



Obituary: Norman Lester Rowe CBE



Norman Lester Rowe CBE—Robed as Vice-Dean, Faculty of Dental Surgery, Royal College of Surgeons of England

The history of medicine and dentistry is embellished by memorable names; those exceptional persons who have, by dynamism and insight, opened up new horizons of thought and endeavour. In future years Norman Lester Rowe will be known and remembered by all who practise the art and science of oral and maxillofacial surgery.

He was the gentle doyen, the 'uncle' of all his trainees, respected and honoured by all the societies of maxillofacial surgeons in the four corners of the earth. His epic textbook 'Fractures of the Facial Skeleton', co-authored with his friend Homer Killey, first published in 1955, opened new vistas in the management of maxillofacial injuries. It was followed by a second edition in 1968 and later by a major revision 'Maxillofacial Injuries', broader in scope and detail, written with a former trainee, John Williams and enthusiastically reviewed in 1985.

Norman Rowe was born in Stroud, on 15 December 1915, educated at Malvern College and qualified LDS at Guy's Hospital in 1937. General dental practice was followed by war service in the RADC. He served with the forces in Europe after D day in a CCS and later the 86 British General Hospital. These were the formative years of one who became the outstanding maxillofacial surgeon of his time. Postwar saw medical training, again at Guy's, a position in the plastic and jaw unit at Hill End, St Albans and then the post of consultant at Rooksdown House, Basingstoke, where he came under the influence of that great surgical innovator, Sir Harold Gillies. In the hectic

years which followed he showed his flair for meticulous organisation and attention to detail, developing the oral surgical departments in most of the significant hospitals governed by the South West Metropolitan Regional Board. He and his trainees who followed, left an indelible mark on the standards of oral and maxillofacial surgery in that broad sweep of the South East from Lambeth to Chichester.

Early in 1959, on the closure of Rooksdown House, Norman Rowe transferred to the unit which came to be the mecca for maxillofacial surgeons, Queen Mary's Hospital, Roehampton. From 1960 to 1980 he was also the senior consultant in the specialty at Westminster Hospital until retirement on 15th December 1980. Lesser men may have relaxed a little at that stage, but not the indefatigable missionary of maxillofacial surgery! Norman Rowe travelled as visiting lecturer and professor to the four corners of the earth, always greeted as a friend, greatly respected for his ability to teach and inspire.

The British Association of Oral Surgeons, founded in 1960, owed an immense debt to the first honorary secretary, Norman Rowe, who served from 1962-65. He presided over the Association in 1969-1970 and was elected an Honorary Fellow in 1981. He gave similar periods of loyal and dedicated service to the International Association of Oral Surgeons as Councillor, Secretary General and Honorary Fellow. He presided over the Council of the European Association for Maxillo-Facial Surgery in 1974-1976, after periods of office as councillor and vice-president. His name and fame were recorded in the annals of more than 20 specialist societies worldwide as member *honoris causae*. He taught at the Eastman Dental Hospital and acted as civilian consultant to the Royal Navy and the Army. He was awarded honorary fellowships in surgery and dental surgery by Royal Colleges and received the Civil honour of Commander of The Most Excellent Order of the British Empire in 1976.

While all of the above would seem to be accomplishments enough for one man, there was more—much more, to the life and works of Norman Rowe. His devotion to his patients, his ever ready ear to the cares of his colleagues and his trainees, his enduring passion for the advancement of the art and science of maxillofacial surgery, all ensured that he would be singled out as a man for all times, all seasons. The hundreds of students who faced him across the examining table will remember, with pleasure, his knowledge, kindness and sense of humour. His wife, Cynthia, whom he married in 1938, was his regular companion at home and abroad. His passing was sudden and unexpected—in a hospital environment which he had known and enhanced. Cynthia, and son and daughter David and Susan survive him. His life was a rich tapestry of knowledge, skill, humility, gentleness and friendship; all these elements were so mixed in him that I wish to stand and say to all the world 'This was a man!'

D. E. P.