



**Dr H. L. Glyn Hughes, Member of the Foundation Council and first Honorary Treasurer
of the College**

BRIGADIER H. L. GLYN HUGHES

C.B.E., D.S.O., M.C., F.R.C.G.P.

HUGH Llewelyn Glyn Hughes was born in 1892. His father was a doctor who had emigrated to South Africa, from Anglesey, to practise in a small town south of Johannesburg. When he was two his father died of a 48-hour illness from pricking a finger at an operation. After this tragedy his mother returned to England, living for a while in considerable poverty.

At the age of about seven 'Hughie' was deemed to have curvature of the spine; his mother took him to a spa in Belgium where she was told that he would always be puny and underdeveloped and he was confined to a spinal carriage for a time. A few years later he entered Epsom College as a foundation scholar, and then his real life began. Later he used to say that he owed everything to Epsom where he was supremely happy and captain of rugby football.

From Epsom he went with a scholarship to University College Hospital where he studied until 1914. He had always wanted to be a soldier and, when the First World War broke out, he joined up at once only to be returned to the hospital to qualify as a doctor in 1915. Reporting again for duty, he began an outstandingly distinguished military career as medical officer with the Wiltshire Regiment and the Grenadier Guards, winning the *D.S.O.* and bar, and the *M.C.*

After demobilisation he worked as a general practitioner at Chagford, Devon, on the borders of Dartmoor, where he did many of his rounds on foot or on horseback; playing rugby football, golf, tennis, and any other sport that came his way. After a few years he moved to London, to practise in Kensington.

In 1940, soon after the outbreak of the Second World War, he dashed off into the Army a second time. Once again, his military record was phenomenal—winning a third *D.S.O.* in action at Arnhem where, as senior surviving officer, he took over command of the tanks.

At the end of the war with Germany he was the medical officer in charge of the liberation of Belsen concentration camp, with responsibility for the care of its inmates (most of them Jews) and for cleaning up the camp—an appalling experience. Subsequently, at the Lüneburg trial he was the first witness for the prosecution and described his encounter with the camp commandant, Kramer. Because of all this he became an almost legendary figure in Israel, which he visited later, more than once. He was created *C.B.E.* in 1945.

At the start of the National Health Service he was appointed first Senior Medical Officer of the South-east Metropolitan Regional Hospital Board. After that he was Director of the South-east London General-Practitioner Centre at Peckham for ten years. Later still he undertook for the Gulbenkian Foundation a survey on the care of the dying which was published under the title *Peace At The Last*. At one time he was Honorary Physician to the Queen; and at another he was President of the Harveian Society.

Games were one of the loves of his life, particularly rugby football which he played for University College Hospital, Blackheath, Middlesex, and Devon, and he was captain of the United Hospitals' XV. He represented the Barbarians first in 1912 and played

for them 20 times on nine tours. Later he became their President. In 1972 he was presented with a silver trophy at a Barbarian's match at Cardiff Arms Park on the 60th anniversary of his first Easter Tour with them. He was also fond of golf which he was still enjoying at the age of 81. He was president of many golfing societies, and was at one time a member of the General Committee of the Royal and Ancient at St. Andrews. He was appointed Chief Lucifer—a great honour in the golfing world.

By his first wife he had a son and two daughters—both of whom were nursing sisters at U.C.H. In 1949 he married Thelma whom we all know and admire, who had herself been appointed *M.B.E.* for services during the War and who did so much to help our College, with Hughie, in its early years. She was appointed one of our honorary fellows in 1962.

Hughie had always been interested in general practice. He was invited to join the College soon after its foundation—as a member of the Foundation Council. He became the Honorary Treasurer of the first College Council and set up a most useful and successful finance committee. In this capacity he was a great help during the next 12 vital, difficult years. Extremely energetic and hardworking, he was cheerful and encouraging. His personal experience of general practice and his administrative ability were most valuable on many occasions. With wonderful support from Sir Harry Jephcott, and from the pharmaceutical industry, he collected nearly half a million pounds for the first phase of the College's appeal, writing nearly all his letters longhand.

When his wife, Thelma, discovered that 14 Princes Gate, London S.W.1. was for sale they did some lightning negotiations which enabled Council in July 1962, to buy this fine freehold property (overlooking Hyde Park on one side and Princes Gate Gardens on the other), at only a few hours notice, for £175,800. They were largely responsible for furnishing it, too. It has more than 60 rooms, one of them large enough to seat 100 people for a lecture or dinner; and it has given the College a fine and much-needed headquarters which has steadily increased in value since then.

On the personal side we found Hughie virtually always the same happy, encouraging, optimistic person, readily willing to give thoughtful and helpful advice—characteristics which had made him so popular at school, on the rugby field, in the Army throughout two World Wars and, later, as a medical administrator in the young National Health Service. John Hunt considered he was the bravest man he had ever met. His three D.S.O.s and M.C. had indicated this before he joined the College; but several other occasions since then confirmed it; as, for instance, when severely ill from an abdominal complaint he was told by a surgeon how essential it was that he should have a major operation at once. However, he had promised to attend a celebration in America given by the survivors of Belsen—a commitment which he insisted on honouring before returning home for the operation which was, fortunately, a complete success even though the original serious diagnosis was confirmed.

Last November, at the age of 81, he attended the College's Annual General Meeting at the time of its 21st anniversary, when Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, handed over his Presidency. Hughie seemed then to be his usual cheery self; but a fortnight later he died suddenly in Edinburgh, a few hours after watching an international rugger match at Murrayfield. Surely, just the way in which one of the leading and most colourful figures of the College's early days would have wished to go.
