

Dermatology in Devon and Cornwall

Exeter and Barnstaple - 1947-2005

By Dr. Andrew Warin

Barnstaple

John Simpson was appointed to the Royal Devon and Exeter Hospital in 1947 and from then until his retirement in 1979 undertook 2 clinics each week in Barnstaple. Hilary Hubbard was appointed as consultant in Barnstaple in 1980, and she also did two clinics each week in Exeter. Hilary resigned her post in 1996 due to ill health.

Michael Boss was appointed as consultant in Barnstaple in 1997, but resigned in 2002 to take up a post in the Medway towns. The department of dermatology is now run at the Litchdon medical centre, with Brian Malcolm and Karen Davies undertaking regular outpatient clinics. The service is supported by the Exeter consultants who visit in rotation every 2 weeks, and is entirely primary care trust based.

Exeter

John Simpson was the first dermatologist in Exeter and was in post from 1947 to 1979. He was a fine dermatologist; and looked after North Devon as well as Exeter. He also visited Torbay regularly until Tony Bowyer was appointed there in 1969.

Andrew Warin was appointed to Exeter in 1980, and retired in 2005. In 1993, he was the first dermatologist to receive the 'Hospital Doctor of the Year' award. During his 25 years in post, he developed the department steadily to include an associate dermatologist (Tessa Frost) and many clinical assistants. Special clinics for skin cancer and pigmented lesions were established, as well as a paediatric clinic, an

outpatient treatment centre, and a lymphoedema service for the Trust. Specialist nurses were trained, and a leg ulcer management service was set up in the community. Four editions of 'Guidelines for GPs' were produced between 1985 and 1999 and 'Skin Forum' teaching clinics for GPs have been running for 23 years. The department also created many patient information videos, and later CDRoms.

In 1994, Paul Collier was appointed as a second consultant. He developed "The South West Laser Service", but left in 2001. In that year, using money from the Action on Dermatology programme, Tessa Frost created a teledermatology service for all GPs in East and later Mid Devon. This successful service still runs.

Tessa Frost left the department in 2002 to work in Torbay. Chris Bower, and later Tony Downs, were appointed as consultants and, on Andrew Warin's retirement in 2005, Carolyn Charman was also appointed. Andrew Warin now works part time as emeritus consultant.

The direction of the department is now very much towards training the students at the Peninsula Medical School as well as our Specialist Registrars, whilst continuing to provide all of the clinical services mentioned above. The consultants continue to support the service in North Devon.

Plymouth, East Cornwall and West Devon - 1950-2005

In 1950, Dr Douglas Sweet was appointed as the first consultant dermatologist. He is internationally known for his description of the disease that bears his name - "acute febrile neutrophilic dermatosis".

In the late 1960s, Dr Dick Harold was appointed as an assistant. His previous expertise had been in tuberculosis. After several years, he became a consultant. In 1979, Dr Ruth Murgatroyd was appointed as a registrar on the "doctor with domestic commitment" scheme. She later became an associate specialist but left in 2001.

In 1980, Dr Sweet retired and Dr Michael Davies was appointed; and, in 1982, Dr

Harold retired and Dr Peter Kersey was appointed. Dr Fiona Prentice joined the department part-time in 1984. She had previously worked in Glasgow with Professor Rona Mackie. In 1988 she moved into general practice. Soon afterwards, 3 clinical assistants were appointed, and later two of these (Dr Jane Parish and Dr Diana Kersey) became associate specialists. Dr Marcia Shaw was appointed as the third consultant in 2002.

Since 2003, Plymouth, together with Exeter, Truro and Torbay, has been part of the Peninsula Medical School. A specialist registrar training scheme has been established with specialist registrars rotating between Plymouth, Truro and Exeter. Plymouth has had a Senior House Officer post in dermatology for about 10 years.

Dr Davies has a long standing interest in skin diseases that occur in patients with medical illness; Dr Kersey has developed the department's surgical expertise; and Dr Shaw has developed her interest in teaching.

Dermatology Services in Plymouth, East Cornwall and West Devon - 1950 to 2005.

