MERTON BROOKES (1937-39)

Merton Brookes grew up during the Depression in a poor immigrant family and won a state scholarship to Manchester Grammar School. His wartime medical studies were accompanied by challenges at home owing to the internment of his Austrian-Jewish father, and additional responsibilities as a trainee officer, fire watcher, and air raid warden. As a senior medical student, Merton was given charge of Waffen SS prisoners of war at Blackpool Royal Infirmary.

After qualifying he was junior house officer at Stockport Infirmary (1945), senior house officer at Huddersfield Royal Infirmary (1946), and resident medical officer at the Liverpool Radium Institute (1946-47). His Dickinson Trust scholarship at medical school facilitated his return to Manchester as demonstrator and lecturer in anatomy in preparation for a surgical career, which included assisting Professor Charnley in his work on hip replacements.

Owing to his family’s financial needs, Merton became a GP in 1949. Rochdale was home to asbestos, cotton, and farm industries, and Merton treated a wide range of medical conditions in patients from across the socioeconomic spectrum.

He was the senior partner of Edenfield Road Surgery and served as police surgeon for Rochdale and environs for 25 years, as medical officer of Marland Geriatric Hospital, and as honorary team doctor for Rochdale Football Club for 20 years, before retiring in 1991.

He and his wife moved to Dallas, Texas, USA, in 2007 to live with their daughter. Merton enjoyed travelling, conversation, bridge, and reading historical non-fiction, The BMJ and the Financial Times. He was an avid soccer fan and horse racing enthusiast. Even in his less active final years, Merton’s mind remained sharp, and his medical opinion was widely sought. Merton leaves Barbara, his wife of 65 years; their only child, Lesley, and her husband; two married grandchildren; and his younger brother, Professor Murray Brookes.

Lesley Wiseman (daughter). Published by the BMJ Publishing Group Limited.