Christopher Booth

RNVR	1942-1946	Professor and Director of Medicine	1966-1976
MB ChB (St Andrews) cum laude	1951	Royal Postgraduate Medical School	
MD (Rutherford Gold Medal)	1958	Director MRC Intestinal Malabsorption	1967-1972
LID (Hon) University of Dundee	1982	Research Group	
Knight Bachelor	1983	Director MRC Clinical Research Centre	1977-1988
Fellow Royal College Physicians (Lond)	1964	Northwick Park	
Censor and Member of Council	1974-1976	Editor of <i>Gut</i>	1975-1981
Fellow Royal College Physicians (Edin)	1967	President of British Society of Gastroenterology	1978-1979
Fellow American College Physicians (Hon)	1975	President of British Medical Association	
Dicke Gold Medal	1973	President of Royal Society Medicine	1988-
(Dutch College of Gastroenterology)		Chairman, Tropical Medicine Research Board	1981-1985
Docteur (Honoris causa) Université Paris VII	1975	of Medical Research Council	
Chevalier de l'Ordre National du Merit	1977	Chairman, British Council Medical Advisory	1979-1985
Docteur (Honoris causa) Université de	1981	Committee	
Poitiers		Chairman, Royal Navy Personnel Research	1985-
Ludwig Heilmeyer Gold Medal	1982	Committee	
(German Society for Advances in Internal		Chairman, Board of Science and Education	1988-
Medicine)		British Medical Association	
Lecturer and Senior Lecturer in Medicine	1959-1966	Chairman, The Coeliac Trust	1969-1983
Postgraduate Medical School, London		President, The Johnson Society of Lichfield	1987-1988

Christopher Booth

Christopher Booth retires this year after a career of great distinction. Born in Surrey, the twin son of the inventor of the telephoto lens, he was brought up as a Yorkshireman in the family house in Wensleydale. He was educated at Sedbergh School where he concentrated on history and foreign languages and did little science. After leaving school in 1942 he joined the RNVR as a seaman and rose to the rank of lieutenant. He served in the Far East where he met a St Andrews trained clinician who encouraged him to study medicine. He was accepted by St Andrews University and, after qualifying, he undertook house posts in Dundee. His special abilities were recognised and nurtured by the then Professor of Medicine, Ian Hill, who encouraged him to seek further training at the Postgraduate Medical School in London. And so Chris Booth became senior house officer to another eminent Scottish physician, John McMichael. There followed a year as registrar in medicine at Addenbrookes hospital before a return to Hammersmith as resident medical officer. From this post Chris Booth forged links with David Mollin in the Department of Haematology and rapidly showed a natural flair for identifying clinical problems which could be solved by available technology. His enthusiasm overcame his lack of experience in laboratory techniques and his work on the mechanism of absorption of vitamin B₁₂ earned him a Rutherford Gold Medal from the University of St Andrews. Throughout the 1960's he produced a stream of interesting work on the small intestine which encouraged many young clinicians to emulate his ability to use medical skills not only for the direct benefit of patients but also for the furtherance of knowledge.

In this Festschrift we trace Chris Booth's influence on British medicine through his professorship of Medicine at the Royal Postgraduate Medical School and his directorship at the MRC Clinical Research Centre, Northwick Park; through his collaboration with and encouragement of the medical services of the Armed Forces; and through his presidencies of the British Medical Association and the Royal Society of Medicine. We then go on to show how ideas initiated by him have been taken up and developed into substantial bodies of knowledge particularly in relation to vitamin B₁₂ and the structure and function of the small intestine. Papers from James Scott, and Soad Tabaqchali show how Chris Booth has never been frightened to explore the implications for gastroenterology of the new sciences especially those of immunology, cellular and molecular biology and genetics; and how he

has encouraged and enabled research fellows to outstrip him in scientific endeavour. In the final section of the Festschrift we explore Chris Booth's philosophy of using clinical problems as a start for exploring the unknown and indicate how his breadth of knowledge and humanity have had an influence far beyond the limits of British gastroenterology.

