

Michael Watson

(1941 - 2024)

Obituary by W Angus Wallace,
Roger Emery and Angela Watson

Our profession and specialty has lost a great soul and leader. Michael was born in Newcastle but moved with his family to South Africa aged five. After several years in South Africa, the family returned to England and Michael went to Quarry Bank Grammar school in Liverpool.

Winning a scholarship, he went to Caius College Cambridge. Michael was an excellent runner, competing in the 400 metres for England. He competed in the university athletics team and was awarded a blue for athletics. Injury sadly stopped him from competing in the 400m at the 1960 Olympics.

His clinical studies were at the Westminster Hospital in London. After qualifying as a Doctor, Michael signed up onto a graduate recruitment scheme with the Royal Air Force for a five-year commission, as an Acting Pilot Officer (APO), and he visited many countries including Germany and Sweden. Michael passed his FRCS at RAF Hospital Wegberg in Germany, having already passed his MRCP a year earlier. However, he departed from the RAF upon completing his five-year term, as he was keen to resume his orthopaedic training in London, where he secured a position as an orthopaedic registrar.

In 1974, he was promoted to Lecturer under the newly appointed Professor Lipmann Kessel, whose clinical base was initially at Fulham Hospital before relocating to Charing Cross Hospital. It was here that Michael's academic career flourished. Between 1977 and 1996, seven highly referenced papers were published in leading medical journals, focussing on the trans-acromial approach to the shoulder and Acromio-Clavicular (AC) joint degeneration and rotator cuff tears.

Michael's collaboration with the United States saw that he became one of the first British Shoulder surgeons to be elected to the American Society of Shoulder Surgery as an Honorary Member.

After his appointment as a Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon at Guy's Hospital in 1977,

Michael published two excellent books – *Practical Shoulder Surgery* (1985) – a multi-author reference for inexperienced shoulder surgeons; and *Surgical Disorder of the Shoulder* (1990) for more experienced surgeons. Michael's artistic skills were highlighted in these books as the illustrations were personally drawn by him.

On 3rd November 1986, after the very successful third International Conference on Surgery of the Shoulder in Fukuoka, Japan, Michael wrote to three of his closest shoulder colleagues – suggesting it was time to form a *British Shoulder Surgery Association*.

As a consequence, four of the five founding members of BESS, Michael Watson, Ian Bayley, Steve Copeland and Angus Wallace met in Michael's Harley Street rooms in London on 28th March 1987 and discussed the setting up of a Society. BESS was born.



Michael's artistic skills resulted in him creating the first BESS logo – the humerus with a serpent winding around it – it was based on a combination of Asclepius, God of medicine, healing, rejuvenation and physicians with his serpent-entwined staff and a modification of Andry's tree.

Michael was elected the third President of BESS (1993-95), his appointment having been postponed by his activities with the European Society of Surgery of the Shoulder in the preceding years.

Michael was an excellent linguist, and this resulted in him developing friendships with shoulder surgeons across Europe. He formed a particular friendship with Didier Patte who wrote a chapter in his book on *Disorders of the Shoulder* before he died in 1990.

Michael was appointed as the second President of Société Européenne de Chirurgie de l'Épaule et du Coude (SECEC) in 1989. Michael had been instrumental in fostering European collaboration having secured a place for the UK within the European Society and through the friendships he formed worked hard to bring in membership to SECEC from Northern Europe and Scandinavia.

Michael met his wife,

Angela, at Guys Hospital, where she had trained and worked as a doctor. They married in 1986. At that stage he had had to stop doing paediatric and spinal surgery, which he enjoyed doing, as the demand for his shoulder expertise left no time to do anything else. Michael was very much a

family man, and he attended many of the international meetings with Angela and their three young sons.

Michael was diagnosed with multiple myeloma in 1997, taking early retirement in 1998 after total body irradiation and autologous stem cell graft.

Michael is survived by his wife and their three sons; Michael, Charles and George. Also, his daughter Karin and son David from his previous marriage and his brother David. ■

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