Robert Robins was educated at Gayhurst and Aldenham in Hertfordshire. He studied medicine at Queen’s College Cambridge with his clinical years at St Bartholomew’s Hospital qualifying in 1947.

After early training at Barts and Bath he spent his National Service as a Ship’s Surgeon in the merchant navy on the South American routes.

He returned to Bath in 1949 before being awarded the Luccock Research Fellowship in Newcastle where he began his life-long interest in Hand Surgery.

This interest was reinforced in 1952 when he was appointed as registrar at Princess Elizabeth Orthopaedic Hospital and came under influence of Norman Capener.

Apart from a two year period spent at the Nuffield Orthopaedic Centre in Oxford (1954-1956) he continued his training in Exeter until he was appointed as consultant orthopaedics and trauma at the Royal Cornwall Hospital, Truro in 1961.

During his training Robert was awarded a number of honours including the James Berry Prize (RCS, 1952) and Hunterian Professorship (RCS, 1954). He was the Council of Europe Travelling Fellow visiting Sweden and France in 1958 and an ABC Travelling Fellow to North America in 1960. Later he was a British Council Special Fellow visiting Czechoslovakia in 1975 and Hungary in 1978.

Following his appointment, Robert was responsible for the development of a comprehensive orthopaedic service in Cornwall encouraging a system of specialisation within the department. His links with the orthopaedic department in Exeter resulted in a much valued senior registrar rotation which developed into the Peninsula orthopaedic training programme.
Robert contributed to many local and national committees serving on the executive committees of the British Orthopaedic Association between 1966 and 1967. He was an examiner for the FRCS(Orth) and represented hand surgery on the Presidential Board of Surgical Specialities RCS.

Robert played an important part in the development of hand surgery in this country. He and a few other young surgeons, some not yet consultants, would have liked to join the exclusive “Hand Club” but they were not considered experienced enough to do so. They, therefore, formed their own club which was brilliantly named “The Second Hand Club”. This was the real progenitor of the British Society for Surgery of the Hand (BSSH), which was formed by the merger of these two clubs in 1969 and which was open to any surgeon who was interested.

In 1979 he was President of BSSH, at that time the youngest ever. In the same year Graham Stack had a carotid artery stenosis. He was the editor of the society’s journal, then called “The Hand”, Graham was assisted by Harold Bolton but he was also in effect the publisher, as he had the journal printed by a small firm near his home at Brentwood in Essex.

After Graham’s illness, Robert realised that if Graham became incapacitated, the journal might grind to a halt. For this reason a Committee of Management was formed with Robert as Chairman. He encouraged the move to an established medical publisher and designed the front cover himself, which was used until recently.

In 1989 the journal became the Journal of Hand Surgery (British volume). Robert attended the meetings of the American Society for Surgery of the Hand every year, at his own expense, and stood up at the Business Meeting to urge American Hand Surgeons to take out a joint subscription to the American and British volumes of the Journal and Hand Surgery.

Robbie was a very knowledgeable gardener creating an extensive garden at Perranaworthal that was often opened to the public for charitable events. He was keen follower of sport particularly cricket, being a member of the MCC. He supported many local arts and crafts institutions and was responsible for setting up three Morris Rings in Cambridge, Exeter and Cornwall.

He is survived by Shirley, his four children, nine grandchildren and one great grandchild.