

# Richard Turner–Warwick: a father of reconstructive urology

DOMINIC HODGSON

**Richard Turner–Warwick, or RTW as he is known, has had a significant influence on the advancement of urethral stricture surgery and of functional reconstructive urological surgery in the UK and worldwide. In this article, Dominic Hodgson, having met with and interviewed Richard, outlines some of the achievements of his long and very distinguished career.**

**R**TW's father was a deep-thinking consultant surgeon, and he (Richard) decided at an early age that he wanted to follow in his footsteps. He was accepted to read medicine at Oriel College, Oxford in 1942.

Oxford and Cambridge were but shadows of their former selves during the Second World War. There were fewer than 350 reserved occupation male scientist undergraduates a year at each to cover physics, chemistry and medicine (only 100 of them preclinical doctors); no others; and almost no postgraduates. The wartime preclinical course was foreshortened to two-years. However, based on the results of the initial examination, it was extended to a third year for just 10 candidates each year to enable them to take the Final Honours School degree.

RTW rowed, with great enthusiasm, in his spare time. During his third year, he became



*RTW was given the Innovators Award at the EAU in March 2017*

Captain of the Oriel College Boat Club, rowing in its First Eight.

At the end of his third year, RTW was invited by Professor Le Gros Clarke to take a fourth year to read a Research BSc degree in Neuroanatomy. During this time, he was elected President of the Oxford University Boat Club, with responsibility for the selection of the University Crew in which he rowed – winning the Oxford and Cambridge Boat Race in 1946.

It was at Oxford that he met Margaret, a contemporary medical student and scholar of Lady Margaret Hall – they were married at St Dunstan-in-the-West when they qualified in 1950.

During his clinical training at The Middlesex Hospital, RTW was most fortunate to have Rex Lawrie MS FRCS, MD FRCP as his clinical tutor. Rex was a very fine surgeon who had obtained his almost unique series of

degrees before joining up as a graded plastic surgeon in the Royal Army Medical Corps (RAMC). The acquisition of this series of degrees became an ambition of RTW, which he started by winning both the annual Senior Broderip Scholarship and the Lyell Medal in Surgery at The Middlesex, which led to his becoming House Surgeon to Sir Eric Riches. His Oxford DM thesis was on 'The Intravital Demonstration of the Lymphatics of the Breast'.

The return of the many relatively senior surgeons from the forces at the end of the war created an 'employment congestion', providing the time that enabled RTW to successfully apply for the advertised registrar–training appointments with a number of 'master-craftsmen' at The Middlesex. These included Sir Francis Avery-Jones in gastroenterological medicine, Rainsford Mowlem in plastic surgery, Sir Oswald Lloyd-Davies in colonic surgery, and Sir Thomas Holmes-Sellers in cardiothoracic surgery. He then became Senior Registrar to Sir Eric Riches in Urological Surgery and Vaughan Hudson in Thyroid Surgery.

## AT THE FOREFRONT

Although RTW was only a Senior Registrar, he was already at the forefront of developments in urethral stricture surgery at this time. Initially, he favoured scrotal drop back procedures, but there were issues relating to eczematous reaction of this skin when it was exposed to wetness, leading to his use of penile or foreskin on an extended pedicle.

*Dominic Hodgson, Consultant Urologist, Portsmouth Hospitals Trust*

In 1958, the award of the Leopold Hudson Travelling Fellowship enabled RTW to undertake a research appointment with Professor Perry Hudson at the Colombia Presbyterian Delafield Hospital in New York. However, shortly after his arrival, the Senior Resident became ill and RTW was asked to stand in for him until the end of June, which involved responsibility for the ward and all its routine surgery.

Perry was most grateful for this critical 'stand-in' and arranged for RTW to have 'some more experience of American urology'. This involved staying in the homes of some of his elite former Johns Hopkins' colleagues and operating with each of them for a week – an extraordinary privileged introduction – Hartwell Harrison at the Peter Brent Brigham Hospital, Wyland Leadbetter at the Massachusetts General Hospital Boston, Willard Goodwin at Los Angeles, and Frank Hinman in San Francisco.

