



SIR GEOFFREY HIRST BATEMAN (1906–1998)

Sir Geoffrey Bateman, surgeon, died on 17 September, aged 91. He was born on 24 October, 1906

The advent of antibiotics and dissecting microscopes transformed the practice of ear, nose and throat surgery. When Geoffrey Bateman started his specialist training in 1931, most surgery was carried out to deal with the consequences of infections of the head and neck. In the second half of his career, new microsurgical techniques for cancer treatment and to relieve deafness were the major skills practised by the ENT surgeon. Bateman played his part in this change, achieving brief international fame in 1959 when he restored a patient's sight by implanting radioactive seeds into her brain tumour – the first operation of its kind in the world. Furthermore, in the 1960s he visited Sweden and learnt a technique for removing the pituitary gland through the paranasal sinuses, and then introduced it into surgical practice in this country.

Geoffrey Hirst Bateman was born into a talented family. His father was a Rochdale GP, and his mother had read maths at Cambridge in the days before women were awarded degrees. His elder

brother, Donald, who was killed in the Second World War, was the author of a biography of the first Lord Moynihan, as well as being a doctor. His younger brother, Ralph, became President of the CBI and his sister, Helen, was an architect.

Geoffrey and his brothers were educated at Epsom College and University College, Oxford. During the General Strike he spent some time unloading luggage from cruise ships at Southampton. His clinical training was at King's College Hospital. He qualified BM Sch in 1929 and FRCS in 1933.

In 1931, he married Margaret Turner, also of Rochdale, and they set up home in Chelsea. He was appointed chief assistant to the ENT department of St Thomas' Hospital in 1934 and became a consultant in 1939. By this time, he was already in the RAF Volunteer Reserve, and at the outbreak of war he was called up.

He did not enjoy the war, feeling frustrated by his station medical duties and the interruption of his career. However, in later life he realized that the experience had been of benefit. He made friends from all over the country, he learnt about hospital

organization, and how to improvise when staff, equipment and medical supplies were scarce – all of which was to stand him in good stead in his later career.

He finished the war as a wing commander and returned to St Thomas'. Apart from professional journeys to Istanbul (1953), America (1961) and Australia (1964), to teach and learn, he spent the rest of his career establishing a department which was renowned for training surgeons from all over the world.

His colleagues' respect for his integrity led to his appointment to numerous committees. For 15 years from 1957 he was involved in the rebuilding of the hospital, and he performed the topping out ceremony for the new building in 1971 just before he retired. His career-long interest and involvement in the School of Nursing was recognized by the award of a Nightingale badge in the same year. At that time male Nightingales were rare.

He was active in the British Association of Otolaryngologists and the Visiting Association of Throat and Ear Surgeons and served both as president. Sir Geoffrey was president of the Section of Laryngology of the Royal Society of Medicine in 1965–66. He was editor of the *Journal of Laryngology and Otology* 1961–78, and represented his speciality on the council of the Royal College of

Surgeons 1961–66. For the last five years of his career he was adviser to both the Department of Health and the Army. He was knighted in 1972. While he was treasurer of the Royal Medical Benevolent Fund (1961–78), it was restored to a sound financial position. His last high office was the Mastership of the Fifth British Academic Conference in Otolaryngology held in Birmingham in 1979.

Sport was his main leisure interest. After being a good tennis player in the first half of his life, he converted the grass court at Grimsdyke, the family home in the Chilterns, into a croquet lawn where he saw off all competition with his knowledge of the rules and the local contours. When he and his wife moved to Sussex on his retirement, he turned to golf.

Salmon fishing was his other love. After being introduced to the Aberdeenshire Dee at Ballater by a patient in 1959, he spent one or two weeks there every May for 25 years. His careful records of those years – the weather, the state of the river, and the catch – form a gloomy record of the decline of that great river.

He is survived by his wife and by their daughter and three sons.

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