

A personal Tribute to a College Personality by Friends of Millbank

Colonel Thomas Bouchier-Hayes MBChB FRCGP L/RAMC

(1937 – 2002)

Emeritus Professor of General Practice



Thomas Bouchier-Hayes

Chairman's note

I first came across mention of Thomas (Tommy) Bouchier Hayes when I was on my Postgraduate Medical Officer (PGMO) course at Millbank in 1989, when transferring from the Territorial Army to the Regulars. I had developed an interest in Sir David Bruce, who many will know spent two years as an assistant general practitioner in Reigate before embarking upon an illustrious career in the Army. I was enjoying an evening looking for references to Bruce in past issues of the Journal of the Royal Army Medical Corps in the marvellous College Library, when I came across the Inaugural David Bruce

Lecture delivered on 12 January 1982 at Millbank by Dr John Fry, Honorary Consultant in General Practice to the Army.¹ John Fry paid rare tribute to Tommy Bouchier-Hayes:

Progress of general practice in the Army has been made by Ken Young and Tommy Bouchier-Hayes. This remarkable and complementary pair created one of the best vocational training programmes for general practitioners in the UK. They created the most popular over-subscribed MRCGP course in the UK. They created high morale among Army GPs and undoubtedly the quality of care in Army general practices has improved considerably. In their earlier days there was a third member of the team from the RAF - Alistair Moulds, no less remarkable with a flair for producing teaching programmes. His talents have developed further in civil practice with books on how to pass MRGCP and PLAB exams, written together with Ken Young and Tommy Bouchier-Hayes.

A tribute by Major General Peter Craig²

Tommy Bouchier-Hayes was as near to an anarchist as the British Army could ever possibly tolerate. He got away with it throughout a full career of great achievement by outstanding Irish charm and cunning and sheer outrageous mischievousness and wit. It was impossible to be unhappy in his presence and he was adored by his family, patients, students, and all those of his colleagues not involved in his confidential reporting chain.

This quite irreverent beginning to an obituary is intentional because Tommy combined a very high intellect with arrogant disregard for authority. Nevertheless, he had a total commitment to general practice in all its aspects. He influenced the Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP) and its training committees hugely and organised and hosted numerous pivotal meetings in the Royal Army Medical College at Millbank, while he was the professor of general practice. His textbooks on the MRCGP examinations, the Professional Linguistic Assessment Board (PLAB) test, and multiple choice questions (MCQs), and particularly the jointly authored *Emergencies in General Practice* [see review below] were received with gratitude by a whole generation of trainees, as were his training videos. Another tranche of young doctors will never forget his lectures, which were delivered with enthusiasm, wit, and, in many cases, controversy — no bad thing.

His father was an eminent and much loved surgeon in Dublin, who died at the tragically young age of 52 leaving 12 children of whom Tommy was the eldest son. Tommy joined the British army shortly afterwards and in a much abbreviated indoctrination course managed to enrage the then commandant at the Royal Army Medical College at Millbank to such an extent that he was informed, in no uncertain terms, that his plum posting to Nee Soon in Singapore was to be revoked. Exceptionally and typically, he stayed for a full five years there, twice the length of a standard tour, partly because his wife, Heather, was the only speech therapist in South East Asia, but also because he had charmed his garrison into submission.

¹ Fry, J. First David Bruce Lecture in the David Bruce Tradition – The evolution of General Practice in the British Army *J R Army Med Corps* 1982; 128: 152-159

² Obituary - Thomas Anthony Ivan Bouchier-Hayes. Craig, RP. *BMJ* 2003 Mar 15; 326(7389): 603. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1125497/bin/bmj_326_7389_603_c_index.html

His selection as professor of general practice at Millbank in 1988 was far-sighted and a huge success. By this stage he had acquired immense experience of the whole spectrum of organic pathology and psychiatry and was able to use his very considerable brain in teaching and writing.

Perhaps his most continuing achievement was to cultivate the officers of the RCGP and their inspecting bodies. In this regard, he was able to initiate within the army and latterly the defence medical services a series of new ideas and training techniques, which were later adopted by the civilian profession. His courses for the membership of the college were highly regarded by those in uniform and succeeded in attracting civilian recruits to both the regular and Territorial Army. He was president of the section of general practice of the Royal Society of Medicine and was later elected an honorary member of the section. His love of rugby combined with his enthusiasm for sports medicine made him the ideal medical adviser and supporter of the London Irish Rugby Club.

