

KENNETH HOLT (d. 2015)



Kenneth was born in Barrowford, Lancashire into a cotton manufacturing and farming family, the youngest of three siblings. His aspiration to be a doctor began at the age of six when he knocked himself out falling from the hayloft on his grandfather's farm. Nelson Grammar School started him on that path and he was fast-tracked at 17 into the second year of Medical School in Manchester.

Here as stage manager for a student production of 'The House Master' he met his future wife, Winifred, playing the part of Chris, and whom he ever after called by that name. Their budding romance was put on hold when

Kenneth won a Rockefeller Scholarship to study in the USA, travelling across the Atlantic in a wartime convoy. He graduated MD with highest honours from Rochester University, New York and began his career with a six months internship at the Peter Bent Brigham Hospital in Boston.

He returned home in 1946 on the Queen Elizabeth's maiden voyage after her life as a troop-ship and then qualified, for a second time, as a doctor in Manchester in 1947, marrying his university sweetheart in 1948. Following membership of the Royal College of Physicians, he did his National Service at the age of 25, and was appointed as junior medical specialist at Military Hospital 9 in Hamburg where, amongst his patients, were some of the last defendants in the Nuremberg Trials. During this period he began his lifelong work as a paediatrician, possibly influenced by the loss of his triplet sons.

On returning to England Kenneth took up paediatric posts in Sheffield, London and Manchester before settling in Sheffield with a lecturing post in paediatrics. Family life flourished with the birth of three daughters, Caroline, Alison and Georgina. In 1958, Kenneth was offered a Research Fellowship at The Medical School and Children's Centre in Iowa, USA, and the family left the UK for a memorable year abroad. Back in Sheffield Kenneth took up the post of senior lecturer and consultant at the Children's Hospital and with 11 others he started the Paediatric Research Society of the United Kingdom. He also set up the Ryegate Centre in Sheffield, a highly innovative and ground-breaking, inter-disciplinary service for children with multiple disabilities whose approach has become the norm for medicine in general, and globally for the assessment of child disability. In 1965 this innovation led to him being asked to establish the Wolfson Centre at Great Ormond Street, the first such national centre.

Kenneth's working life involved much travelling, with Winifred accompanying him whenever possible. He lectured, advised and inspired on many continents, twice as a visiting professor in Australia. He was influential in many charities, meeting and appreciating the interest of several members of the Royal Family, particularly Princess Margaret. In 1976, Kenneth was awarded a personal Chair of Developmental Paediatrics.

He wrote and edited several books, one of which was translated into Japanese, many journal articles and was influential in setting up Child, Care, Health and Development. In 1989, Kenneth retired from the Wolfson Centre, but continued working until 75 as an expert witness, being involved in well over 300 cases, including the Beverley Allitt case.

While Kenneth's work was vastly important to him, he and Winifred cruised the British waterways on the 'Entre Nous' which provided a base for many family get-togethers, while cruising the world in more luxurious vessels, until 2013

when Kenneth was 88. He also found time to become a formidable bridge player, create lovely gardens, involve himself in the local church, and in his younger days, thoroughly enjoy a good walk. In 1994 Kenneth and Winifred moved to Oxfordshire, first to Clifton and then Deddington. Despite his steadily deteriorating mobility, which started in his early sixties, he was able, alongside Winifred, to take a full part in village and family life. Kenneth delighted in the company of his nine grandchildren and six great-grandchildren and was always interested in what they were doing, talking with them about their activities and achievements.

He and Winifred started a bridge club, helped with the DN and were active members of Deddington Church. Kenneth helped establish the day care centre and gain charitable status. He enjoyed membership of Probus, an opportunity to make many new friends. In his last few years Kenneth coped stoically with pain and deteriorating mobility. He fought hard to maximise his opportunities, showing quiet enjoyment. During his final 18 months he was able to participate in several happy family occasions and showed great dignity to the last.

The Holt Family