

Dr Maurice George Philpott

q Barts, 1943

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Maurice George Philpott was born in London on 21st September 1919. His parents were Ernest Walter and Lillian Mary (nee Carsberg). Her parents owned George Carsberg and Sons, a firm of surgical manufacturers since 1777, the running of which Ernest took over in the early 1920s.

The family moved to the developing Welwyn Garden City and Maurice attended Hitchin Boys Grammar School from 1928 to 1937. Here, he developed a deep interest in science, and early on decided he wanted to be a doctor, an unsurprising choice in view of the family business and several medical antecedents. His other great interest was the school scout troop, where he developed practical skills, and a love of travel, particularly with a Spartan edge.



In 1937, Maurice was accepted as an undergraduate at St Bartholomew's Hospital, where he was a diligent student. At the outbreak of war he was evacuated to Cambridge, and later to Bishops Stortford. Although excused military service until after qualification, he was a member of the London University OTC, and was engaged in fire-watching and other civilian wartime duties. By the time he qualified in 1943, he had developed an interest in paediatrics, passing the DCH examination in 1944. He always had a great fondness for his alma mater, and attended reunions until the stage was reached when none of his contemporaries were able to be present.

Towards the end of the war, Maurice joined the RAMC, where he developed further skills before being posted as physician on the hospital ship Oxfordshire. After the cessation of hostilities the ship was employed repatriating sick allied and former enemy forces to various countries. Several trips to Hamburg were followed by two much longer voyages to the Far East, including Japan where Maurice visited the devastated Hiroshima. These were probably the greatest adventures of his life, and were recorded on 9.5mm cine film. He became MRCP in 1946.

On discharge from the army, Maurice gained a training post at Great Ormond Street, where he built up further paediatric knowledge before being appointed Tutor in Child Health at the University of Sheffield, under the renowned Professor Ronald Illingworth. Here he made good friends with others concerned in child care: Donald Beazley from New Zealand, Spiros Doxiadis, later Greek Minister of Health, and John Lorber who later became Professor of Paediatrics in Sheffield. Maurice completed his MD in 1952, and at the age of 34 was appointed late in 1953 as Consultant Paediatrician in Kingston upon Hull.

Paediatric services in the city were at a fairly basic level. With his senior colleague, Tom Morton-Stewart, and later joined by Richard Pugh, services were developed over the ensuing decades. Maurice rapidly entered the wider medical circle in Hull, becoming secretary of Hull Medical Society for a number of years, and serving on many professional and hospital committees. His main base was Victoria Children's Hospital, but he also had responsibilities on the neo-natal unit at Hedon Road Maternity Hospital, wards at the Western General Hospital and took outpatient clinics in Driffield and Bridlington. In those days of difficult transport for patients and little diagnostic sophistication, domiciliary visits at the request of GPs were a commonplace occurrence. Maurice would travel to far-flung parts of the East Riding in all weathers armed with little more than a stethoscope and a fine diagnostic eye. His special interests included streptococcal sensitive conditions, childhood enuresis, and particularly haemolytic disease of the newborn. At one stage he devised a machine to reduce the tedium of replacement transfusions, and his family recollect prototypes being experimented on the kitchen table using diluted Ribena to simulate blood.

In the early 1960s plans were afoot for the new Hull Royal Infirmary to be built on Anlaby Road. Maurice was an important member of the team planning paediatric services. The progress of construction of the hospital was recorded on cine film, by now with sound commentary, and it was a proud moment when the children's wards on the twelfth and thirteenth floors were opened in 1967. He was invited to become a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians in 1971.

He was responsible for the training of a great number of future paediatricians, many from overseas, and was still in contact with colleagues in India, Pakistan, Turkey and Nicaragua into his later years. Family holidays were often combined with meeting up with former colleagues. These involved driving across great tracts of Europe, camping en-route, to destinations as far as Helsinki, Athens and Istanbul. Other holidays were taken at the family cottage at Gillamoor in North Yorkshire.

Maurice ceased practising on his 65th birthday in 1984, and it turned out that his retirement was almost as long as his consultantship. In 1945 he had married Constance (Connie) Quarby, a theatre from Yorkshire, and they subsequently had three children, Nicholas, Susan and Prudence. These later provided the couple with six grandchildren, and to date there are four great-grandchildren. After retiring, Maurice widened his social group from a former largely medical base, to include becoming a member of Probus, a Bonsai Society and a walking group. He was still a regular attendee at Hull Medical Society meetings, where he served as Chairman and President. He was an avid reader of the BMJ until his final couple of years, at which point he claimed to be unable to understand a word of the publication apart from the obituaries.

In October 2002, Connie suffered a major stroke, which left her severely disabled until her death in 2010. She needed continuing nursing care, and moved to a residential home. Maurice religiously visited her daily, and his devotion gained him great admiration from all who knew him. In October 2012 Maurice entered a care home himself, where he spent the remainder of his life in relative contentment. He died peacefully at the age of 94 on 7th February 2014.