Heather, his loving and tolerant wife, remained a support throughout his rather erratic career. She and their children, Tom and Siobhan, miss him terribly, as do all his friends and admirers.

Informal recollections by Brigadier (retd) Mark Conroy

I have read with great interest Peter Craig's excellent obituary [above], which highlights many of Tommy's great strengths and doesn't shy away from some of his weaknesses. Despite having been at his funeral, and at the riotous and protracted 'wake' at their house in Brixton Water Lane afterwards, I had never seen it before, so it's a delight to have it now.

Although I was at school with Tommy, I was four years behind him, so didn't know him then. However, I do remember him being in the First XV (wing three-quarter) and as a stalwart of the school tennis team. He later became a competent squash player, but it was at tennis that he excelled – although, entirely characteristically, he never took it seriously.

He was one of twelve children, all of whom were very able and variously distinguished: one fenced for Ireland in the Olympics, one was a prominent Alpinist, one was for 24 years a Professor of Surgery, and one captained the Irish Ladies hockey team.

The Professor of Surgery's recent obituary notes that he was '...an innovator and ... a brilliant clinical teacher and trainer', and that 'He had a great intellect, a wicked sense of humour, but was a humble man who did not take himself too seriously'. It could equally have been describing Tommy.

In addition to his well-known books (most of which were the first to address their particular subjects, whether on how to pass the MRCGP exam, or on emergencies in general practice) he published a plethora of very accessible short medical articles (something like 220 in total, I think he once told me) in non-heavyweight medical journals such as 'Pulse'.

I think he was able to be so productive because his writing method for short articles was often, allegedly, a sort of 'stream-of-consciousness' style – he'd dictate the bones of the article and all the ideas into a Dictaphone, and send the tape to a professional medical editor to sort out the order of paragraphs, smooth the syntax, etc., and generally do the mundane job of beating it into shape, while Tommy moved on to his next idea.

Both Tommy and Ken Young were enormously important in convincing the doubters in the Royal College (and more importantly, the Joint Committee on Post-graduate Training, who administer the Act of Parliament governing Vocational Training) of the validity of Army GP training. Both, of course, had great personal charm, but both also worked tirelessly to ensure high standards in our training, and to persuade an often-reluctant RAMC hierarchy that GP training was vital for recruitment and retention, and deserving of appropriate resources.

The Pre-MRCGP course at Millbank, initiated and run by Tommy (and ably continued by John Richardson) was universally acknowledged as the pre-eminent preparation course for the College exam; it brought enormous reputational benefit to the RAMC, and was a significant recruiting tool.

Ken and Tommy persuaded the College that, whenever we had a group of candidates overseas, we could hold the written exam in theatre, and it was Tommy who was trusted to fly out with the question papers, invigilate the exam, and then bring the answer papers back to Princes Gate for marking (indeed, I sat my MRCGP papers in Cyprus under this system). Eventually, this privilege (which had run its time by then in any case, as we'd finally gotten through the backlog of overseas Army and RAF candidates for this new exam) was withdrawn following one such exam in BAOR, when Tommy, packing his suitcase in haste after a late night in the Mess, failed to tighten the cap on his shampoo bottle. The marking of the papers took, I was told, about twice as long as normal, and involved a significant amount of guesswork...

Although "the brightest and most knowledgeable SHO I've ever had" (so said Colonel Ernest Aldous-Ball) Tommy failed his Diploma of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists at the first attempt, because in the oral exam he fought with one of the examiners about haemoglobinopathies in Gurkhas, and refused to back down. It was reported that both of them ended on their feet, leaning forwards, fists on the table, and that the final exchange went like this:

Tommy: "I spent five years with the Gurkhas in Singapore, so I know what I'm talking about!"

Examiner: "And I spent fifteen years as Professor of Obstetrics in Hong Kong, so I know what I'm talking about!"

Peter Craig mentions Tommy's time in Singapore, and his disregard for rank and authority. On one occasion a rather unpopular outgoing CO of the hospital there was 'lunched out' and waved off to the airport. Great celebrations immediately began in the Mess. Unfortunately, the RAF plane 'went U/S', and two hours later the CO and family were returned to camp. To everyone's horror the anteroom doors opened and there stood the CO. There was a stunned silence until Captain Bouchier-Hayes strode forward, hand out, saying loudly, "Ah, Colonel, forgotten but not gone, I see!"

