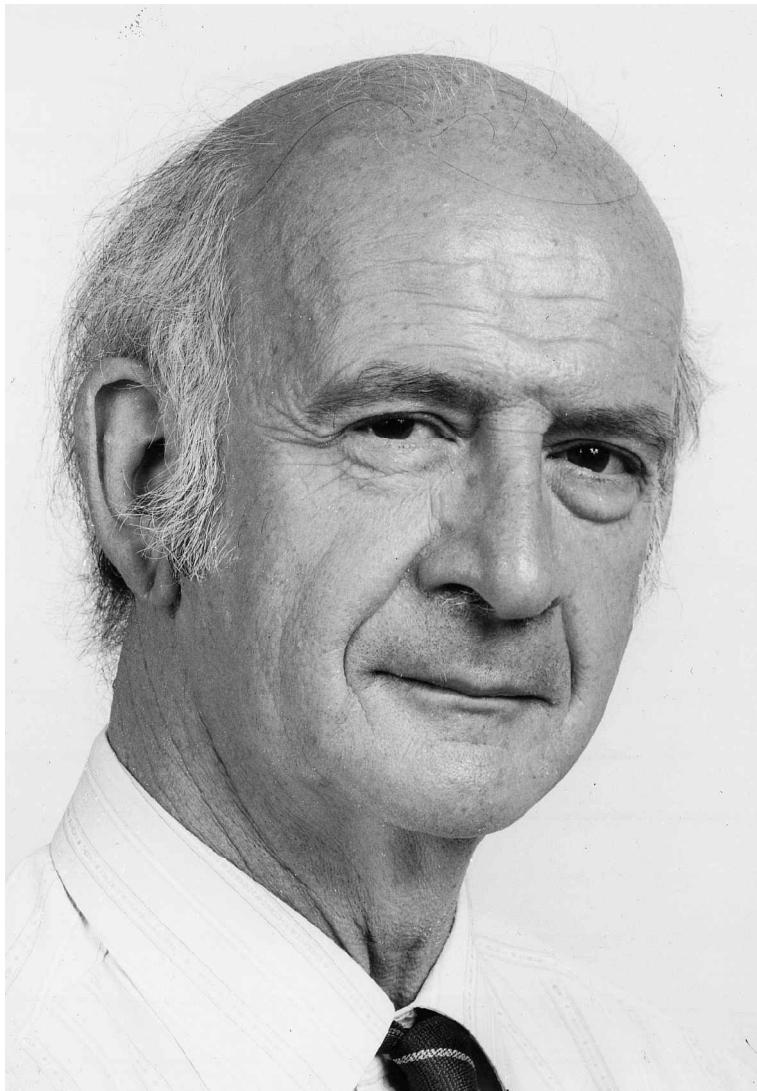


Obituary



**PROFESSOR SIR DONALD HARRISON, M.S., M.D., PH.D.,
F.R.C.S., F.R.C.OPHTH**

Donald Frederick Norris Harrison was born at Portsmouth on 9 March 1925, son of the late F. W. R. Harrison, O.B.E., J.P., B.Sc., and the late Florence Bessie Harrison. Donald was educated at the High School in Newport where his father was Principal of the College of Technology for Monmouthshire. After leaving school he entered the medical school at Guy's Hospital in London, where he graduated in 1948. He then spent two years of National Service in the Royal Air Force and it was during that period that he developed his life-long interest in ear, nose and throat surgery.

However, his scientific bent led him soon to seek an academic appointment and after a few junior posts he was elected Reader in Laryngology at the Institute of Laryngology and Otology in London in 1962. By this time he had already obtained his MS in 1959, with a thesis on 'Meatal osteoma, new bone growth in the external auditory meatus following swimming. Are aquatic animals protected from this problem?' and had produced a further university dissertation (MD, 1960) on 'The effect of systemic oestrogen upon the nasal mucous membrane and its application to the treatment of familial haemorrhagic

telangiectases'. However, his attention soon turned to oncology and it was as an oncologist that he was widely known and highly respected throughout the world.

