

## PROFESSOR CHARLES EDWARD ROSSITER (S49-55)

He was born on 5 December 1935 in Lobitos, Peru and after attending the College went to St Johns College, Oxford. There he obtained a BA in Mathematics in 1958, followed by a Certificate in Statistics in 1959. He obtained his MA in 1962.



After leaving Oxford his early appointments were :-

Scientific Staff (Statistician) MRC Pneumoconiosis Unit, Penarth	1959-1979
Assistant Professor of Medical Statistics McGill University, Montreal (on Sabbatical)	1966-1968
Head, Division of Computing and Statistics MRC Clinical Research Centre, Harrow	1979-1984
Head, Department of Occupational Health and Director, TUC Centenary Institute of Occupational Health London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine	1984-1988

Since 1989 he has been Emeritus Professor of Occupational Health at the University of London and Chairman of the Joint European Medical Research Board.

He was made an Honorary Member of the Society of Occupational Medicine in 1984 and an Honorary Fellow of the Faculty of Occupational Medicine at the Royal College of Physicians in 1985. He was also granted Freedom of the City of London in 1988.

Around 1990, at the age of 55, he largely gave up his academic career, maintaining just a few professional consultancies. He now enjoys the pleasures of South African sunshine, sporting facilities and wine. In 1990 he obtained a Doctor of Science in Medicine at the University of London, followed by a Batchelor of Science from the Open University in 1996.

As well as being the author or co-author of some 120 research papers, primarily on occupational health and on pregnancy outcome in Nigeria, his other extensive activities in detail are as follows :-

Chairman, Medical Section, Royal Statistical Society	1980-1982
Scientific Secretary, Scientific and Technical Committee, Joint European Medical Research Board (health hazards of man-made mineral fibres)	1976-1983
Scientific Adviser to EURIMA (European Insulation Manufacturers Association)	1983-2008
Epidemiological Advisory Committee, Central Electricity Generating Board	1980-1988

British Thoracic Society Research Committee	1983-1984
Editorial Board, Clinical Respiratory Physiology	1980-1984
Society of Occupational Medicine Committee, London Group	1980-1984
Treasurer, London Group	1986-1990
Council, Section of Occupational Medicine, Royal Society of Medicine	1985-1989
Council, Section of Measurement in Medicine, Royal Society of Medicine	1985-1989
Scientific Adviser English China Clays International	1989-1995
St. Mary's Coronary Flow Trust	1989-1995
Examiner, Associateship of the Faculty of Occupational Medicine	1986-1997
Member, World Health Organization Expert Advisory Panel on Occupational Health	1986-1992
Chairman, World Health Organization Study Group on Training and Education in Occupational Health	1986
Chairman, World Health Organization Expert Committee on Health Promotion in the Work Setting	1987
Rapporteur, World Health Organization Consultation on Setting a Health-based occupational Exposure Limit for Asbestos	1989
Chairman, World Health Organization Expert Committee on Occupational Epidemiology for Developing Countries	1989
Member, International Labour Office Expert Panel on the Revision of the International Classification of Radiographs of the Pneumoconioses	1989
Rapporteur	1990
Scientific Committee, Japanese International Workshop on Health Effects of Low Level Exposure to Fibres	1991

He passed away on Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> July 2017 aged 81. He had suffered from dementia for several years and slipped away peacefully due to pneumonia. The following is the eulogy given by his wife Jane.

## EULOGY TO CHARLES

*Thank you all for coming*

*Charles was very well known in Helderberg Village. He was co-opted onto the Board of Management within our first year in the village. He had stood up at a CEO's Chat Session and made some erudite comments, and was immediately earmarked as Board material. Whilst on the Board, Charles's particular portfolio was the Health Care Unit, Heatherton House. Charles was very involved in the enlargement of Heatherton House and the creation of the Special Care Unit for Dementia Patients.*

*Charles loved his golf, and served a term as Treasurer of the Golf Committee. In fact Charles loved all sport. He played rugby at school, cricket at school and subsequently, and he was an excellent squash player. We took up golf together, we took up running together and ran a half marathon for his 50<sup>th</sup> birthday, and we took up cycling together when Charles was 71. Charles did nothing by halves, so we joined the Pedal Power Association and almost every weekend saw us leave the village before dawn, bikes on the back of the car, off to a cycling event.*

*Charles was born in Peru. Why? He liked to say, his mother happened to be there at the time. His father was transport manager on the oil fields in Northern Peru. Charles lived in Peru until he was 8, then was sent "home" to England to go to school. He won a scholarship to Framlingham College in Suffolk, then to St. John's College, Oxford where got his degree in mathematics and went on to further study statistics, before beginning work in medical research. His daughter Jane has followed in his footsteps, graduating in maths from St. Hugh's College Oxford, then statistics, and on to a career in medical research.*

