IN MEMORIAM

HARRY ARCHIBALD PEARCE
1913-1971

H. A. Pearce, Consultant in Orthopaedics to the South Essex Group since 1954, died in June at the age of fifty-eight. He qualified in 1937 from St Bartholomew’s Hospital and after house appointments there spent some time in general practice. During the war his surgical interest was again aroused by service in the Royal Army Medical Corps, during which he worked principally in hospital ships. Soon after demobilisation he took the Fellowship of the Royal College of Surgeons of England and became registrar at the Wingfield-Morris Orthopaedic Hospital and later first assistant at the London Hospital.

Harry Pearce was a man of most remarkable qualities, not the least of these being the way in which he met and overcame the difficulties produced by multiple sclerosis, which first appeared some eighteen years ago. The condition waxed and waned, relapsed and remitted for the rest of his life, but so well did he come to terms that little disability was apparent to the casual observer. In the same way he overcame coronary disease, which struck him later, and in spite of all adversity he was able to pursue and enjoy a busy surgical life to the very end.

As a surgeon his greatest gift was that of uncommon good sense. This, with the wide experience of both the natural history of disease and the possibilities and limitations of surgery, made his an outstanding opinion on the problems which were brought to him in such number.

When he first came to the the South Essex Group both of his main hospitals were in the process of being transformed from their original function as public assistance institutions into general hospitals. Harry built up the orthopaedic departments in both of them and contributed largely to the planning of the new accident department now functioning at Orsett Hospital. He also instituted, and greatly enjoyed, the weekly joint ward round where his gift for bedside teaching was evident. No resident taught by him is ever likely to forget the homely phrases and delightful humour with which his points were driven home.

He retained throughout his career a broad interest in all aspects of orthopaedic surgery, but was particularly fascinated by the problems of congenital dislocation of the hip. He remained a warm advocate of conservative measures in this condition (seldom seen at his hospitals until long after the children had walked), and had recently completed a survey of his first fifteen cases, surprising even himself by the satisfactory nature of his results. In earlier years he had been greatly stimulated also by the challenge presented by victims of poliomyelitis and was deeply interested in the problems of tendon transference.
Away from work he lived a happy family life with his wife and four children. Although unwilling to discuss the matter, he was a religious man and a valued member of his local church. His many interests included natural history in general and bird watching in particular.

It is well nigh impossible to sum up such a complex character in a few lines, but he may safely be described as independent, cheerful (indeed often uproariously so), guileless, intensely loyal, and perhaps the least pompous of men. He was greatly loved and will be greatly missed.

W. K.

ROBIN McMILLAN LATTA
1912-1971

Surgeon Captain R. M. Latta, formerly senior Orthopaedic Specialist at the Royal Naval Hospital, Plymouth, died on February 22 at the age of fifty-nine.

Robin Latta graduated at Glasgow in 1933 and entered the Royal Naval Medical Service in 1937. His first years as a Surgeon Lieutenant were spent at sea and at the outbreak of war he was serving in the submarine depot ship Lucia in the Indian Ocean. At this early stage of the war his duties were not arduous but in 1940 he was appointed to the Royal Naval Hospital, Plymouth, and it was here that he gained his first experience in the treatment of war casualties during the heavy bombing of Plymouth and Devonport in March and April 1941, almost becoming a casualty himself when his reception ward received a direct hit. After a further period at sea he was appointed to Number 1 Royal Naval Orthopaedic Rehabilitation Centre and continued in charge of it until his appointment as assistant orthopaedic surgeon at the Royal Naval Hospital, Haslar, in 1948. In 1950 he was sent as surgical specialist to the Hospital Ship Maine, then in Korean waters, where he was again heavily involved in the treatment of war casualties, when some 1,850 recently wounded were carried to base hospitals in Japan during the first two months of the Korean War. A most informative report on these casualties appeared in the Lancet of January 1951, in which he showed that the surgical mistakes of the early days of the world war were again being repeated in the Korean War, in particular the primary suture of limb wounds caused by high velocity missiles.

On returning from H.M.H.S. Maine he continued as surgical specialist until 1958, when he became the Senior Specialist in Orthopaedics at the Royal Naval Hospital, Plymouth, and from then on he continued in full-time orthopaedics. His wide experience of war wounds, orthopaedic rehabilitation and general surgery served him well in orthopaedics and he became respected, both in the Service and beyond as an orthopaedic surgeon of outstanding ability and wise judgement. In 1967 he was appointed Honorary Surgeon to the Queen. In 1968 he retired from the Royal Navy after thirty-one years of full and valuable service.

