

John Pemberton

Epidemiologist and founder of academic public health medicine

Qualifying before the second world war, John Pemberton was greatly affected by the poverty and social conditions of that time. While at medical school in 1936 he and some fellow students set up a first aid station to help feed and tend the sore feet of the Jarrow marchers. Two hundred people had marched almost 300 miles from the town of Jarrow, in Tyne and Wear, to protest at parliament in London against the unemployment and extreme poverty that existed in northeast England during the great depression. Pemberton had



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written his first article, *Malnutrition in England*, in 1934, in which he showed that the benefits provided to unemployed people in England were not sufficient to sustain healthy families (*University College Hospital Magazine* 1934; Jul-Aug, reprinted in *Int J Epidemiol*, 2003;32:493-5).

Born in 1912 in Essex, he attended Christ's Hospital school in Horsham from 1922 to 1930, when he went up to study medicine at University College London and University College Hospital, qualifying in 1936. After house appointments at University College Hospital he was recruited by John Boyd Orr to spend two years, from 1937-1939, in charge of a mobile nutritional research team. It undertook a survey to set up a cohort of some 5000 British children. This showed the effects of poverty on nutrition and was acknowledged by Lord Woolton, the minister of food during the second world war, as the foundation for the successful nutritional policy during the war. The Boyd Orr cohort is still used today to investigate associations of childhood diet and health with adult chronic diseases.

Pemberton had now acquired the two essential ingredients for his influential career in public health medicine: an understanding of the importance of social determinants of health and knowledge of the rigorous epidemiological methods needed to underpin public health research.

Shipwrecked sailors

He held a series of medical appointments at Sheffield Royal Hospital and Sheffield University. In 1941 he was appointed as a medical tutor and first assistant and helped to start its student health service. He worked with Sir Hans Krebs on human experiments on vitamin deprivation for the

development of policy to help shipwrecked sailors. After the war he began to teach social medicine, and initiated some of the first research on air pollution and respiratory illness funded by the Medical Research Council. With Professor W Hobson he was awarded a £100 (€115; \$154) prize by the Ciba Foundation for original work in geriatrics. He was appointed senior lecturer and honorary consultant in the social aspects of medicine in 1946 and was promoted to reader in 1955.

His proudest achievement was being the cofounder of the International Corresponding Club, which became the International Epidemiological Association (IEA), the largest and most influential international epidemiological society. Pemberton had been awarded a Rockefeller travelling scholarship in 1954 to spend a year at the Harvard school of public health. On this sabbatical he met the US post-graduate Harold Willard, and together they founded the club. Its original aim was to improve research and teaching in epidemiology in other countries, which they considered an important tool in global health investigation. In addition to stimulating exchanges among established experts it promoted strengthening of capacity in developing countries.

Back in England Pemberton cofounded the Society for Social Medicine in 1956, which now has more than 1000 members in the United Kingdom and Ireland. In 1967 he also created the All-Ireland Society of Social Medicine, bringing both academics and those working in the service together for regular meetings. Together with contemporaries such as Archie Cochrane, Richard Doll, Tom McKeown, Jerry Morris, Donald Reid, and Alice Stewart, he was one of the founders of academic public health medicine.

Pemberton was the first to describe objectively the work of general practitioners. During his time in Sheffield he spent a few weeks every summer as a locum general practitioner in the Yorkshire dales. He worked with Will Pickles, the first president of the Royal College of General Practitioners, who advocated the importance of epidemiological methods in general practice. These summer weeks made a profound impression on Pemberton, and he later wrote a biography, *Will Pickles of Wensleydale*.

Flax fibre

In 1958 he was appointed to the chair of social and preventive medicine at Queen's University Belfast, where he stayed until his formal retirement in 1976. He continued to work on respiratory disease and was the first to show that flax (an important local product) caused byssinosis. As a result, the law was changed to include compensation for exposure to flax fibre. He also expanded his interests to include coronary heart disease, which led to the establishment in Belfast of a centre for internationally coordinated research.

During his career he served on several WHO committees and, in particular, in 1956 an expert committee on public health training of general practitioners. He was a temporary consultant on several visits to India, the Soviet Union, Sri Lanka, and Indonesia. One of Pemberton's great interests was in making epidemiology an important tool in global health, and through the IEA and WHO he promoted the strengthening of this capacity in developing countries.

After retiring from Queen's in 1977 he retired to Hathersage, near Sheffield, where he spent the next 30 years painting, reading, researching, writing, organising the training of public health doctors, and making regular contributions to public health seminars in the University of Sheffield. He had letters published in the *Guardian* and the *Independent* on matters close to his radical conscience, such as poverty and the Iraq war. Pemberton spent nearly 80 years working in public health medicine. His last letter, on scurvy, was published in the *BMJ* the day before he died (2010;340:c590, doi:10.1136/bmj.c590).

Pemberton's wife, Gwen, died in 1989, and he leaves three sons and his partner of the past 20 years, Dr Maureen Maybin.

Jon Nicholl, Walter Holland

John Pemberton, epidemiologist (b 1912; q 1936, University College London), died from pneumonia on 7 February 2010.

