Obituary

Matthias Hackenbroch (1894–1979)

Matthias Hackenbroch, an honorary member and President of SICOT from 1963 to 1966 died on 5th September 1979, a few weeks after his 85th birthday. He succumbed following an operation for gallstones.

Born in Cologne, he remained faithful to his home town throughout his life even when he went to the Orthopaedic Centres of Frankfurt and Munich. At the young age of 34 he became head of the Orthopaedic Hospital of the University of Cologne succeeding his former teacher, Cramer. For nearly 40

years he was the chief of this hospital which moved in 1956 into the most modern of orthopaedic hospital buildings. In addition to his clinical work he remained a highly esteemed teacher at the University. In 1935 and 1957 he was President of the DGOT and from 1963 to 1966 President of SICOT. He was also an honorary member of many orthopaedic societies.

Matthias Hackenbroch was born to a christian family and grew up in an open society where humanism and the "Christian Occident" was a living conception. With this went a love of music, especially Bach and he had particular interests in literature, history and philosophy. He married in 1936 and there were six children.

From his open-minded christian background his singular personality developed. His death has left a large gap which will not be easily filled. He was a great man, a doctor of medicine with true charisma, a doctor in the true and honest hypocratic tradition.

As a great scientist, he has given us new knowledge, discoveries, and inspiration to new developments. The facility to stand away and give objective opinion, a quality which has become rare in our time, allowed him to become actively involved in the development of our discipline. He was one of the first to recognize and develop orthopaedic surgery through the stage of anatomical pathology towards a functional and physiological science. Recognition of the importance of conservative orthopaedic surgery was the foundation for his pioneering work in new operative reconstructive surgery. During this stormy period of development, he proved to be a biologist and a doctor who was not confused by extreme mechanical thinking because he had developed a well balanced view of his discipline. His work was not "l'art pour l'art". It was for him a service for the disabled. In it he saw the union of a human person and the soul.

Particularly during the last few years his scientific presentations showed him to be an unusual and unique man, a philosophical doctor who demonstrated new and correct trends in our orthopaedic work. He was the doctor, teacher, and scientist whom we had chosen in 1963 to be our President of SICOT but apart from this honour, we owe him a singular debt for his life's work in the formation and development of our Society.

A. Rütt