

Ian Isherwood

Dr Edmund Hartford Burrows



Published online: 25 September 2002
© Springer-Verlag 2002

I. Isherwood
Woodend House, Strines Road,
Disley, Cheshire, SKG 7GY, UK
Tel.: +44-1663-764980
Fax: +44-1663-766498

Edmund Hartford Burrows was a consummate neuro-radiologist, the architect of the British Society of Neuroradiology, a teacher of renown and a prolific author of both radiological and historical books and papers. His urge and his ability to write led him along many paths. In 1969 he approached all the British consultant neuroradiologists to suggest the formation of a “Visiting Neuroradiological Club”. He received overwhelming support for the formation of a Society. A meeting was arranged by Dr James Bull on March 2 1970 which resulted in the formation of the British Society of Neuroradiology (BSNR). Dr Burrows was the first Secretary/Treasurer and in 1980 was elected its President. From 2002 the prize for the best scientific paper presented at the BSNR annual meeting will be known as the Burrows Prize.

Dr Burrows (known to all as “Ted”) was born at Swellendam in the Overberg region of South Africa on February 18 1927. His grandfather had married into one of the great Cape families, which included poets, politicians, writers and translators. His parents were farmers and at the time of his death Ted still owned the family farm. He qualified in medicine at the University of Cape Town in 1951 but whilst still a medical student had demonstrated evidence of his own writing and editing skills as University correspondent to the *Cape Times*, editor of the student newspaper and contributor to the *Cape Argus* of a series of historical articles. These formed the chapters of the first volume of a trilogy, completed after his retirement in 1994, concerned with

the Overberg region; indeed, he coined the term “Overberg”. Prior to medical school he had been educated at the local farm school, which he attended on horseback, and at the Rondebosch High School.

His first medical post was as an intern at the Grootte Schuur Hospital in Cape Town followed by a year as assistant Government pathologist. By 1952 he was assistant editor of the *South African Medical Journal*, a post he held for a year and which allowed him time to research and write a definitive book *A Medical History of South Africa*, before becoming a medical officer with the South African Pneumoconiosis Board in Johannesburg, with responsibilities for recruitment of miners in Europe.

With this background in medicine and journalism and several papers on medical and historical topics, Ted Burrows left South Africa in 1955 and entered the diagnostic radiological training scheme in Liverpool. He was first appointed as an unpaid trainee but managed to finance himself from a combination of savings and an ability to edit and translate from Dutch (his first language was Afrikaans) and German, in which he was also fluent, into English for *Excerpta Medica*. For over 20 years he served as a part-time radiology editor for the

Excerpta Medica Foundation's journals. He later edited many congress publications and books, at the same time translating numerous medical textbooks from German and Dutch.

He rapidly developed an interest in neuroradiology and made regular visits to Manchester where he and I were contemporaries, getting to grips with direct arterial punctures, the manipulative skills of pneumoencephalography, and intracranial anatomy. He had a wonderful sense of humour and always made the process of learning a rewarding and entertaining exercise. In 1959, having obtained the DMRD (Liverpool) and the DMRD (England), he was appointed an academic neuroradiological registrar in the University of London.

In 1960 he gained a visiting fellowship for a year in radiology at the University of Rochester in New York, followed by a further 18 months as a fellow in paediatric radiology at the Denver Children's Hospital where, surprisingly perhaps, he developed a particular interest in urethral lesions of infancy and childhood. This was the subject of both his thesis, presented in 1963, for the degree of Master of Radiology (MRad) in the University of Liverpool and his book *Urethral Lesions in Infancy and Childhood* published by Thomas in 1965. In 1962 he returned from the US to receive, thankfully, curative treatment of a malignancy and was appointed senior registrar in the Lysholm Radiological Department at the National Hospital for Nervous Diseases, Queen Square, London under the tutelage of James Bull.

In 1963 he married Anne. The marriage, blessed with two daughters, was to be the mainstay of his life thereafter. Ted arrived on the London scene with perfect timing. The new speciality of neuroradiology was in its infancy – there were only 24 neuroradiologists in the UK – and, as a consequence, many radiologists from overseas, notably the United States, flocked to Queen Square for further training. Secondments to Stockholm and Oslo, together with his junior teaching posts in the US, equipped him finally for what was to be his life's work in neuroradiology.

In 1964 Dr Burrows was appointed consultant neuroradiologist to a new neurosciences unit, the Wessex Neurological Centre, in Southampton, serving 2.5 million people in the south of England. He held this post for the next 27 years until his partial retirement in 1992. The Wessex Centre is now part of the University of Southampton and Burrows, though a self-confessed unwilling administrator was, nevertheless, one of the successful medical negotiators in the establishment of

the medical faculty in Southampton in the early 1970s. He subsequently served in many managerial and administrative roles but still retained a direct involvement in the clinical and teaching activities of the department. His fund raising activities on behalf of the Wessex CT and MRI units were outstanding and raised over £3 million.

Throughout his career in Southampton he maintained a steady flow of publications on both neuroradiological and historical topics. Many of these were sole-author papers – an indication of the focused nature of his many activities. He produced about 50 original papers on radiology of the nervous system but will, perhaps, be best remembered in this field by his several contributions on radionuclide brain scanning in the 1970s. He was nominated and elected a Fellow of the Royal College of Radiologists in 1971. In 1981, together with Norman Leeds, he produced a two-volume textbook *Neuroradiology*, which included some of the earliest CT scans to be reproduced in conjunction with the then conventional neuroradiological techniques. For 10 years he served as neurological editor of *Clinical Radiology* and as civilian radiology consultant to the Royal Navy.

Many of his historical publications, which continued in his retirement, were concerned with investigations into his family past. They provided unique insights into the cultural development of South Africa and the links with Europe. He had always regarded himself as a fully acclimatised Englishman from his entry into the country in 1955 but identified himself especially with the Hampshire family Burrows of which, in time, he became the titular head. His book, *A Hampshire Family*, written with warmth and a special empathy, is a remarkable account of a remarkably talented family. Ted himself became an authority on 18th and 19th century naval history and exploration and for the work in this field was elected a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society. His research for all his publications was meticulous. His book *Pioneers and Early Years – a History of British Radiology* remains an encyclopaedic reference work for anyone concerned with medical history. In retirement Dr Burrows was director of the Midhurst MRI unit. His final illness did not stop him writing nor did it interfere with his many diverse interests.

Edmund Hartford Burrows (1927–2002), neuroradiologist, historian and geographer, died on February 9 at the age of 75 years. He is survived by his wife Anne, two daughters, Emma and Charlotte, and a granddaughter, Molly.