

Mark Hewitt

Born 1918, died 2005

Mark Hewitt was appointed as Consultant Dermatologist for the whole of Cornwall as a half time post in 1956. He laid the foundations for the large modern unit it has now become and at the same time pioneered research into the effects of mites and other insects in diseases of the skin.

He trained at the Middlesex Hospital, and worked as Chief Assistant to the Medical Unit at Manchester Royal Infirmary until the end of 1945. For the next 4 years he was Medical Consultant to the North West Region Ministry of Labour, during which time he became interested in skin disease, writing several papers for the Lancet on industrial dermatitis, and the dermatological problems of the unemployed and disabled. In 1950 he was appointed Senior Registrar and Tutor in Dermatology at Bristol under Dr

R Warin. He was the first properly trained dermatologist to be appointed to Cornwall, succeeding Dr FH Whitlock who moved to Australia as a Professor of Psychiatry.

It now seems amazing that it was then thought possible that one consultant alone could be expected to deal with a population of 400,000 on a half time basis, but this he managed to do. However, as his reputation grew, so did the workload and eventually Dr George Wright, a GP in Falmouth with an MD in Dermatology, Dr Jim Mann, and subsequently Dr Ian Wort and Dr Celia Julian, joined him as clinical assistants.

He delighted in doing domiciliary visits, and whilst doing so developed his interest in papular urticaria, taking photographs and brushings for mites from dogs and other animals in the process. Patients also had their clothes



shaken into bin liners, and the samples were initially sent off to the Veterinary department at Liverpool University for identification, but subsequently this was carried out locally by Stella Turk and Dr Ian Barrow (of the Truro Bacteriology laboratory). The study was extended to lobster pots, made of cherry wood which were also found to contain mites and were thought to cause problems with inshore fishermen. This work caused international interest, and Mark was asked to lecture on it throughout the UK and in Europe.

He had other dermatological interests. He investigated the tuberculous granulomas found in tin miners in Cornwall with Ian Wort and Ian Barrow, showing that they were due to *Mycobacter-Marinum*, thriving in the radioactively heated water deep in the Cornish granite. He also published on hedgehog ringworm and transmission to humans. He was a very astute clinician.

He stimulated the development of

dermatological surgery in the south west. The nearest Plastic Surgery unit was, and still is, in Plymouth – and as most patients were unwilling to travel that far, so the majority of the rapidly increasing number of tumours were excised locally, often using advanced techniques such as grafting.

Outside his work, he was a generous host and entertaining company. He kept bees, had a keen interest in gardening

and antiques and was extremely shrewd in his financial affairs. Shortly before he died he said he just could not help making money on the stockmarket!

He married his wife Betty in 1943. Sadly she had a major stroke in 1991 and spent the last 9 years of her life in a nursing home. They had 3 children, one of whom is a GP in Cornwall.

Celia Julian, Ian Wort, Bill Bowers and Charles Hewitt