

# Obituary

## PROFESSOR GILBERT CAUSEY

(8 October 1907–25 August 1996)

Gilbert Washington Causey, formerly professor and emeritus professor of surgery in the Royal College of Surgeons of England, Lincoln's Inn Fields, died on 25 August 1996.

Gilbert Causey was born on 8 October 1907 and educated at Wigan Grammar School and Liverpool University, qualifying in medicine with 1st class honours in 1930. He was a registrar at Walton Hospital Liverpool and became FRCS Eng. in 1933. He then entered general practice in Fowey, Cornwall. During World War II he was in the EMS. His academic career began in 1947 when he joined the Anatomy Department at University College London. J. Z. Young had just become head of the department and was continuing the studies on peripheral nerve injury that had begun in Oxford during World War II. Gilbert Causey immediately began experimental work on peripheral nerve and soon established his own research group, working with Elisabeth Palmer, C. J. Stratmann and others.

In 1952 he was appointed Sir William Collins Professor of Human and Comparative Anatomy at the Royal College of Surgeons, a post he held until 1970. There he continued to work on peripheral nerve, undertaking some important early ultrastructural studies with H. J. Hoffmann and Tony Barton. Elec-

tron microscopy was not without its problems in those days. The London Underground ran below the College of Surgeons, the vibrations from which made the taking of electron micrographs impossible when a train was passing underneath. A technical innovation was introduced which involved reflecting a beam of light onto the ceiling from a dish of mercury placed on top of the microscope. The reflection danced around wildly most of the time but Tony Barton carefully watched for a window of time when it was still. He then quickly took his photograph.

Gilbert Causey was awarded the DSc (Liverpool) in 1964. His studies on peripheral nerve led to a small but influential book entitled *The Cell of Schwann*. A particular feature was his prescience in realising the importance of segmental demyelination as a pathological process. This had been identified by Gombault, Mallet and others towards the end of the last century and then largely forgotten. He also authored a book on electron microscopy and coauthored a dissecting manual with J. T. Aitken, J. Z. Young and J. Joseph.

Professor Causey's interests outside academic life included gardening, sea fishing and Cornish history. He also played the violin in amateur quartets. In 1935 he married Ellen Elizabeth Hickinbotham, who died in 1995. They are survived by their 2 sons and 3 daughters.

P. K. THOMAS