

## Obituary

### ARCHIBALD YOUNG

1913–1996

Archibald Young was born in 1913 into a distinguished medical family. His father was a surgeon of international repute who followed Macewen to the Regius Chair of Surgery in Glasgow. On his mother's side he claimed descent from the famous Highland cateran Rob Roy. The family lived in great style in the fashionable Park area of Glasgow, and entertained Einstein on his visit to the University.

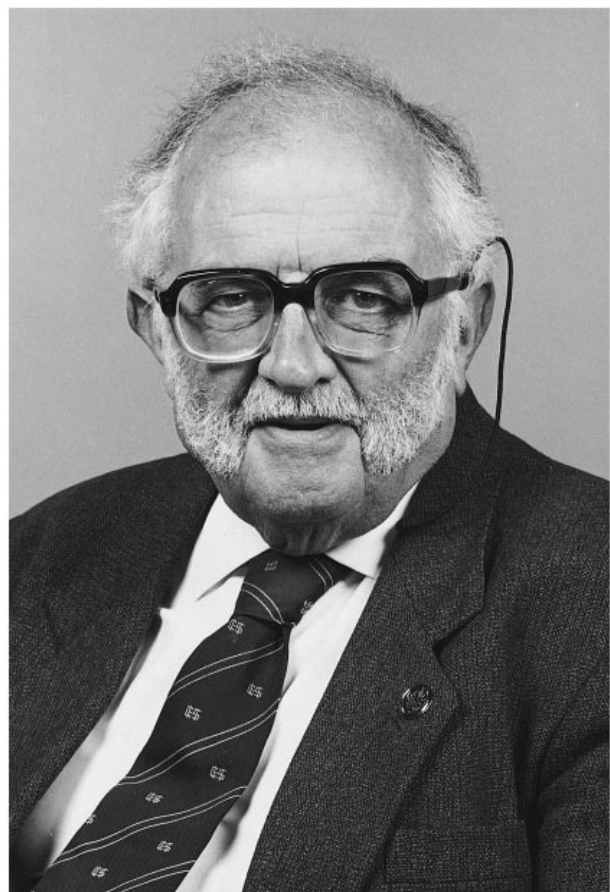
Young was educated at the High School of Glasgow and at St John's College Cambridge before returning to Glasgow to complete his medical training and take a number of junior clinical appointments in surgery and septic. When the Second World War broke out Young joined the RAMC and saw active service in North Africa and Italy. At the end of hostilities he was appointed to the Staff of the Anatomy Department in Glasgow, which remained his base for most of his career.

Young taught a wide range of anatomical subjects to medical, dental and postgraduate students, but became especially associated with the dental class. This class met in a long, low dissecting room designed by Sir Gilbert Scott, but later partitioned at one end to form a narrow polygonal classroom. It was in his setting that Young became a legend to generations of West of Scotland dentists. His inimitable style and quaint Cambridge mannerisms would provoke encouraging cheers from the class, while his characteristic spectacles, and in later years, full Dundrearies, proved irresistible to student engravers on the back bench. Young also taught postgraduates. He was no mean topographer, and his oblique sections of thigh struck terror in the hearts of FRCS students long before CT or MRI made such sections fashionable. Young also examined for the University and for the Royal College of Surgeons in Glasgow for many years. On these occasions he carried a telescopic pointer which he would pull out dramatically to draw the attention of the hapless candidate to some recondite canal in the sphenoid. Candidates had less to fear than they supposed, for Young was the very incarnation of the kind heart behind a forbidding exterior.

Young's first paper, in collaboration with R. J. Harrison, was a study of the flexor retinaculum, but his main scientific interest was to develop in em-

bryology and reproductive anatomy, particularly in association with Paul Bacsich with whom he shared a corridor in the Department. Young's early work involved ingenious experiments on transuterine migration of the ovum. From this he progressed to injection studies of the placental site, and of the transverse communicating artery of the placenta as a compensating mechanism. Around these formal investigations Young built up an astonishing range of research activities, many of which had a strong comparative interest. Sabbaticals took him to the University of Natal, to the Yerkes Primate Centre, and on safari to Kenya. At home he was a scientific fellow of London Zoo, and an enthusiastic and combative vice president of the Glasgow and West of Scotland Zoological Association. He was also an officer of the Scottish Aquarium Society and an acknowledged authority on cichlids.

A visit to Young's study in the Department bore witness to the depth and breadth of these interests. The walls were stacked from floor to ceiling with slide trays and specimen jars. Much of the floor space



would be taken up with piles of offprints and boxes of primate skulls. In the sink there might well be the fetal membranes of a llama from the zoo, and in an adjoining lab, trays of neolithic bone fragments undergoing analysis for the Ministry of Works. It was no surprise that Young was often forced to retire to the Common Room to find a space to write. These diverse activities brought Young enviable first hand experience and an unequalled circle of correspondents, but it made it difficult for him to draw the various threads together or to do justice to the more promising lines. It is for this reason that his potentially important work on the primate placenta and its circulation remained unfinished.

Throughout his career Young retained an active interest in the Society, reading research papers to meetings in the 50s and 60s and later serving on Council. With his burly figure, mischievous twinkle and ineffable thrawnness he became something of an institution at Society meetings. If he was sometimes a thorn in the flesh of officers and colleagues with his carefully timed points of order, he was also a doughty

champion of the rights and privileges of the ordinary member, warmly recalled in countless affectionate anecdotes. Young was rarely without his well loved *Practika* on Society occasions, and he must have amassed an invaluable photographic record of the Society's activities and personalities.

It would be easy to dismiss Young as merely bluff and eccentric. With his love of tradition, concern with natural history and fascination with the singular instance he represented everything that was best and worst about British anatomy. Yet this would be to judge the picture by its frame. Young was sincere, generous and sensitive. He had a great love of life and of living things, and he himself lived a good life abundantly.

Young owed a great deal to his wife Mamie, who was sensible, patient and supportive. They had 3 children, Archibald (Archie), Margaret and James. It is surely no accident that one went into academic medicine, one became a teacher and one practised as a vet.

JOHN SHAW-DUNN