

Obituary

Dr Leslie Thomas Scott, FFARCS

Died 15 May 2009

Consultant Anaesthetist, Lancaster and Kendal, 1960-1981

Leslie Scott, who established the Lancaster Department of Anaesthesia and also started one of the earliest pre-operative assessment clinics in the country, has died from coronary artery disease, aged 92.

Leslie was born in 1916, in Liverpool, where his father was a naval architect. This occupation meant the family moved frequently, to Spain, London and then to Morecambe, and these moves may have influenced Leslie's subsequent itinerant lifestyle. His final school was Ulverston Grammar, from where he obtained an open scholarship to Magdalen College, Oxford, where his tutor was Dr Hugh Sinclair. His clinical was at University College Hospital, graduating in 1941, followed by house jobs at Bath and Tunbridge Wells. These posts had given him an introduction to anaesthesia which he continued on a part-time basis as a general practitioner in Tonbridge, working at Tonbridge hospital and obtaining the DA in 1946.

By 1950, he had become disillusioned with general practice and to his considerable surprise was appointed as Professor of Anaesthesia at Damascus University, a three-year post sponsored by the British government. The purpose was to introduce modern anaesthesia to Syria, a task for which he felt singularly unprepared but which he managed successfully, doing most of his teaching in French. Political expediency meant leaving Syria abruptly in 1953.

The need for another job was urgent as, following his marriage to Betty in 1939, he now had a family of three boys. Unqualified for a consultant position in the UK he took a post in the Colonial Medical Service in Malaya, with the remit to develop modern anaesthetic practice in the Federation. Whilst in Malaya he set up a respiratory unit in Penang for the treatment of tetanus by cuarisation and ventilation. This work was published, along with several other papers from his time in Malaya.

In 1959, the family returned to the UK, and Leslie obtained a consultant post at Dumbarton for a year, which brought him

back into current anaesthetic practice. In 1960, he was appointed consultant to the Lancaster and Kendal hospitals, which enabled him to return to his roots but which was to prove a more challenging job than Syria or Malaya.



At that time, the anaesthetic staffing in Lancaster was made up of two consultants, two SHMOs, five GP clinical assistants and one SHO. They had to cover seven operating theatres in six hospitals. The anaesthetists were not organised into any formal structure and were held in poor regard by other hospital consultants. Leslie felt both the standards and staffing could be improved and trying to do this brought him into conflict with one of his colleagues. This led to the Manchester Regional Board intervening and it was resolved by Leslie being appointed as Consultant in Administrative Charge in 1966. This gave him the formal authority and responsibility for the anaesthetic service. He held this position for 15 years until he retired in

1981. In this time, he established a department of anaesthesia, with regular meetings, consultants allocated to departmental responsibilities, considered forward planning, increased the number of staff, both consultants and trainees, and established a teaching programme. He also found space in the attics above theatres for a department, providing space for offices with a secretary, a library and seminar room. The result being that the Lancaster department was seen as one of the best in the North West. Another of his innovations was to start a pre-anaesthetic assessment clinic. This was well before its time in most of the country and offered a real service to patients.

He also contributed to hospital and regional committees, and was proud of the fact that as Secretary of the Lancaster Medical Book Club he had raised the quality of the wines served at their dinners!

Leslie was very well read and an excellent conversationalist. His life was touched by tragedy when his eldest son was killed in an aircraft accident. His wife predeceased him in 1993. He leaves two sons, six grandchildren and seven great grandchildren.

Miles Rucklidge