(He'd probably already had his CR [confidential report] by then, of course...).

It has been good to potter down memory lane, and to remember Tommy – one of the brightest and most original people I've ever met.

Memorabilia from Tommy's writings (courtesy of Mrs Heather Bouchier-Hayes)

Tommy loved teaching, and moreover firmly believed in making learning fun. He occasionally combined this with his knowledge of horse racing, as exemplified by the following items. Past students of Tommy may well wish to dig out their own favourite memorabilia.

The Consultation Risk Stakes

LENGTH: 6 minutes 10,000 per year

INSIDE:

RIDERS AND THEIR COLOURS

A detached guide to all entries and their jockeys colours

CORRESPONDENTS TIPS

Opinions from the punters

GOING

According to the government the official line is "You never had it so good"

STEWARDS

The race stewards will be announced on the day

1.
2.
3.

The essential unit of medical practice is

"a consultation and all else in practice of medicine derives from it."

Spence J, The Purpose of Medicine. London: Oxford University Press 1960

ENTER NOW

- * Select the most inappropriate entries from the 21 runners.
- * Compose your own unlikely entry.
- * Fill in the betting slip and hand it in to any race official.
- * A guide has been supplied detailing the date and author of the original title.



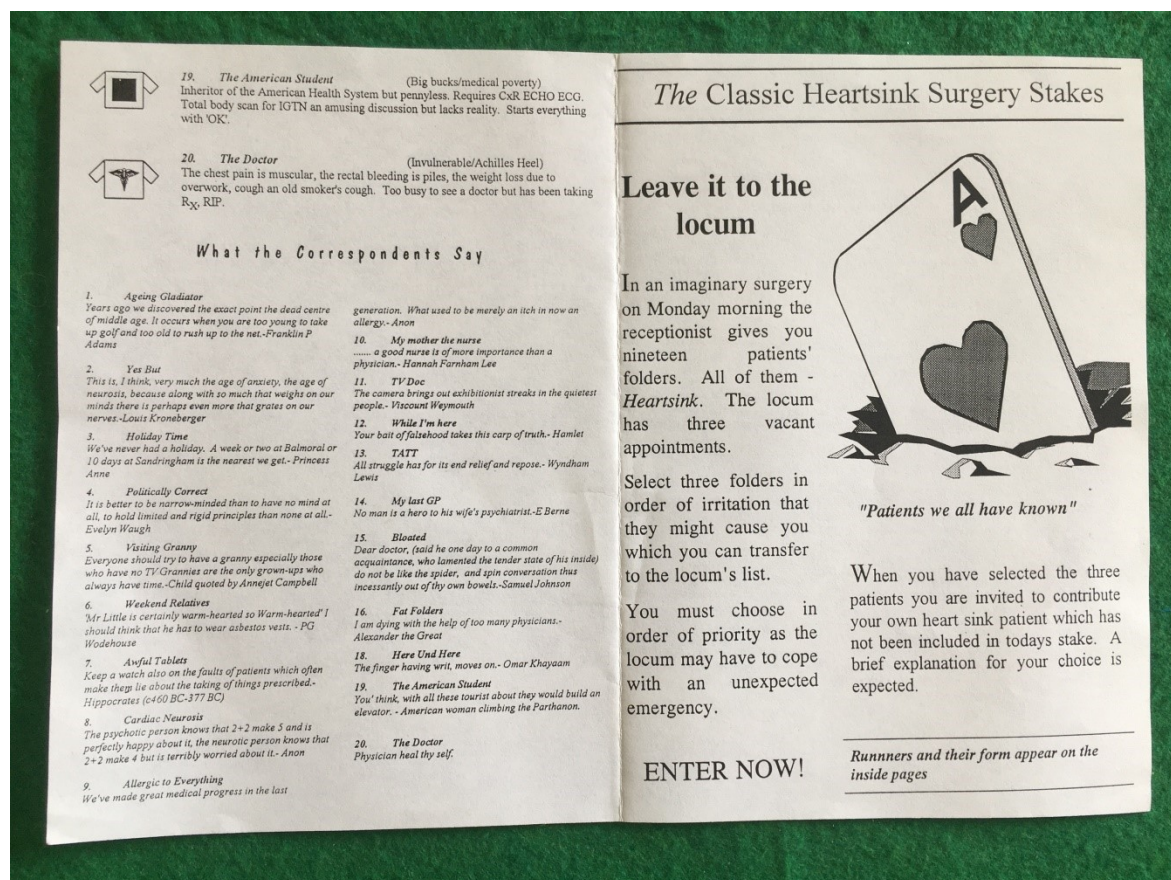
THE WHOLE THING IS A STUDY IN MISMANAGEMENT! GOD KNOWS HOW WE SURVIVED - OR DOES HE?