To those who did not know him Robin Latta was seen as a quiet, somewhat diffident man; one who preferred to remain unobtrusively in the background and listen to others, rather than be in the forefront of any discussion. But when occasion demanded he spoke or wrote
with a clarity and authority that at once revealed his intellect, knowledge and breadth of outlook. His character was such that no one who served with him ever forgot him, or he them. He was always courteous, thoughtful and kind to friends, staff and patients alike, thorough and painstaking in all his work and a gay companion in hours of relaxation. These qualities made him a splendid administrator when in charge of the Surgical Division or when acting as Medical Officer in Charge of the Royal Naval Hospital, Plymouth.

He was a man of fine physique and a good athlete. He played rugby for his university, was an excellent swimmer and in later years became an efficient skier. In fact, anything that Robin took up he did with a characteristic thoroughness and attention to detail. Having discovered that he was one of those rare “naturals” on the piano, much in demand at “guest nights”, he taught himself to read music and became an accomplished pianist and organist.

On retirement from the Royal Navy he settled down in a small village in Dorset and was soon absorbed in the life of the village, where his ability as an organist was quickly discovered. It is tragic that this happy period of his life should have lasted so short a time. Our deepest sympathy is offered to his wife and three daughters by all those who were fortunate to know him during his service life.

C. J. P. P.

ARNE BERTELESEN
1910-1971

Professor Arne Bertelsen died suddenly on February 12, 1971, from coronary occlusion. He occupied the first chair as professor in orthopaedic surgery in Denmark, established in 1957 at the University of Copenhagen. He had been an Honorary Fellow of the British Orthopaedic Association since 1962.

He was born on October 11, 1910, a son of the well known Danish painter Aage Bertelsen who took an essential part in the Danish Greenland expedition in 1906 and in 1908 exhibited in Copenhagen a remarkable collection of paintings and drawings. Bertelsen visited Greenland himself as an orthopaedic surgeon, sailing for months along the west coast to the small “udsteder” together with his shoemaker and orthotist, operating when possible on the spot and referring patients to his department in Copenhagen. His mother Karen Dorthea Schmidt was descended from an old Danish family in South Slesvig, the part of Jutland that, in accordance with the plebiscite after the first world war, was not returned to Denmark. Arne Bertelsen felt that an injustice had been done, and retained an active interest in the cultural and political strivings of the Danish minority south of the border in his mother’s old country. He shared this desire for helping the subdued in a national conflict with his friend and teacher, the outstanding surgeon Ole Chievitz at the Finsen Institute: characteristically, both of them served as surgeons in the Finnish army during the Finnish-Russian conflict up to the second world war. Pursuing his interest in public affairs, Arne Bertelsen became a Member of Parliament from 1960 to 1962 in the newly formed political party “the Independants”.

Professionally, already as an undergraduate Bertelsen made his keen personality felt among his fellow students and teachers. He graduated in 1935 and was then appointed prosector of anatomy at the University in Aarhus and assistant to the pathological anatomical institute at the Aarhus Municipal Hospital. His three years’ work there resulted in his thesis “Contribution to the Question of Normal Genesis of Blood Cells” by which he obtained the doctorate of the University of Aarhus—and also an offer from the university to take the chair of anatomy. However, his wish was to work as a surgeon; he moved to Copenhagen and had most of his training here at the University Hospital under Dahl Iversen. In 1945 he was chief of the hospital’s surgical polyclinic.
His main surgical interest became focused on orthopaedic problems. Among the many papers he published during his training, an important one was on the effect of bone marrow-extract on new bone formation. From 1945 to 1947 he went on a long tour to Sweden, England, the United States of America and Canada in order to study orthopaedic surgery at different centres. In America one of these was Phemister’s: the two men were already well acquainted on account of their common interest in experimental induction of osteogenesis. During his stay in England most of his time was with Archibald McNIndoe, and Arne Bertelsen became the first Danish surgeon with authorisation in plastic surgery. During his long tour he sent home regular reports to a Danish medical periodical: and a sometimes amusing and sometimes violent polemic occurred with the grand old man in Danish orthopaedic surgery, Paul Guildal. Later, when Arne Bertelsen joined the staff of the Orthopaedic Hospital in Copenhagen, they became close friends.

