

# John Edmund Riding CBE

**Consultant Anaesthetist. Born 10<sup>th</sup> March 1924. Qualified MB ChB 1947. Died 17<sup>th</sup> June 2018.**

Edmund Riding was born in Ormskirk to parents who had no immediate connection to the medical profession but who were friendly with some general practitioners. He was educated at King George V School in Southport and, without difficulty, gained entry to the University of Liverpool Medical School, graduating in 1947. After the usual house officer positions he decided upon anaesthetics as a career and was appointed to the Royal Southern Hospital as an SHO. This was followed by training posts throughout the United Liverpool Hospitals. He progressed smoothly and satisfactorily and passed the Diploma in Anaesthetics examination and later, the recently introduced ultimate examination, the Fellowship of the Faculty of Anaesthetists.

He spent more time as a trainee, especially at registrar and senior registrar levels than was usual in those days. Thus, when appointed as a consultant to the United Liverpool Hospitals he was extremely competent and capable.

The 1950s and early 1960s were exciting times for anaesthetists in Liverpool. Cecil Gray, the pioneer of the "Liverpool Technique" was trying to perfect the concept which was gaining attention throughout the world. Edmund helped in many ways in its development. He gained the MD as a result of a study of the effects of premedication on the technique. A more crucial piece of research was showing how safe the then controversial drug neostigmine was when administered correctly.

In 1961 Riding was made editor of the British Journal of Anaesthesia, a post he occupied for twelve years with great distinction. Under his editorship its circulation increased greatly throughout the English speaking world. By this time, with his name on the cover of every journal, he was well known and was elected, at his first attempt, to the Board of the Faculty of Anaesthetists. A few years later, in 1976, he achieved the extraordinary and rare distinction of being elected Dean of the Faculty in his first period of office – a tribute to the esteem in which he was held by the leaders of the profession.

What he will probably be remembered for by those who were his colleagues was that he was a superb clinical anaesthetist. He worked quietly and efficiently and coped with the most major cases seemingly effortlessly. Needless to say, he was much admired by surgeons, nurses and technicians. He was also an innovator, establishing what was probably the first pain clinic in the country. It was always called the Riding Nerve Block Clinic and he attracted patients from all over the North West and from North Wales.

Outside his professional life, Edmund was a happily married man. He had met another SHO anaesthetist, Joyce and they embarked on a marriage which lasted for over sixty years. When twins were born, Joyce gave up work, as was common in those days, but later in life became a successful psychiatrist. In all his dealings Edmund was unfailingly friendly and polite. In fact there was great surprise among many of us when he was elected Dean so quickly - we thought he was too friendly and not ruthless enough for the job. But we were wrong – he was an outstanding Dean and was awarded the CBE for his services to the profession. He was also a most erudite man. He read widely and, if asked, would give his views on books and on authors. At about the age of sixty he had a bowel resection and was given a guarded prognosis. He died more than thirty years later of an unrelated condition.

After retirement, the Ridings moved to North Wales where they were able to indulge in their love of gardening in their spacious garden. Such was their skill that they achieved recognition by the Royal Horticultural Society and their garden was open to the public once each year. Joyce died in December 2017 after a long and painful illness. Edmund died six months later. Both had been cared for in the most loving way by their son Gordon, who, to their delight had lived near them for a number of years. Our sympathy goes out to him and their daughter, Heather, who lives in America.

R.S. Ahearn