

Colin Cooke



Colin Cooke died peacefully in his sleep on 28th February 2001. Born on August 9th 1906, he qualified at Manchester in June 1927 when he was awarded the Preston Prize but had to wait until he was 21 years old before he could be admitted to the Dentists Register!

He worked in private practice and was on the part time staff of the dental school as clinical lecturer in the conservation department. Soon after the war began, he started to teach full time, continuing with his practice in the evenings to help alleviate the shortage of civilian dentists.

It has been my privilege and pleasure to have known Colin for over 60 years. We first met when I was a dental student in 1940 and he taught in the Conservation Department; his help and guidance continued when I was a house surgeon and until I joined the army. After the war he gave up his practice and devoted himself to teaching. I went back to the dental school and our close association continued; he was my mentor, colleague and friend, until he retired and we collaborated closely in our

work together.

Colin was primarily a clinician, a true hands on dentist, he was respected for his expertise and knowledge by colleagues and students alike and was appointed consultant soon after the inception of the NHS. He assisted Professor Wilkinson in the oral surgery department for some months when the post of clinical assistant became vacant. In 1948, the Royal College of Surgeons of England awarded him an FDS, for which he was already studying intending to sit the examination. Some considerable time later he told me that, far from being pleased at the time, he would have preferred to sit the examination and had seriously considered declining. He was advised that it would be impolitic to do this and so in the end accepted the honour.

During his career he wrote several papers; his main interest lay in treating injuries to anterior teeth. He classified the types of injuries sustained, rationalised their treatment and laid down the principles of treatment, which largely pertain to this day. He was also interested in root

canal therapy and was responsible for a biological approach to the treatment of non vital teeth with open apices, a problem which had previously eluded the profession. Another important piece of work lay in initiating research into the the radiological and histological correlation of periapical lesions. Colin had a very open and enquiring mind as well as being blessed with common sense and was always eager to try out new ideas and techniques. When he retired in 1972 his enthusiasm persisted and he worked as an associate with Dr and Mrs Torr for a few years.

In 1951, a Romano British Cemetary was discovered at Trentholme Drive in York. The skeletal remains of some 350 individuals dating from about 150 AD were sent to Manchester University for examination. Colin and I spent many evenings examining the skulls and teeth in the basement of the old medical school and then later in our own homes, once a week, often until one o'clock in the morning, writing out the findings and doing the various associated craniometric calculations. No pocket calculators then, just old fashioned log tables and arithmetic! The report formed part of a publicaton by the Ministry of Public Works and Buildings in 1968. More than ten years after his retirement, another paper appeared under his name; one facet of the work on open apices had always been an enigma but finally, after re-examining all our data, the significance of the 'biological clock' and its role in determining the type of treatment and prognosis for each case was explained.

An enthusiastic and active member of the BDA, he was President of the East Lancashire and Cheshire Branch and rarely missed a meeting. In 1972 he was made President of the Association. He was also a member of the odontological section of the Manchester Medical Society and of the Dental Circle. The latter is a small group of eminent dentists who meet regularly. Colin was an avid and proficient golfer, which his many friends can affirm; and he was a keen walker and gardener. Colin married Lilian in 1945, theirs was a loving and companionable marriage; they had no children. Lilian died almost three years ago.

Even when his physical condition deteriorated, his mind remained as sharp as ever, he was always interested in the latest medical, dental and scientific discoveries and was always well informed. He will be sadly missed.

C. R.