Obituary

Frank William Law, MA, MD, BChir, FRCS, LRCP

Frank Law died on 26 May 1987 at his home in Chipperfield aged 88 years. He was born in Isleworth on 12 August 1898 and was educated at St Paul's School and later at St John's College, Cambridge. He qualified in 1926 with the degree of MB, BChir, having completed his undergraduate training at the Middlesex Hospital. His medical studies were interrupted by the first world war, during which he served in the Royal Artillery in France and Flanders.

After deciding to specialise in ophthalmology he became at first house surgeon and then the senior resident officer at Moorfields Eye Hospital, where in 1936 he was appointed honorary surgeon. He was also appointed honorary ophthalmic surgeon to Guy's Hospital. With the formation of the National Health Service in 1948 these appointments were automatically renamed consultant surgeon. He was also consultant ophthalmic surgeon to the King Edward VII Hospital for Officers, and civilian ophthalmic consultant to the Army.

Frank Law was also a Knight of the Order of St John and was closely associated with the Order's Eye Hospital in Jerusalem. He was actively engaged in many ophthalmic congresses. In 1950 he was secretary general of the International Ophthalmological Congress held in London. This was an outstanding success despite the many difficulties occasioned by the shortages of almost everything in postwar Britain. He was president of the Faculty of Ophthalmologists and a long-term member of the Oxford Ophthalmological Congress, of which he was master for two years. He was a very active serving member of the Ophthalmological Society of the United Kingdom, being honorary secretary for eight years and honorary treasurer for 33. Even during his two years as president of the society he continued as treasurer. He did much to foster co-operation between ophthalmologists and opticians and was a member and master of the Worshipful Company of Spectacle Makers. He was awarded an honorary FBOA. He also travelled widely in the course of his profession and was an honorary member of many overseas ophthalmological societies. He was an enthusiastic teacher of undergraduate and postgraduate students both at home and abroad. In this connection he was appointed honorary visiting ophthalmologist at Johns Hopkins Hospital, Baltimore. In his later years he became interested in the history of British ophthalmology and wrote books on the history of Moorfields Eye Hospital, of the Ophthalmological Society of the United Kingdom, and of the Worshipful Company of Spectacle Makers.

It might be imagined that in view of such extensive commitment to ophthalmology that Frank Law would have little time for other activities. However, this was not the case. He was devoted to music and played the piano and organ excellently. In quiet moments he would also engage in meticulous embroidery work. He had a wide knowledge of heraldry and was associated with the formation of the coats of arms of the OSUK and the Faculty of Ophthalmologists.

His greatest hobbies were, however, in the field of sport. At Cambridge University he was captain of the Lady Margaret Boat Club and rowed at number 2 in the University Boat Race of 1923. He retained a close interest in rowing throughout his life, being a member of the Leander Club, and he always attended the Henley Regatta. He was accomplished at Royal Tennis, and as a member of the MCC he played at least weekly at their courts at Lords. He was a very sound shot and went regularly to Roxburghshire in the grouse and pheasant seasons. He could also be found at dawn in winter wild fowling on the Solway Firth. He greatly enjoyed trout and salmon fishing, and it was a delight to be with him on the river bank in places as far apart as Hampshire, Hereford, and Aberdeenshire. Not only did he cast his fly to perfection but his knowledge of the wild life around added enormously to the interest. His anecdotes and ready wit could also transform an otherwise unrewarding day into a memorable one.

There must be hundreds whose lives have been enriched by knowing Frank. Particularly endearing was his readiness to help a colleague, especially a younger one. However busy he might be, he was never too busy to listen. Despite having achieved great success and indeed fame he was above all, in the words of his favourite author Thomas Hardy, 'A good man and he did good things'. He is survived by his wife Brenda (Tommy) to whom he was married for 58 years, and by his son and daughter. DA