All this travelling was made possible by the purchase of an ancient, bright red Ford V8 Convertible for \$200, the engine of which made distinctly unhealthy noises when driven at more than 60mph. Margaret came over on her own Travelling Fellowship, and they drove more than 7000 miles across America and back together, visiting each other's 'centres of specialist interest'. When they arrived back in New York, they sold the car for \$200 (its unhealthy engine noises were apparently no worse).

#### A CONSULTANT APPOINTMENT

Returning to London, RTW became Resident Surgical Officer at St Paul's Hospital and the Institute of Urology. His MCh thesis was on 'The Treatment of Female Urinary Incontinence'.

Subsequently, when Rupert Vaughan-Hudson retired in 1960, RTW achieved his ambition of becoming one of the six Consultant Surgeons at The Middlesex Hospital. He was then able to devote most of his attention to the development of his special interest in functional reconstruction of the urinary tract, which was dependent upon an

understanding of objective urodynamic measurement (hitherto the assessment of male urethral obstruction had been simply the 'visual guesstimation' of the force of the voided stream).

Alongside his consultant radiological colleague, Graham Whiteside, RTW established a daily outpatient 'Urodynamic Clinic' at The Middlesex – the first of its kind for the evaluation and treatment of both male and female urinary tract dysfunction. The urethrographic image intensification procedure they devised was superimposed on pressure and flow measurements (a forerunner of most contemporary video-urodynamic equipment). This was further developed by Christopher Chapple, when he was Research Director and subsequently Professor at Sheffield.

RTW had been initially appointed to The Middlesex as a general surgeon, so when his colleague Sir Eric Riches retired in 1963, he was able to re-establish his department as a purely urological unit, covering all aspects of the speciality. Euan Milroy was appointed as an additional urological colleague to cover uro-oncology, enabling RTW to specialise exclusively in functional reconstructive procedures.

*'The Functional Reconstruction of the Urinary Tract and Gynaeco-Urology'*, written by RTW and Christopher Chapple, provides a detailed account of the surgical procedures and the history of developments in the field. It was illustrated by some 1600 original drawings by RTW, and published by Blackwell's, Oxford in 2002. The book and its many self-directing chapters was a great step forward that spread much light when it was new. Unfortunately, it was discontinued and residual copies have become quite valuable, but it is available online at [www.rturnerwarwick.com](http://www.rturnerwarwick.com) – for free.

#### VISITING PROFESSORSHIPS

In the 1950s and 1960s, before the development of universal audio-visual electronic communication, the only way to communicate the development of

new surgical procedures was by personal demonstration in the operating theatres – hence the numerous 'Visiting Professorships'.

The special instruments that RTW designed and made himself in his workshop could all be accommodated in a 'Dopp bag' in the cabin luggage that he took to visiting professorships (he did more than 200 of these in the USA and Australasia).

Many of RTW's instruments have been adopted for routine use by others – advances in endoscopic equipment, together with the RTW diathermy instruments, have become routine laparoscopic surgery. The pedicled omental interposition grafts have decimated the incidence of complications after precarious reconstructions.

RTW then specialised in complex multi-compartmental female pelvic surgery (for which he had trained and qualified 'horizontally'); the perineal-anastomotic repair of bulbo-prostatic pelvic-fracture strictures; and the abdomino-perineal reconstruction of complex injuries. He was a peripatetic international surgeon based in London, but also on the consultant staff of King Edward VII Hospital as a reconstructive urologist.

The FRCS(Urol) examination was introduced when RTW was President of the British Association of Urological Surgeons (BAUS). Unusually, he served on the Council of both the Royal College of Surgeons and the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists. He was honoured with a CBE for services to surgery and awarded an Honorary DSc in New York. RTW received the special honour of the 'Innovators Award' from Professor Christopher Chapple at the European Association of Urology (EAU) meeting in London in March 2017.

After a busy life, in his own words, Richard and Dame Margaret are having an 'immensely happy and enjoyable retirement in their home in Devonshire', near Exeter, where he still potters in his workshop and they grow most of their own fruit and vegetables.