*Charles's research career started with coal-miner's pneumoconiosis, then asbestosis, and more recently the possible hazards of insulation fibres. He became an expert in lung x-rays and together with a colleague, John Gilson, developed The International Classification for the interpretation of lung x-rays.*

*In 1984 Charles was appointed to the Chair of Occupational Health at London University. This was a very controversial appointment, because the Chair should have been a medical doctor, which Charles was not. When the appointing Panel were asked why they chose him, they said that after many months of interviews, Charles was quite simply the best person for the job. While in that post, Charles became an Honorary Member of the Society of Occupational Medicine, an Honorary Fellow of the Faculty of Occupational Medicine, and a Freeman of the City of London. He liked to say this gave him the right to drive his sheep over London Bridge. When he stepped down from the Chair of OH, he was awarded the title of Emeritus Professor. In 1990, Charles obtained a Doctor of Science in Medicine from London University, followed by a Batchelor of Science from the Open University. He was the author or co-author of some 120 research papers.*

*Charles went on to a consultancy position with the Joint European Medical Research Board, as a statistician. The Board comprised doctors from every country in Europe, and the research papers they produced were in English, but what mangled English! Charles became indispensable in putting their efforts into impeccable English. Charles used a word processing programme called Word Perfect, and that pretty well sums up his attitude to the English language. He was also on around 14 other technical and scientific committees, not all at the same time.*

*We discovered Helderberg Village one Christmas while on holiday in Somerset West, where one of my sisters lived at the time. He spotted an advert for the village and we came to have a look. Charles was a creature of impulse, and the very next day we spent the whole morning back at the village, choosing a site and a house. We spent the rest of the holiday choosing knobs and knockers, paint colours and tiles, and went back to England to put our affairs in order. In November 1998 we moved in, and Charles became enthusiastically involved in many aspects of Village life. When people asked why we had moved to South Africa, Charles would reply: "the sunshine, the wine, and the exchange rate".*

*But his European bosses refused to let him resign, and with the help of modern technology his consultancy continued. They flew him, and me, to Europe every year for the annual conference. From as far back as 1988 onwards we had attended this congress, in a different city and country every time, and also the annual*

*meetings of their American counterparts. So I travelled the world with Charles, visiting places I had never dreamed I would see.*

*Charles was a self-taught computer expert. He was one of those rare people who would open the computer manual at page 1 and work through it until the end, by which time he understood everything and could do anything. He became a valued member of an internet forum helping people with their Word Perfect problems. He also became well known in the Village for helping anyone with their computer problems. He had endless patience with old ladies who had just acquired a computer and didn't have a clue. When they offered to pay him, he declined but asked them to make a donation to the Friends of Health Care.*

*Charles loved South Africa, and so do I. We had many wonderful holidays in the Kruger Park, Etosha Pan, several of the smaller game reserves, the Wild Coast, the West Coast, the Drakensberg. Great memories.*

*And so now I would ask you to raise your glass, or cup, and drink a toast to Charles.*

Jane kindly sent in this further tribute from a colleague who had worked with Charles and was Emeritus Professor of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, and Former Vice Chancellor at University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria, Kelsey A. Harrison :

### **Charles Rossiter: a short tribute**

Now that Charles Rossiter has left us, I wish to place on record his distinguished work and numerous acts of generosity towards making the world better than he found it. Here is just one example out of many such. In 1980, I had in my possession, the raw data collected from over 22,000 consecutive hospital births in Zaria, Northern Nigeria. Previous attempts at data analysis both in Nigeria and UK having failed, Frank Hytten, the then head of the Division of Perinatal Medicine at the Clinical Research Centre of United Kingdom Medical Research Centre at Northwick Park Harrow stepped in. He brought Charles Rossiter, the then head of the Division of Computing and Statistics, and I together, and the rest is history. In his capacity as the principal collaborator in the project, Rossiter saw early that we were on to something good for maternal health in Nigeria and beyond. A good listener, a fantastic networker, a reflective yet a decisive person, he took an active part in finding lasting solutions to every one of the numerous problems that came in our way - financial, managerial, administrative, academic and even personal. And when it was all over, the results, published in the British Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology in 1985, captured immediate global attention, and became a powerful force for good. He even gave me as a parting gift my first personal desk computer.

I cherish the life- long friendship forged. I was fortunate. I am grateful, and so are the women of Africa.



Kelsey A. Harrison, Emeritus Professor of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, and Former Vice Chancellor, University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria.