

Out of Hours Perry Harrison:

an appreciation



21 November 1915–29 September 2016

Herbert Percival Cooper (Perry) Harrison, FRCGP, Glasgow University, a founder member of the RCGP, died aged 100 on 29 September 2016. He practised as a single-handed rural GP for 35 years and was responsible for the College's coat of arms and its guiding motto: *Cum Scientia Caritas* ['Compassion with knowledge'].

He studied at the University of Glasgow where he gained a hockey blue, graduating in 1940. During the war he was a medical officer in the Merchant Navy with the Clan Line before serving in the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve as a Surgeon Lieutenant-Commander. This included spending 3 hours in an open boat when he was responsible for recovering badly-burned survivors from the wreckage of the frigate HMS Tweed: selecting those whom he believed most likely to survive.

On discharge he initially trained in orthopaedics before, in 1950, taking over a single-handed practice in Blane, north of Glasgow, following very limited experience as a GP locum in another practice.

He was a proud and enthusiastic founder member of the College, delighted that general practice was developing recognition as a discipline in its own right and serving on the West of Scotland Faculty Board for 13 years. Early on, he proposed to the College a scheme for undergraduates to gain experience in practice, and in 1953 he took his first student, for 2 weeks. By 1958, 98 Glasgow students per year were able to



One of Perrys' original sketches of the coat of arms featuring the College motto.

gain GP experience through this voluntary scheme. Dr Harrison ran the scheme for 17 years and supervised students himself for a total of 28 years. He also campaigned hard for, and was successful in seeing, the appointment of the first Chair of General Practice in Glasgow.

Dr Harrison was a talented artist, a skill he developed as a student to aid his studies. He was highly knowledgeable on heraldry and in 1956 proposed a coat of arms for the College. Over the next 6 years he refined the design many times before the present design was accepted, along with his suggestion for the college inscription: *Cum Scientia Caritas*. This motto has been adopted by other GP organisations across the world.¹

His practice was progressive and innovative and he was ably supported in its running by his wife Cecile. He was an early adopter of the improved A4 notes format and was an active participant in the local research group.

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In addition to his GP work he also administered dental anaesthetics and undertook additional work in the local psychiatric and geriatric hospitals. He relished the challenges of home deliveries, including once delivering a baby in the confines of a travellers' 'bender' tent.

Outside work he took great pride in his garden, was always active in the local church and volunteered with a local group recycling tools for African farmers. He continued to deliver meals-on-wheels until the age of 97. He was a passionate artist, carrying a sketchbook when out on home visits and continuing to paint in his retirement. He marked his 100th birthday with a watercolour exhibition and sale of over 50 paintings, the proceeds of which, over £3500, being donated to *Médecins Sans Frontières* and Practical Action.

In March I was lucky enough to interview Dr Harrison at his home, from where he used to practise in Blane. He warmly welcomed me, was fascinated by the ongoing developments in general practice and was delighted that the College motto is still seen as being as valid now as it was 50 years ago, in fact featuring in the title of RCGP Scotland's *Core Values* paper.²

I will remember a kind and warm-hearted man who also had the gumption and determination to contribute so much to the formative years of RCGP.

Miles Mack,

Chair, RCGP Scotland.

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2. Webster D. *Core values: Cum Scientia Caritas. Benchmarks, scales and yardsticks*. <http://www.rcgp.org.uk/-/media/Files/RCGP-Faculties-and-Devolved-Nations/Scotland/RCGP-Scotland/Core-values.ashx?la=en> (accessed 2 Dec 2016).