

## ROBERT BEAZER 1939 - 1996

**R**OBERT BEAZER died suddenly in his sleep on 6 December 1996. Born in 1939 he was educated at King Edward VI Grammar School in Bath. From Trinity College, Dublin where he achieved a Double First in Philosophy he moved to New College, Oxford, and under the great philosopher, Gilbert Ryle, he studied further. Deciding that the spires and quadrangles of Oxford were not to be his final resting place he declined a fellowship and instead chose to start again and to study for Medicine.

Having achieved the necessary Science A Levels he returned to New College where he read Medicine as a post graduate student, spending the second three years at St. Thomas's Hospital in London, qualifying in 1968.

Initially his main interests lay in paediatrics but after a year in "green pyjamas" in neonatology he realised that this was too narrow and claustrophobic a field for his eclectic tastes and interests. Typically, when general practice drew him, he sought the most distant corner of the British Isles, the Outer Hebrides for his year of training. With his wife, Lesley, and a growing family of four children, though, a life of isolation was inappropriate and in 1977 he returned south, resting briefly in East Anglia before settling in Swinbrook where he lived for 15 years. Here he joined me in partnership in the Wychwood practice, and here he stayed, very happily, until his retirement in October 1995.

Robert was a man of immense intellect. Knowledge of every kind was absorbed like a sponge and he was able to converse on almost any subject, displaying a depth of understanding in fields way beyond his natural leanings. He particularly enjoyed the colour of individuals, though, and in general practice he found an ideal existence where he could be deeply interested in his patients, not just for their illnesses and the medical challenge that they presented but also for their lives, their histories and their personalities. He adored spending time with the older local folk who regaled him with stories of the area from the early part of the century.

After establishing himself in the Wychwoods he spread his wings and regularly lectured to undergraduate and postgraduate doctors and nurses in the Oxford region about medical ethics, where his immense wisdom, coupled with a profound common sense approach, was much appreciated by all who listened.

In 1985, together with a group of like-minded doctors, he founded the Medical Equestrian Association to further the safety of all riders, both in a preventative capacity and in the improved management of all horse related injuries. In 1989 the importance of the Medical Equestrian Association was officially recognised when HRH The Princess Royal graciously accepted the office of President. For the formative years of the Association Robert acted as the Honorary Secretary.

The success of this organisation is reflected in a recently published paper which demonstrates a five fold decrease in the hospital admission for head injuries of equestrian riders in the Oxford region. He was rightfully very proud of his part in the MEA inception.

In 1991 he and Lesley bought an isolated and derelict farm in the wilderness of Shropshire, she to shepherd and he to write in his retirement.

For three years at weekends and holidays he toiled to restore the farmhouse and buildings to their original state. Using his hands as his stonemason forebears had done, he derived immense satisfaction from this activity and the results did him great justice.

Robert's interests outside medicine are mirrored in the quantity and variety as published in his official curriculum vitae; books, music, walking, architecture, landscape, livestock, water colours and dry stone walling.

In the practice leaflet he once included his foremost interest as "watching the sky".

Robert was a unique individual for whom adjectives could never adequately describe his qualities. We who knew him, either distantly or closely, as patient or as friend, all have our memories of him and will deeply miss him.

A memorial service will be held for him in late February or early March.

Sandy Scott

