeds, Mortimer was fortunate to become assistant to Leonard Braithwaite, who had been Lord Moynihan's first assistant. Thus, the example of gentle and meticulous surgery was absorbed and stayed with Mortimer throughout his career.

Shortly after the outbreak of World War II, Mortimer's senior tutor, Michael Oldfield, spent a year studying with and assisting Sir Harold Gillies at Rookdown House in Basingstoke, preparing to treat the facial wounds of war time. On joining the army, Mortimer also went to Rookdown and was invited by Michael to join the second maxillofacial surgical team as an assistant surgeon. The first team was already in Alexandria under the direction of Randall Champion. The second team arrived in the Middle East early in 1941. The next 4 years were spent in Jerusalem, Cairo and Tripoli, treating the casualties of desert warfare. Towards the end of the war, Mortimer took a small team to Sicily to treat the wounded on that island.

On demobilisation, Mortimer returned to Rookdown House, and spent his days assisting Sir Harold Gillies and the nights wrapped in an army blanket in an empty and freezing-cold ward, studying for the final part of his fellowship.

In the meantime, Michael Oldfield had returned to Leeds as a general surgeon at the General Infirmary, with an interest in plastic surgery for which some beds were allocated at St James's Hospital in what had been an EMS military ward under the command/care of Major Randall Champion. Michael asked Mortimer to join him there, and, with the advent of the NHS, Mortimer was appointed a Consultant Plastic Surgeon at St James's and was soon asked to form a Plastic Surgery Unit at Bradford, and an outpatient clinic at Hull.

Little was known about plastic surgery in 1948, but by dint of lectures to Yorkshire Medical Societies the specialty became acknowledged, and the list of patients grew.

Upon Michael Oldfield's untimely death in 1963, a complete long-term plan for the region became necess-

ary. Tom Barclay, who had already initiated a Burns Unit in Wakefield, took over in Bradford, shortly to be joined by David Crockett. A self-contained unit was formed in Hull, with Bob Heycock in charge, and Mortimer concentrated all his work in Leeds, where Deryk Eastwood joined him as a Consultant, having spent some years as a Senior Registrar in Leeds.

At St James's there was excellent cooperation with the orthopaedic, dental and ophthalmic surgeons, which ultimately led to the foundation of the Accident, Orthopaedic and Plastic Department, housed in the new Chancellor wing, with wards subdivided into small bays, a modern intensive-care ward and a highly developed medical illustration service. There was also a post-graduate suite with useful accommodation for meetings and seminars.

Many registrar posts were filled by overseas trainees; as most were hand picked by their own surgical teachers for further instruction abroad, the unit gained much by their presence, and a contribution was made to the evolution of plastic surgery in many parts of the world.

Mortimer was a Founder Member of the British Association of Plastic Surgeons, served as a Council Member for 5 years and became Vice President in 1962. He was an early member of the Second Hand Club—later to become the British Society for Surgery of the Hand.

Mortimer Shaw was a talented plastic surgeon, and his main interests were in cleft-lip-and-palate repair and hand surgery, with a special interest in Dupuytren's disease. Because of this, he developed close ties with Raoul Tubiana and Tord Skoog, and exchanges took place between Leeds and Uppsala.

He was an excellent teacher and would spend many hours assisting his juniors to ensure that they learnt the basic skills of planning, careful tissue handling and all aspects of repair.

He was always interested in the development of the specialty and encouraged his trainees to learn new techniques and skills. He recognised the part that microsurgery would play in plastic and reconstructive surgery and made it possible for the Senior Registrars to visit other units in this country and abroad, to learn the techniques required, and pushed for a service to be set up in Leeds. It was always his regret that he was too old to use these skills himself, but he was always able to give advice on basic principles to solve difficult soft-tissue problems.

Mortimer had many interests outside surgery; he loved fast and elegant cars, in which he delighted to tour Europe on family holidays. He was a talented pianist and an accomplished photographer. He loved the Yorkshire Dales, and understood their geology—in earlier years he had spent time pot holing and climbing in that area.

His 20 years of retirement in the Lake District were marred by many illnesses, borne with stoical fortitude. He died from non-Hodgkin's lymphoma on 9 June 2002, leaving Mary, his wife for 54 years, a son, daughter and grandchildren.