J. Crawford Adams (1913-2011)

John Crawford Adams was born in Derbyshire, the son of a General Practitioner, and was educated at Oakham School. He entered St Mary's Hospital Medical School in September 1931 and had a successful undergraduate career, winning three major prizes. He qualified in 1937 and held house jobs in Obstetrics and General Surgery. At the start of the Second World War he immediately enrolled in the Medical Branch of the Royal Air Force serving mostly in service hospitals. Here he came under the influence of Sir Henry Osmond-Clark and Sir Reginald Watson Jones, who had been instrumental in establishing a separate orthopaedic centre with associated rehabilitation facilities for that service. After the war he went to the London Hospital, where Sir Henry had joined Sir Reginald Watson Jones, and became a registrar in their department. He had a natural aptitude for the specialty and progressed rapidly. He was appointed Assistant Orthopaedic Surgeon at St Mary's in April 1948, at the Paddington Green Children's Hospital in July 1948 and Orthopaedic Surgeon to St Mary's in July 1949.

John had a very sharp mind. He was an excellent teacher, able to express himself with clarity. He wrote with ease and consequently produced the two most popular books for undergraduate students, 'Outline of orthopaedics', published in 1955, followed by 'Outline of fractures, including joint injuries' in 1957. These volumes have remained core reading for students and continue to be published, the former now in its 14th edition and the latter the 12th. After his retirement he recruited David Hamblen as co-editor and in the most recent editions Hamish Simpson. Apart from these standard texts, he produced the definitive guide on operative orthopaedics for young surgeons. Entitled 'Standard orthopaedic operations' it has again run to a number of editions. After his retirement John continued his literary interests, exploring Shakespeare to write 'Shakespeare's Physic, Lore and Love' and then drawing on his own experience to write 'Harley Street: A brief history with notes on nearby Regent's Park'.

However, his most important work as a wordsmith lay in his contribution to this journal. He began as a sub-editor in 1949, involved particularly in the layout and production before going to print, and was appointed Assistant Editor in 1950. It was soon realised that there was too much work for this to be undertaken satisfactorily as a spare time job, and so in 1951 John was asked to work for the Journal for two days per week on a paid basis, giving up hospital sessions to do so. He continued this role for many years, becoming Deputy Editor in 1961, but did not

wish to become Editor in 1972 when this post became vacant on the death of Sir Reginald Watson Jones. He continued to function as the Production Editor until 1977, when he decided to retire after many years of unassuming and meticulous service. He was then invited to join the Council of Management and remained on this body until the end of 1985.

John was an astute clinician and a skilled surgeon, precise in his operating and inventive in his approach to difficult problems. He made various appliances for facilitating intramedullary nailing and spinal osteotomy, much to the amusement and admiration of those who worked for him. He was a vocal advocate of the school of 'get it right first time' and drilled his trainees accordingly. Although a quiet and self-contained man, he was good company among those whom he looked upon as friends, and very supportive of his registrars. This trait resulted in the intense loyalty of those who had worked for him which continued throughout their professional life.

His meticulous approach to the art and craft of surgery was perhaps reflected in his hobby as a silversmith. He had his own hallmark and was asked by the British Orthopaedic Association to make a silver porringer, which was presented to Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother, on the occasion of the Combined Meeting of the Orthopaedic Associations of the English Speaking World held in London in 1956. He later gave a copy of this piece to the Journal, where it holds an honoured place among our archives.

John succeeded Sir Henry Osmond-Clarke as Civilian adviser in orthopaedic surgery to the RAF and continued in his role until 1984. He enjoyed this position and his advice was greatly valued. He was readily available for consultation in the United Kingdom and travelled to RAF hospitals overseas on many occasions.

John was truly an outstanding figure in Orthopaedics. His contributions were immense and longstanding. He had the respect and admiration of the several generations of orthopaedic surgeons who came under his influence and of the many who benefited from his teaching.

Frank Horan
Editor Emeritus

Journal of Bone and Joint Surgery [Br]