

Kenneth Villiers Sanderson

MB BS FRACP FRCP

1921 – 2009

Ken Sanderson died in Adelaide on 4th December 2009. Ken had been a President and Honorary Secretary of the BAD, a pioneer in dermatopathology and multidisciplinary skin cancer management, an inspiration to a generation of registrars, and an influential teacher.

Ken had ancestry going back almost to the beginnings of the State of South Australia, and was born and brought up in Adelaide. His forbears had been prominent in public affairs and the legal profession. He graduated with distinction from the University of Adelaide in 1943, served for 2 years as a captain in the Australian army medical corps, and after demobilization trained for 5 years in internal medicine. During this time he wrote pioneering papers on the application of electromyography to thyrotoxic myopathy.

His early training in dermatology was at the Institute of Dermatology and St John's Hospital, and he was a registrar there in 1952-4. He was awarded the Chesterfield medal in 1954. He returned to Australia for 3 years in the mid 1950s, and one of the posts he held during this time was as consultant dermatopathologist at the Institute of Medical and Veterinary Science in Adelaide. During this time he began what was to be a long term interest in skin cancer.

He found it difficult to pursue academic activities in Australia, so came back to England in 1958 on a research fellowship at the Institute of Dermatology. His work at this time included experimental production of basal cell carcinoma and a demonstration of the importance of the stroma to the evolution of

the neoplasm. He worked closely with George Wells in developing the use of histochemistry as a tool for investigating skin tumours.

In 1962 he was appointed consultant in the dermatology department at St George's Hospital and senior lecturer at the Medical School, posts which he held until 1986. During much of this time he was also consultant dermatologist at the Royal Marsden Hospital. Nearly 4 decades ago Ken established the first skin cancer multidisciplinary clinic in Britain, with like-minded colleagues in reconstructive surgery and radiotherapy. His broad clinical and histopathological knowledge, together with a natural flare as a writer, made him an ideal choice as the author of the chapter on skin tumours in the first 3 editions of the Rook Book.

Ken's expertise as a dermatopathologist, his enquiring mind and natural gifts as a teacher had a lasting effect on all the registrars who trained with him, and this has been particularly notable in the subsequent careers of Professor Ronald Marks in the University Hospital of Wales, the late Neil Smith at St John's Hospital and Donald MacDonald at Guy's Hospital. To all of us, he conveyed the enormous value that some knowledge of skin pathology has in trying to understand the diseases we deal with as clinicians.

His patients and staff will remember Ken as a kind, patient and thoughtful physician, with a great depth of knowledge. Many of his trainees who have contacted me have said how much they admired his modesty and quiet manner, as well as a delightful sense of humour, and it was a great privilege as well as a pleasure to have



Kenneth Villiers Sanderson

worked with him.

Ken was honorary secretary to the BAD 1975-80, and had much to do with the expansion of its activities and move to larger premises. It was widely regarded that he did so much with so little resource by modern standards beyond the devoted Peggy Paxton. He subsequently became the BAD President, for 1984-5, and is remembered as adroitly managing our affairs on the national stage.

The BAD was fortunate not only in having Ken as a distinguished holder of high offices, but it was the beneficiary of his talent as a silversmith, a skill he was exceptionally good at – his maker's mark is registered at the Assay Office of the Goldsmiths Company, London. He designed and made two trophies given at the Annual Meetings, the Bristol Cup for the best poster, and the Wycombe Chair for the best presentation from a non-teaching hospital.

Although Ken spent most of his professional life in London, he remained proudly Australian, and it gave him much pleasure to have returned to the city he had come from for the last few years of his life. He is survived by three sons from his first marriage, his second wife Jane, and her daughters.

Cameron Kennedy

Bristol