

OBITUARIES

Mary Nicol Finlay

Andrew Finlay, Elspeth Edwards

Former general practitioner and clinical medical officer in family planning Uxbridge (b 1920; q Edinburgh 1944), died from cardiac failure on 8 January 2013.

Mary Nicol Finlay (née Peggie; known as “Ray”) was born in Borrowstounness and educated in Bathgate, where she was dux of her year. She studied medicine after her wish to be a vet was vetoed by her father. As a house officer at Edinburgh’s Southern General Hospital, she encountered wounded German prisoners of war and always recalled their poignant singing of “Holy Night” at Christmas.

In 1946, during two years as a general practitioner in north Berwick, she was one of the first doctors to prescribe penicillin to the public. The “penicillin teapot”—a gift from a patient whose life had been saved by her prescribing of the drug on its first day of availability—remained a treasured possession. At the age of 86 she successfully published its story in the *BMJ*.¹

In 1947 she married Harry V L Finlay, a paediatrician at Hillingdon Hospital, and moved to Uxbridge. She became a part time clinical officer at the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson

Hospital. She later ran family planning clinics in Uxbridge, establishing an effective domiciliary service to reach isolated women in need.

After Harry’s first stroke, she became his full time carer for 18 years. She later supported her daughter, who had severe multiple sclerosis. She continued to live independently, greatly interested in her family, always in good humour, welcoming, and maintaining her sense of fun. She played Scott Joplin on the piano, mastered her iPad, and enjoyed testing medical students on her signs of mitral incompetence.

She died at home, surrounded by her family. She leaves two daughters (one a paediatric matron), one son (dermatologist), two grandchildren (a cardiologist and an emergency physician), and two great-grandsons.

1 Finlay MN. The penicillin teapot. *BMJ* 2006;333:33.

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