

Obituary

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D. Evan Bedford



Evan Bedford, CBE, a founder member of the British Cardiac Society, and original joint Editor of the *British Heart Journal*, died on 24 January 1978 in his eightieth year. He was honorary consultant physician to the Middlesex Hospital and National Heart Hospital and at one time or another occupied positions commensurate with his reputation as one of the most distinguished figures in contemporary international cardiology. He was born in Boston, Lincolnshire, and was educated at Ipswich School and Epsom College. He entered the Middlesex Hospital Medical School in 1916, interrupted his medical studies to serve as surgeon sub-lieutenant, RNVR in 1918 and returned to the Middlesex Hospital at the end of the war to qualify as a doctor in 1921. After holding resident appointments at the Middlesex, he became medical officer in charge of the cardiac wards at the Ministry of Pensions Hospital at Orpington. This hospital was to play a crucial role in the evolution of British cardiology and Bedford's new appointment must have made

him the envy of his contemporaries. From the first year of the first world war, tens of thousands of soldiers were invalided from the front labelled as DAH, VDH, cardiac debility, and soldier's heart. Mackenzie with R. M. Wilson, had already reported to the Medical Research Council that the soldier's heart corresponded exactly to what he had observed in civilian life and was identical with the descriptions given by the surgeons Hawthorne and Da Costa in the American Civil War. The unravelling of these and other problems was the occasion of a series of conferences at Orpington attended by all the leading experts of the day. The discussions, centred on syphilitic heart disease, war service as a cause of sub-acute bacterial endocarditis, the use of quinidine in auricular fibrillation, and other subjects generated so much enthusiasm, that one of the most prominent participants, W. E. Hume of Newcastle upon Tyne, was moved to make the formal suggestion in writing to John Cowan that a Cardiac Club be formed. The Cardiac Club, according to Cowan,

was born on 22 April 1922 and the official accoucheurs were Carey Coombs, T. F. Cotton, W. E. Hume, and Cowan himself. This was the spirited environment of Bedford's first hospital appointment outside the Middlesex. It was at Orpington too that he first came under the influence of John Parkinson, an encounter that he subsequently described as the first important event of his professional life and one that eventually was to guide the way he worked and thought; it remained a dominant influence in his life and behaviour years after both of them had retired from active practice. Parkinson directed Bedford's interest towards French cardiology, and the time he spent in the mid-1920s in Paris with Laubry and in Lyons with Gallavardin left him with an admiration for French attitudes to study and thinking which he passed on to several succeeding generations. His preoccupation with pathological anatomy was a French acquisition, which eventually spread to an admiration of the traditional European study of function through structure. His own intimate knowledge of cardiac anatomy derived from personal dissection of cases followed from the ward to the necropsy room. In later years, during his fruitful period of close surgical collaboration with Thomas Holmes Sellors, discussion of an unusual aortic valve or septal defect would be illuminated by lengthy extempore quotations from Rokitansky, Lower's *Tractatus de Corde*, or his special favourites, the Irish Victorians, Adams, Stokes, and Corrigan.

He was recalled from France to become Paterson research scholar at the London Hospital. The venue was doubly fortunate, providing the undisguised pleasure of being reunited with Parkinson, and giving access to the most sophisticated pathology department in the country, fashioned by the strict discipline of Turnbull. This was the perfect environment for his studies with Parkinson on cardiac infarction. Their publications became internationally acclaimed classics, establishing the names of Parkinson and Bedford as one of the most esteemed combinations in the contemporary literature of cardiology.

In 1926, Bedford was appointed assistant physician to the Middlesex Hospital and in 1933, physician to outpatients at the National Heart Hospital. He served in the Royal Army Medical Corps throughout the second world war, during which he was appointed consulting physician to the Middle East Forces. Brigadier Bedford became known as an efficient if demanding officer among the medical divisions from Aleppo on the Turkish frontier to the hospitals behind the Eighth Army in Cyprus, Malta, and Khartoum. In December 1943, he was summoned by Lord Moran to attend Mr

Winston Churchill who had developed pneumonia complicated by atrial fibrillation when staying at General Eisenhower's villa at Carthage. 'His presence' Moran wrote at the time, 'will keep the people at home quiet . . .'. It also provided the Prime Minister with the idea that M & B 693, one of the vehicles of his recovery, should be renamed Moran and Bedford.

The war over, Bedford returned to his hospital duties at the Middlesex and National Heart Hospitals and to a private practice which soon became the largest and most distinguished in his specialty. In the meantime, cardiac catheterisation, angiocardiology, and surgery had ushered in new dimensions to the diagnosis and treatment of valve and congenital heart disease. The new cardiology brought with it the vocabulary of surgical anatomy with which Bedford was already fluent from his apprenticeship in the postmortem room. He felt a special kinship in the early days of cardiac surgery with Holmes Sellors and Brock and spent many hours in the operating theatre spellbound by the sight of the living tissues whose structure had intrigued him for so long.

Bedford was now at his prime and was acknowledged as an international authority on the new cardiology. National and foreign professional bodies honoured him; he was elected president of the British Cardiac Society and of the European Society of Cardiology, chairman of council of the British Heart Foundation, and vice-president of the International Society of Cardiology. He was consultant in cardiology to the Royal Air Force, the Army, and other public bodies, and editor of the *British Heart Journal*. His fame was recognised abroad by honorary membership of numerous foreign cardiological societies, including French, Swiss, Belgian, Italian, Egyptian, Brazilian, Indian, and Australian. At home, he delivered all the distinguished named lectures including the Harveian oration, Bradshaw, Lumleian, Strickland Goodall, St Cyres, and Carey Coombs lectures. He was appointed CBE in 1963.

In his early days, Bedford was a capable athlete excelling at cricket, hockey, golf, and billiards. He generated an aura of admiration and affection in successions of house physicians and registrars which endured, even thrived on affectations of irascibility and intolerance to noise, hospital administrators, traffic congestion in the streets around the Middlesex, and ever-increasing neurotic ill health in his outpatients.

Bedford's interest in collecting rare books on the heart and circulation began when he was a registrar, evolving through his professional life into a unique and internationally acclaimed library now housed in

the Harveian Library of the Royal College of Physicians. He spent the last few years of his life cataloguing his collection, and bibliographers who predicted the outcome to be of a high standard have been proved right. A special appreciation is included in the present issue of the Journal.

With the completion of this opus, Bedford considered his contribution to his craft complete. He withdrew unobtrusively from society and gently and peacefully passed away.

He is survived by his widow and two sons.

Walter Somerville