Cite this as: *BMJ* 2010;340:c2230

Patrick Beausang



Consultant physician in geriatric medicine Stirling Royal Infirmary (b 1966; q University College Cork 1991; BSc (Hons), MRCP(I)), died from acute leukaemia on 16 August 2009. Patrick Beausang ("Pat") won a health research board scholarship for his intercalated degree in physiology, which was awarded with first class honours. He started postgraduate training at Cork University Hospital, completing specialist registrar training in the west of Scotland before coming to Stirling in 2000. His interests included movement disorder and orthogeriatrics, and particularly the day hospital. Pat had great rapport with his patients as he was interested in them as people. His main focus was his family with interests in athletics (having run 10 km in around 30 minutes) and football. He leaves a wife, Cat, and two children.

Alan McKenzie

Sheila Johnstone

Cite this as: *BMJ* 2010;340:c2280

Fayez Nazeer Botros



Former general practitioner Stoke Newington and Harley Street, London (b 1930; q Ain Shams, Cairo, 1955), died from myocardial infarction on 22 February 2010. After being registrar to the surgeon Professor Halim Grace in Cairo, Fayez Botros came to England in 1960 and continued training in surgery and pathology in Reading.

In 1966 he went into general practice in Stoke Newington, later moving to the new health centre at Barton House, where he worked until his retirement in 1995. In the early 1970s he established a practice in Harley Street, where his patients included the Saudi and Qatari royal families, staff from the Egyptian Embassy, and the Coptic Church. An accomplished carpenter, he completed a table for his grandchildren in the week before his death. He leaves a wife, Mary; two children; and two grandchildren.

Michael Fitzpatrick

Cite this as: *BMJ* 2010;340:c2281

John Douglas

Former general practitioner Liverpool (b 1920; q Liverpool 1943), d 19 April 2009.

John Douglas ("Jack") was in the Royal Army Medical Corps for three years, including as regimental medical officer with the tank regiment. He became registrar in obstetrics and gynaecology in Liverpool and entered general practice in 1954, retiring in 1985. Active in domiciliary midwifery, he was community medical officer and later clinical assistant at Providence Hospital, St Helens. In 1987 he published his findings of more than 30 ovarian tumours, three malignant, in symptom-free women coming to see him for routine smear testing. He was also medical officer to the English National Pilgrimage to Lourdes for 29 years, and vice president of the Liverpool branch of the Eighth Army Veterans Association. He leaves three children and six grandsons.

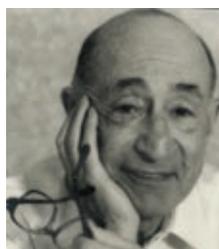
Pauline Douglas-Ohren

Cite this as: *BMJ* 2010;340:c2256

Harry Alexander Isenberg

Former general practitioner Tottenham, London (b 1916; q St Bartholomew's Hospital, London, 1942; DCH), d 2 February 2010.

Harry Alexander Isenberg left school at 14 and was apprenticed to a cloth merchant. He became inspired to become a doctor, and, unbeknown to his family, left his job and took a correspondence course



and matriculated by studying in Hackney library. After six months as a house officer at Whittington Hospital, he joined the Royal Army Medical Corps and spent three years in India. A great enthusiast for the NHS, he practised in Tottenham for 40 years, singlehandedly for 30, and he saw his last patient when in his 80s. He also taught himself calculus, languages, and oil painting, at which he became skilled. He leaves a wife, Sheila; two children; and four grandchildren.

Lesley Isenberg

David Isenberg

Cite this as: *BMJ* 2010;340:c2283

Thomas Swan Matheson



Former consultant general surgeon York (b 1920; q Edinburgh 1943; FRCS), d 6 November 2009. Qualifying during the second world war, Thomas Swan Matheson ("Tom") served in the battleship HMS *Warspite* as surgeon lieutenant. On demobilisation, he held house posts in Leicester, Edinburgh, and Hull. After work as a surgical registrar at Leeds General Infirmary, he became the first consultant surgeon at Otley General Hospital in 1959, rapidly building up the surgical practice before moving in 1964 to York, where he remained until 1985. He helped to establish the York branch of the Ileostomy Association in 1968 and supported it into retirement. In retirement he also with his wife, Nan, helped to create and sustain St Leonard's Hospice in

York. Predeceased by Nan in 2006, he leaves two children and four granddaughters.

Jane Matheson

Ian Matheson

Cite this as: *BMJ* 2010;340:c2279

Anna Stephenie Wilson (née Kilner)



General practitioner Sutton Scotney, near Winchester (b 1947; q London 1971; FRCGP), d 26 January 2010.

Anna Stephenie Wilson (née Kilner) worked for two years each in Zambia and Kuala Lumpur. After working in south east London and Wolverhampton, she was a community child health physician in Winchester. In 1991 she re-entered general practice. Extremely active in the Wessex Faculty of the royal college, she was awarded the chairman's medal for her contribution. She also did much voluntary work, including campaigning for carers and caring for homeless people. She advised the Catholic Church on women's health issues, child protection, and appraisals for the clergy, and was appointed special minister delivering communion to sick and housebound people. She leaves a husband, Max; three children; and her mother.

Max Wilson

Frances Coyne

Peter Burrows

Cite this as: *BMJ* 2010;340:c2275

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