In 1949 Arne Bertelsen was appointed first assistant to Aage Bernsten and succeeded him in 1952 as chief of that department with Sven Kjaer—and later Erik Hjalmar Larsen—in charge of the other. Bertelsen was active in the development of the department for surgery of the hand under Knud Bang Rasmussen at the Orthopaedic Hospital in 1960, and of the department of orthopaedic surgery under Johs. Mortens at the University Hospital in 1963. In December 1968 he moved over to that department and was succeeded by Knud Jansen and later Jørgen Saugmann-Jensen at the Orthopaedic Hospital.

Arne Bertelsen was president of the Danish Orthopaedic Association from 1954 to 1956. In 1957 he was invited by the University of Copenhagen to take the chair of orthopaedic surgery. In his inaugural speech he stressed the necessity to break the traditional isolation of Danish orthopaedics under the institution for the welfare of cripples in Denmark. He urged the establishment of orthopaedic surgical units all over the country in relation to municipal and county authorities to deal with traumatic orthopaedics but also with definitive orthopaedic cases so far as they did not demand reference to specialised units. Many units for orthopaedic surgery have been set up all over the country within the last two decades along the lines that he advocated, a modern development which can be said to be his most important contribution to Danish orthopaedic surgery. Also, the Danish Orthopaedic Association is no longer an isolated scientific society but a branch of the Danish Surgical Association. An important example of this integration with other branches of surgery is the now established common programme of postgraduate training, courses and lectures.

Arne Bertelsen was one of the distinguished editors of Acta Orthopaedica Scandinavica. He was the orthopaedic representative on the Medico-Judicial Council from 1960 to 1964, and dean of the medical faculty from 1963 to 1964. He was a member of various boards, among others for the Fund for the Crippled and for technical help in underdeveloped countries. In spite of his administrative responsibilities, he found time to continue with his own research, and an important result of this was his analysis of cases of pseudarthrosis collected from all over Denmark. Under his guidance many young men started research and several theses were accepted for the doctorate of the university.

Bertelsen’s lively interest in the history of orthopaedics is known to the readers of this Journal: an elegant contribution “Fingers, Compensation and King Canute” was published in collaboration with Norman Capener in 1960. The two scholars had met each other the previous
year during the visit to Copenhagen of the British Orthopaedic Travelling Club. Bertelsen continued his historical works, and was at the time of his death engaged in an account of the development of orthopaedic surgery in Scandinavia.

By the death of Arne Bertelsen, Danish orthopaedic surgery has lost the man who for twenty years has led the speciality into the front line in the treatment of trauma and of definitive orthopaedics. For this he will always be remembered. J. M.

RADEN SOEHARSO
1912-1971

With the sudden death of Dr R. Soeharso on February 27, 1971, orthopaedic surgery in the Far East lost one of its most distinguished and remarkable exponents. Dr Soeharso was born in 1912 in Java, then under Dutch rule. He graduated in medicine in Surabaya, Java, in 1939 and after a visit to England in 1950-51 devoted himself to orthopaedic surgery and to the rehabilitation of the disabled in his native Indonesia. He was for many years director of the Orthopaedic and Rehabilitation Centre at Solo (Surakarta), where he established a unit of very high standards during a period of financial and political difficulty such as seems almost inevitable in a developing ex-colonial country. When the writer visited him there in 1960 he found a first-rate comprehensive orthopaedic hospital that would have stood out as an example even in the wealthier and more developed parts of the world. Faced with enormous problems in the fields of tuberculosis, poliomyelitis and leprosy, not to mention trauma, in circumstances that would have defeated most of us, Dr Soeharso by his courage, initiative and refusal to be overwhelmed produced a centre for the training of young surgeons, nurses and orthopaedic technicians that attracted visitors from all over the world and trainees from as far afield as Pakistan. His Children’s Rehabilitation Sheltered Workshop and the Paraplegic Institute that he founded in the city of Solo became famous throughout South-East Asia, and it is regrettable that the achievements of this remarkable man should have been known to so few here in Britain. Some British surgeons will remember meeting him at the Joint Meeting of Orthopaedic Associations at Sydney in 1970; and he was of course well known to the orthopaedic surgeons of Hong Kong and Singapore.

Dr Soeharso travelled widely. In the last few years he visited Hong Kong, Manila and Dublin as well as Australia. He published no less than eighty-six papers and was awarded many honours, mainly in the field of rehabilitation. He was a kind and considerate host, a cultured gentleman and a pioneer whom the writer is proud to have known. D. LL. G.