



## OBITUARIES

## Judith Mary Hockaday

Derek Hockaday



Judith Mary Hockaday (née Fitzsimons) was both of Irish stock and from a strongly medical family: her father was a consultant surgeon and her mother an industrial medical officer, while her maternal grandfather was a general practitioner in Cardiff. She did her preclinical training at Girton College, Cambridge, in 1947-50 and her clinical training at St Mary's Hospital in Paddington (1950-53), where she was a house physician, senior house officer, and medical registrar. She then did an HP job at the Brompton Hospital, with the intention of a career in chest diseases, having already gained her membership of the Royal College of Physicians two years after qualifying. So in searching for the subject of a doctoral thesis, and probably via the "old girl" network and owing to the prevalence of chest tuberculosis, she was appointed registrar to Honour Smith at the tuberculous meningitis unit in Oxford in December 1957, without fully realising that this was a disease in rapid decline. Her MD thesis, on the results of treatment of tuberculous meningitis, was accepted in 1960, and was the basis of two papers in *Tubercle*. That year she married a member of George Pickering's department at the Radcliffe Infirmary and therefore stayed in Oxford. Backed by all she'd learnt on the meningitis unit, was appointed registrar to Ritchie Russell and Charles Whitty in the department of neurology, where for almost two years, and under their guidance, she had the responsibility of caring for some 25-35 patients at Stoke Mandeville Hospital.

In 1962 she accompanied her husband for a year to the Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston, having delivered their first child shortly before. She obtained work with Robert Schwab, the director of electroencephalography services at the hospital and joined the paediatric neurology ward service as a postgraduate trainee to such effect that she issued reports on adult and paediatric EEGs. Along with Schwab she published an often quoted paper on the EEG changes in acute cerebral anoxia and their clinical significance. Her interest in paediatric neurology was deepened both by her introduction, through Honour Smith, to the widow of Bronson Carruthers, a Boston pioneer of the subject; and by consultation soon after return to England with Dr Sandifer at Great Ormond Street Hospital, where she saw how much could be gained by close and non-invasive clinical study.

From 1963 to 1974 she held various part time posts in the Oxford neurology department (as MRC graduate assistant, locum senior registrar, and locum consultant), as she felt full time work would take her too far from her three children; there were further births in 1964 and 1966. As the children got older she applied unsuccessfully for a full time senior registrar post. She was asked at the interview if she'd made adequate arrangements for the care of the children, and always regretted not having replied, "Yes, have you?" Seeing the way ahead blocked (and at one time reduced to invaluable work in the Oxford prospective study from diagnosis of diabetic patients), she became a part time assistant to Brian Bower in his paediatric neurology service. Her Boston work was of real help with the many epileptic children, and she increased her paediatric experience by study at both Guy's Hospital and the Hospital for Sick Children, Great Ormond Street, where she became an honorary senior registrar in 1977. She transferred her experience under Charles Whitty of adult migraine sufferers to children, especially under John Wilson. Further, she learnt how to do muscle biopsies to study children with dystrophy.

In 1977 she was accredited in both neurology and paediatric neurology by the Joint Committee on Higher Medical Training. Appointments in Oxford followed: in 1977 she became honorary senior registrar, in 1980 senior registrar, and in 1981 consultant paediatric neurologist a year later. She was the first Oxford consultant so titled, and did much to build up a department, delighted to have obtained agreement to a second post before her retirement in 1992; and now there are five such posts. In 1984 she was elected a fellow of the Royal College of Physicians.

Her work in migraine and headache resulted in many publications, and presentations in mainland Europe and Australia, while her 1988 book *Migraine in Childhood* has been described as a "comprehensive, clear, and authoritative source much valued by both paediatricians and paediatric neurologists." She saw the need for Oxford based regional services for parts of the Thames Valley, Wiltshire, and Northamptonshire. Increasingly involved with the problems of language disorder, she worked collaboratively with the university's psychology department on this; she was later elected president of the Oxfordshire branch of the National Council for Special Education. She strengthened the epilepsy service by joint clinics with John Oxbury, consultant neurologist in the adult service, and for highly selected patients this opened a door to cerebral surgery, often by Christopher Adams. And she valued the insights of an ethologist in assessing patients.

Judith, with Professor Peter Tizard, organised in Oxford the 1983 annual meeting of the British Paediatric Neurology Association, of which she had been an early member. She was

also a member of both the Association of British Neurologists and of the International Headache Society, and served as chair of the latter's subcommittee on headache in childhood, having also been on their headache classification subcommittee.

She greatly valued her role as a mentor to clinical students and junior colleagues: one wrote "Judith was a wonderfully effective role model, showing by example how to be a leading consultant, a medical trainer, a mother, and a wife."

This remarkable woman resembled many of her female colleagues in that she was not thought worthy of a merit award, and the pension she'd earned for her surviving spouse was calculated from her earnings during only her last four years of work, as though she'd started work in 1988 and not more than 30 years earlier, on the grounds that such pensions were never granted on behalf of female medical practitioners until 1988. She achieved all she did for paediatric neurology in Oxford while completely fulfilling her enjoyably devoted duties as a wife and mother.

In retirement, with her flair for design, she greatly enjoyed restoring an old house and its garden, making that a tranquil haven for her family, which by then included six grandchildren. She trained in Oxford to be an accomplished botanical artist, and the pursuit of her interest in pictorial art, especially of the 20th century, was one driving force behind her many travels in Europe and the United States with her husband, although it was garden history that took them to China, and 19th century photographs to Western Samoa.

## Biography

Consultant paediatric neurologist (b 1929; q St Mary's Hospital, London, 1953; MD Cantab, FRCP), died from peritoneal carcinoma on 24 May 2019

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