

Obituaries



Mark Dunkerton, FRCS

SMHMS 1972-1977

It is difficult to think of anyone who was as much talked about behind his back as Mark Dunkerton; he engendered so much laughter and affection simply by being the focal point of a multitude of anecdotes: "Did you hear about Dunkerton.?.?" being a common conversational entree at many parties.

Educated at Tormore, Kent and Cheltenham College, Mark was an achiever. Never the most diligent student at Mary's, his easy going manner, his love of life (assisted now and then by the odd pint of Guinness) and his impish sense of fun masked a determination to excel.

He always wanted to try new things, see new places and conquer new challenges. Whatever he set out to do, he determined to do it well, but always having fun at the same time. He negotiated his undergraduate course with ease, never appearing to exert himself; for instance he spent a residence at St Charles playing Montana Red Dog in the mess relieving the house staff of vast sums of money while he was supposed to be "on take". Yet he never failed a single examination.

His contribution to the Mary's 1st XV over five years was second to none both on and off the pitch. On the pitch he was an extremely fast striker of the ball at the scrummage although his throwing in at the line-out often favoured the opposition rather than his own team - something he put down to a chronically subluxed acromio-clavicular joint, the signs of which were curiously absent on examination.

Off the pitch he was frequently the centre of attention, especially from the female contingent (for some unknown reason), and various irate curry house owners (Mr Dilshad comes prominently to mind). He was responsible for keeping many a Paddington carpenter in business repairing Wilson House doors; such was his reputation that he was blamed for some damage done in London while he was in Botswana on elective!

Mark was an excellent climber, conquering peaks all over the world from Alps to the Rockies. His love of the mountains also extended to ski-ing whether off piste or beating the Army in downhill races. Golf, however, was not his forte as evidenced by his inability to hit a ball more than six inches off the ground or straight for more than six yards.

Having sailed through finals he became House Surgeon to Mr Walsh Waring and Mr Wright at W2 followed by six months in Bath where, with two friends, he lived in a house which quickly became dubbed the Hellfire Club and renowned for its all night parties.

Jobs at the Battle Hospital, lecturing in Anatomy at Mary's (where he developed his teaching skills) and at St Albans and St Charles developed Mark's interest in wielding the scalpel. Having successfully kept his appointments with the FRCS examiners, and stimulated by Mike Mowbray and Patrick Chesterman, he determined that a career in orthopaedic surgery was for him. It was during this period that he suddenly became smart; he discarded the various Dunkerton "emblems": the beer stained grey flannel trousers, the jacket, the orange anorak. Was this anything to do with his new girlfriend, Jill, his friends wondered?

He and Jill subsequently departed for a spell in Cape Town (where he worked as a consultant to the Trauma Unit at Groote Schuur) and then on to Sydney where they married, with the reception held in Sydney Opera House.

Following their return to the UK, Mark entered the senior registrar rotation at Mary's. At first he did not find this easy, as his knowledge and experience were in excess of his position; however, he quickly overcame this by devoting himself to teaching and study and, under the influence of Rolfe Birch, he developed his interest in upper limb surgery.

He and Jill were soon on their travels again to France where Mark worked for six months at Institut Francais de la Main in Paris and impressed all by his seemingly immediate grasp of the French language. It was only latterly that he let slip that he had undergone a crash course in French prior to his departure!