By Dr. M.G.Davies

The first consultant dermatologist to cover this area was Robert Douglas Sweet, who was appointed in 1950 and served in that capacity until 1980. As was common with many other provincial centres in the 1950s, and often in the 1960s, he was unsupported as the sole provider of dermatological services. Nevertheless he is, of course, internationally known for his description of the disease which bears his name, but which he described as acute febrile neutrophilic dermatosis. In the latter part of the 1960s he was joined by Dr. Dick Harold, whose expertise had previously been in the field of tuberculosis when that disease was very common. After many years of help and experience, Dr. Harold was given a consultant post in the mid-1970s. During the 1970s, Dr. Bernard Peck, a GP in Plymouth, also helped to provide dermatological services, doing two sessions per week as a Clinical Assistant.

Following the appointment of Dr. Antony Bowyer to Torbay, he also did occasional sessions in Plymouth.

In October 1979, Dr. Ruth Murgatroyd joined the Dermatology Department in Plymouth as a Registrar, and later converted to an Associate Specialist post in which she remained until 2001.

Dr. Sweet retired in 1980, and was replaced by Dr. Michael Davies as a Consultant. Eighteen months later, Dr. Dick Harold retired and was replaced by Dr. Peter Kersey as a Consultant. Dr. Bernard Peck retired from his work as a Dermatological Assistant in 1982. In 1984 Dr. Fiona Prentice, a Glasgow-trained doctor who had worked briefly with Dr. Rona Mackie, joined the department part-time, and for the next four years the services were run by the two consultants, and Drs. Murgatroyd and Prentice. In 1988 Dr. Prentice moved into general practice, and within two years three Clinical Assistants were appointed - Drs. Jane Parish, Rupert Jones (G.P.), and Diana Kersey.

The large demands on the service, together with the size of the population it served, made it increasingly necessary to appoint a third consultant, and Dr. Marcia Shaw was appointed in April 2002.

Dr. David Forsyth took over from Dr. Jones, providing a weekly Clinical Assistant session from 1991 to 2002. In 2003 Drs. Jane Parish and Diana Kersey were upgraded to Associate Specialists.

At a more junior level, dermatology in Plymouth has had a Senior House Officer stand-alone post for approximately a decade. This has proved very helpful for trainees wanting to have some experience in dermatology before going on to become fully trained.

There have been two fairly recent developments in the service provision for Plymouth. Firstly, together with Exeter, Truro and Torbay, we are now part of the Peninsula Medical School, and have taken on the training of Specialist Registrars

within our discipline. This began in 2003 and individual specialist registrars now rotate between Truro, Plymouth and Exeter.

Finally, Dr. Fiona Prentice - who had worked in the dermatology department between 1984 and 1988 - returned to dermatology as a G.P. with special interests in 2004, assisting Dr. Michael Davies in his weekly Launceston clinic.

Torbay

By Dr. Jill Adams

The dermatology department at Torbay Hospital, Torquay, was effectively started by Dr Anthony Bowyer, who was the first dermatologist specifically appointed to the Torbay and District Hospital in 1969. Before that time, dermatology services were provided by visiting sessions from Plymouth –based dermatologists.

Dr Bowyer remained single-handed for most of his career. He was very involved in the post-graduation education movement, and was appointed post-graduate clinical tutor in 1971. He went on to become chairman of the National Association of Clinical Tutors.

Dr Bowyer was supported by his able associate specialist, Dr Neil Hunter for many years. Dr Jill Adams was appointed as Dr Bowyer's colleague in 1995, but the partnership was short-lived as Dr Bowyer died in 1996.

Dr Marcia Shaw replaced Dr Bowyer in 1996 and remained at Torbay Hospital until she left for Derriford Hospital, Plymouth, in 2002. Dr Tessa Frost, who had worked in Exeter as an Associate Specialist, moved to Torbay in April 2003. Drs Adams and Frost now work with a team of clinical nurse specialists and clinical assistants. The dermatological services they offer include a vulval disease service, clinics for itchy bottoms, photo-dynamic therapy and nurse-led eczema clinics. They anticipate a further addition to their medical team in 2006.

Cornwall

By Dr Bill Bowers

Dermatology services began in Cornwall in 1948 with the appointment of Dr F.H. Whitlock as consultant. He left in 1955 to go to Australia as a Professor of Psychiatry.

Dr. Mark Hewitt was appointed as Consultant Dermatologist for the whole of Cornwall as a half time post in 1956. It seems amazing now 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. 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.

Mark undertook clinics in Truro, Penzance, St Austell and Bodmin, and he set up an in-patient unit in Falmouth in an old cottage hospital. He developed an 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 also investigated the tuberculous granulomas found in tin miners in Cornwall, with Ian Wort and Ian Barrow, showing that they were due to *Mycobacterium marinum* thriving in the radioactively heated water deep in the Cornish granite. He also published on hedgehog ringworm and its transmission to humans. He was a very astute clinician.