In 1963 he was elevated to the Professorship of Laryngology and Otology at the Institute, at that time and for many years thereafter the only Chair in the specialty in the United Kingdom. His clinical work was done at the Royal National Throat, Nose and Ear Hospital where he proved himself to be a highly skilled surgeon, a caring doctor and a very popular teacher.

Professor Harrison's early interest in malignant disease of the upper respiratory tract, especially of the larynx and upper jaw, was reflected in many of his publications, which amounted to almost 200 and included several books, in one of which, *Tumours of the Upper Jaw*, he was co-author with Professor Valerie Lund; and following an 11-year study on the 'Correlation between clinical and histological staging in laryngeal cancer' he gained a further doctorate (PhD) in 1983.

He was in great demand as a lecturer and he delivered many eponymous lectures which included – to mention but a few – the Wilde Oration in Dublin in 1972, the Semon Lecture in London in 1974, the Jobson Horne Lecture in 1979, several eponymous lectures in Canada and the United States in the 1980s, and the Holmgren Lecture in Sweden in 1993, three years after he retired from the Chair. He gave lectures in many parts of mainland Europe, Africa, Australasia and Hong Kong and was involved in establishing the Garnett-Passe Lecture, given in honour of the late distinguished otologist, E.R. Garnett-Passe, and delivered biennially at the Royal Society of Medicine.

Professor Harrison had a keen interest in ophthalmology and for several years was consultant ear, nose and throat surgeon at Moorfields Eye Hospital in London. An article of his on 'An ENT surgeon looks at the orbit' was published as a supplement to the *Journal of Laryngology and Otology* and in 1993 he became a Fellow of the Royal College of Ophthalmologists.

He was co-editor with Ronald Hinchcliffe of *Scientific Foundations of Otolaryngology*, published in 1976, and in 1995 he edited *Dilemmas in Otolaryngology* which was awarded the George Davey Howells prize by the University of London. However, his main personal research was based on

his unique collection of over 1000 mammalian larynges which culminated in his *magnum opus*, the *Comparative Anatomy and Physiology of the Mammalian Larynx*, published in 1995.

For many years he was a member, and for several of them assistant secretary, of the Collegium Oto-Rhino-Laryngologicum Amicitiae Sacrum, and after acting as chairman of the Academic Committee for several of the early British Academic Conferences in Otolaryngology, he served as Master of the Eighth Conference in Dublin in 1991.

Throughout his professional life Professor Harrison was an ardent supporter of the Royal Society of Medicine and he became President of the Section of Laryngology in 1981. In recognition of his outstanding services to the specialty he was knighted in 1990, and after his election as Honorary Fellow in the following year, Sir Donald became the 96th President of the Society from 1994 to 1996, the first otolaryngologist to achieve that distinction since the late Sir Terence Cawthorne more than 30 years earlier.

Sir Donald was held in great affection and respect by all who were privileged to know him, and he received innumerable honours and awards during his extensive travels; these included honorary fellowships and memberships of associations, colleges and societies in every continent.

His leisure interests included radio-controlled model boats; heraldry – he designed, amongst other things, the tie and scarf of the Collegium ORLAS; and the history of medicine, the last-named resulting in his biography of *Sir Felix Semon: Victorian laryngologist*, published in 2000. He also made a significant input to Penelope Hunting's definitive *History of the Royal Society of Medicine*.

Sadly, his last years were blighted by a series of misfortunes: first, three years ago, by the death of his wife Audrey, a loss from which he never fully recovered; then, almost without respite, a series of illnesses, the last of which took his life to a peaceful end on 12 April 2003, shortly after his 78th birthday. He is survived by his two daughters and three grandchildren, to whom he extend our deepest sympathy.

Sir Donald was a great ambassador for British Otolaryngology and our specialty will be poorer without him.

JOHN BALLANTYNE