His contributions outside the world of academic medicine are demonstrated by the many tributes which we have received in preparing this publication. For example, Chris was one of the first physicians to support the development of patient support groups. In 1968 he agreed to chair the newly founded Coeliac Trust. Elizabeth Segal tells us that without his support during the critical early period the Trust might well have foundered. For 15 years Chris provided professional leadership and he has remained a Trustee of an organisation which now has more than 20 000 members.

Another side of his character is manifest through his deep involvement with the history of the Dales. His knowledge of Dales doctors led to an extraordinary train of friendship across the Atlantic. Dr George Corner and his wife Betsy, both distinguished American medical historians, approached Chris to work on the searching out and editing of letters written by a Dales doctor, John Fothergill who, as well as being an eminent physician, was also a close friend of Benjamin Franklin and the Quakers of Pennsylvania. A great deal of research led to the publication of a book with the delightful title *A chain of friendship: selected letters of Dr John Fothergill* edited by Christopher Booth and Betsy Corner. Regrettably, before the book was published, Mrs Corner died but Chris maintained his links with George Corner and frequently attended meetings of the American Philosophical Society of which Dr Corner was the executive officer. In 1977 Chris addressed this, the oldest learned society in the United States, and four years later received the rare honour of foreign membership.

Chris Booth has a deep love of the 18th century. Thus it is not surprising to find that he has been president of the Johnson Society. Robert White, chairman of the society, writes 'He brought to our Society the freshness, enthusiasm and vigour of the natural historian, for that is what we discovered him to be. In 1987 he delivered, to 200 members of the Society, the presidential address on 'Taxation no tyranny' . . . and he has responded enthusiastically to the notion of a medical history museum in Erasmus Darwin's house in Lichfield. He fell in love with

Lichfield and we with the warmth and unpretentious nature of his style and personality.'

Chris Booth's links with academic life extend throughout the world but those with mainland Europe are especially important. Professor Jean Jaques Bernier, Emeritus Director of Medicine of the Hospitals of Paris, and his colleagues Jean-Pierre Bader and Robert Modigliani write, 'Anglo-French co-operation has been dominated by the links between l'Inserm and four institutions – the CIBA Foundation, the Royal Postgraduate Medical School, the British Society of Gastroenterology and last but not least Sir Christopher Booth. After the war Professor Louis Bugnard head of French Medical Research Council (formerly INH and now INSERM), became impressed by the development of Clinical Science in Britain. Many brilliant young scientists including Serge Bonfils, Henri Sarles, Rene Lambert, Jean Paul Benhamou and A Ribet were recruited and Bugnard proposed that they should adapt the British experience of linking specialist training with clinical research.' Chris Booth, who is not afraid to speak in French or German, provided a warm welcome for these European visitors. Professor Bernier recalls that such visits helped transform not only university medicine in France but also

the somnolent French Society of Gastro-enterology which was founded before 1900. Again to quote from their letter, 'Chris Booth was aware of our difficulties and encouraged us; with his specific sense of humour he explained that things had not been easy on the British side of the channel. He made several trips to France as a cordial intermediary between British and French gastroenterologists. He was ever trying to perfect his French. At the end of one trip he told me 'Your friend Portos taught me a French expression I did not know.' Portos was adviser of our Health Ministry; he was very busy; he attended a lot of meetings which ended in only a few decisions. Portos said to Chris, 'En résumé: je pédale dans la choucroute.' Chris added 'pédaler dans la choucroute . . . What a beautiful expression! I will use it . . . for I am also doing that . . . sometimes!' It is difficult to imagine the one time 'enfant terrible' of British gastroenterology ever 'pedalling in sauerkraut'. We wish him well for a characteristically vigorous and productive retirement. Long may he continue to challenge and delight us with his contributions to academic life.

SIR FRANCIS AVERY JONES
and GRAHAM NEALE