In 1979 Mark was joined by David Gould. David was inspired by Professor Bill Cunliffe and was registrar in Leeds and then lecturer in Sheffield. Moving to Cornwall in 1979 meant an extremely heavy clinical load and excessive travelling to multiple peripheral clinics, but David thrived on this, maintaining his academic interests, and publishing papers on subjects varying from acne to calcified ears in the Cornish!

During the 1990's he became the prime mover in developing the Cornwall Dermatology Research Unit in conjunction with Leo Salter from Cornwall College, looking at the effects on the skin of sunlight, pollution and anti-oxidants such as green tea, especially in relation to the development of skin cancer. Several students have now obtained PhDs as a result. He was always eager to encourage others to do research and write papers.

At the same time he developed his interest in education, becoming director of postgraduate education in Cornwall, Associate Dean for Cornwall for the South Western Deanery, and Senior Lecturer in the new Peninsula Medical School. He was also involved in Royal College affairs and an examiner for the MRCP.

In 1983, Mark Hewitt retired and was succeeded by Bill Bowers who was son of Bob Bowers, dermatologist in Gloucestershire from 1950 to 1980. Bill trained at St Thomas's, University College, Oxford, and in general practice in Great Yarmouth, before moving to Otago University in New Zealand as medical registrar/lecturer. He soon entered dermatology, becoming interested in skin cancer and skin surgery. He subsequently returned to Nottingham as senior registrar, and also did a short fellowship with Fred Mohs in Madison. His move to Cornwall was a great opportunity to set up a Mohs surgery unit, making much of his own equipment, and working in fairly primitive conditions. He also later became involved with the hospital planning team, and enjoyed various aspects of clinical research - from further investigations into tin miners' granuloma, frullania and daffodil dermatitis, the genetics and epidemiology of skin cancer, to pilomatricomas and chondrodermatitis.

In the early 1980's, apart from the ward in Falmouth, there was still no Dermatology Unit, theatre or offices, and it became clear that a purpose-built

department was required. Together David and Bill lobbied for years, and eventually a new unit opened in 1994 at Treliske Hospital. This allowed some rationalisation of multiple peripheral clinics. Previously the consultants had spent each half day in a different part of the county. The number of new patients seen increased markedly, and by the late 1990s around 9000 new patients were being seen annually.

Tom Lucke (Cambridge and Newcastle, plus dermatology in Glasgow) was appointed in 1999, and soon afterwards Kate Dalziel moved from Nottingham to join us when David decided to increase his commitments to medical education and to reduce his clinical load. Kate has transformed the patch-testing services, and has set up a much needed vulval clinic, supported by Liz Venner (who began as our SHO in 1994, and has returned as clinical assistant). In Truro, the first Peninsula Medical School students arrived in 2004.

Dr Bill Bowers retired in 2004 and was replaced by Toby Chave and Sarah Woodrow. Two months after Bill left, David died very unexpectedly. Tom Lucke was already the surgery and skin cancer lead, and the opportunity was taken to close the dermatology ward, which had been filled solely by medical outliers and no dermatology patients. In its place, a day treatment centre has been set up, largely nurse-led.

The department has been very ably supported throughout by our sub-consultant staff. Ian Wort, a GP in St Keverne on the Lizard, joined Mark Hewitt in the late 1960s, helping with the papular urticaria research, and taking on an increasing clinical workload - so much so that when Mark had a coronary in the 1970's, Ian virtually ran the Cornish dermatology service on his own, whilst still running his own practice. Ian continued to work with Bill after his retirement from general practice and was closely involved in the daffodil and tin miners' granulomas research.

Celia Julian was also recruited by Mark in the 1970s, but dropped out for a while with her own GP work in Poole. She returned in 1984 to work one session a week with Bill, in Truro, and subsequently Redruth and the Scillies, later taking over Ian's sessions and dropping her general practice. Already skilled in surgery, she took over

much of the Mohs surgery, and wrote many of the papers produced on daffodils, surgery and pilomatricomas.

Sandra Campbell also joined in 1984 to help David, mainly in Truro and St Austell. She also rapidly became an essential part of the team, and was closely involved in David's research projects, especially in the development of photodynamic therapy, on which she is a nationally renowned expert.