Listen, it's easy enough to criticise! **You** try being God for a while.

Without any training or practice. Yeah.

MORAL: Well done, on the whole, for a deity with no educational qualifications.

The essential unit of medical practice is ...



Leave it to the locum ...

A description of Tommy's book

Emergencies in General Practice

By A.J. Moulds, P.B. Martin, T.A.I. Bouchier-Hayes (4th edition, 2008)³

"This featherweight volume packs a heavyweight punch. It's a how-to guide to emergency general medical practice, which omits no important subject - the most practical book ever for general practitioners...the ideal book to keep by your side when on call." Update, 1997

Here is the fully revised fourth edition of this unique book that provides general practitioners with an easy-to-read, easy-to-use guide to the management of the vast majority of emergencies. The first contact a GP has with an emergency case is almost always a telephone call, and the advice given here by the doctor is of paramount importance in the subsequent management of the case. A unique feature of the book is that each topic begins with advice on how to handle the initial telephone call. Each presenting problem is then approached logically with concise notes on assessment, advice and management necessary when the patient is seen. The emphasis is on practical primary care, with discussion of differential diagnosis taken as far as is needed to decide the best immediate course of action. Tables are used liberally to summarise useful information. For each emergency, the ultimate advice and strategy is emphasised within heavy horizontal lines. Emergencies in General Practice is an indispensable book for the practising GP, whether in the practice, on call, or working for the co-op or deputising service. It is also a valuable teaching text for GP registrars.

About the Authors: Dr A. J. Moulds, MBChB, FRCGP, is a general practitioner and course organiser in Basildon, Essex, and is GP adviser to Pulse and The Practitioner. Dr P. B. Martin, MBBS, FRCGP, is a retired general practitioner in Basildon, Essex, and is still active in medical education and research. Col T.A.I. Bouchier-Hayes, MBChB, FRCGP, RAMC (Retd) was Professor of General Practice in the RAMC and now works as a civilian medical practitioner with the army.

Knott Memorial Prize

Major T A I Bouchier Hayes was awarded the annual Knott Memorial Prize (1978) by the Royal Army Medical Corps.⁴ This prize was instituted in 1976 from a fund given by Lady Knott in memory of Lieutenant General Sir Harold Knott KCB OBE QHP LLD, DGAMS 1961-1965. It is awarded annually to the general practitioner who has most distinguished himself or herself in that branch of medicine (all GPs of the Regular RAMC are eligible for this prize).

³ Emergencies in General Practice (4th edition, Nov 2008) Description on Amazon:
https://smile.amazon.co.uk/Emergencies-General-Practice-Fourth-Moulds/dp/1900603861/ref=smi_www_rco2_go_smi_8682124849?encoding=UTF8&%2AVersion%2A=1&%2Aentries%2A=0&ie=UTF8

⁴ Medical Miscellanea. J R Army Med Corps 1979; xx:41

Personal recollections of entering the strange world of Army life

Thank you for this tribute, it captures Tommy very well. I can only add that when we had our initial posting he rang me in Tipperary where I had a clinic. He said we are going to FARELF. I asked him where that was and he said he thought it sounded Welsh. When I came back up to Dublin we looked through a map but couldn't find it. Together we went to see Brigadier Thickness and asked him where FARELF was, saying it sounded Welsh to us.

He paused and then said he wasn't sure where Far East Land Forces was these days...

Then he looked it up.

"It is in Singapore"

We left sheepish and excited at soon to be living in a world of initials,

O.R., C.O., H.Q., B.M.H., R.S.M...

Heather Bouchier Hayes

Colonel Tommy Bouchier-Hayes – Gone, but not forgotten