

Dame Sheila Patricia Violet Sherlock

Dame Sheila was born in Ireland and educated at Folkestone Grammar School. When she graduated from Edinburgh University with honours in 1941 she was the Ettles Scholar of her year and went on to spend a year as clinical assistant to Sir James Learmonth in Edinburgh.

She moved to London and worked at the Hammersmith Hospital before going to Yale University on a Rockefeller Fellowship. In 1948, at the age of thirty, she was appointed lecturer and honorary consultant physician specialising in hepatology at the Hammersmith Hospital and Post-graduate Medical School and three years later was elected FRCP, by far the youngest woman to be elected to the College.

In 1959 she moved to the Royal Free Hospital and Medical School, retiring in 1983. Her department of hepatology was internationally famous as a centre for research and teaching. Sheila Sherlock was one of the founders of modern hepatology. She was exceptionally talented with a remarkable memory, strong intellect and the capacity to anticipate where the next advances in her discipline would occur. Her contributions to the study and clinical management of liver diseases were many and of fundamental importance.

She pioneered the use of percutaneous liver biopsy, elucidated the mechanism of portal hypertension, and was one of the first to appreciate the importance of immunological mechanisms in the pathogenesis of cirrhosis and hepatitis.

After retiral she moved to the Department of Surgery where she worked, wrote and maintained her extensive international connections. She wrote *Diseases of the Liver and Biliary System* which ran to eleven editions and has been translated into several languages.

She was the first woman to be appointed Professor of Medicine in the UK and the first to be appointed Vice-President of the Royal College of Physicians. She was the recipient of numerous fellowships and honours and was appointed a DBE in 1978, elected an Honorary Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh in 1989 and Fellow of the Royal Society in 2000.

Reproduced by permission of the University of Edinburgh Graduates Association. First published in the *University of Edinburgh Journal*, June 2002.

Dame Sheila Patricia Violet Sherlock MB, MD, FRCP, FRCPE, FRS; born 18 March 1918; elected HonFRSE 6 March 1989; died 30 December 2001.