

Tribute to JKS 5th March 2021

For Gail, her brother Nigel, Sian and others

As you are now aware my name is Ian Trail and I am one of John's colleagues at Wrightington Hospital. I have known John since I was appointed as a Hand Society Fellow at Wrightington in 1987. From that time on John became my teacher, mentor and then friend.

Gail, Sian and James have asked me to say a few words about John's professional life. As you appreciate this will be no mean feat.

John qualified in medicine from the University of Liverpool in 1968. At that time he had already met and married Gail. He underwent his basic medical training and then orthopaedic training in the Mersey region. Towards the end of his orthopaedic training John developed an interest in hand surgery and following a Travelling Fellowship to the USA he was appointed as a Consultant Hand Surgeon at Wrightington in 1979. From that time John set about building the Hand and what became the Upper Limb Unit. He remained Head of Service until his retirement 30 years later in 2009. At this time the unit has 13 Consultants and appoints 9 Fellows or Senior Trainees from around the globe annually. It is a unit of national and international repute. John was fiercely proud of that achievement. Be under no illusion, however, that without John's total dedication and determination that would not have been achieved. If you want to measure how John is respected at Wrightington Hospital, if you were to go there later you would see that the flags are at half-mast and at 10am today for 2 minutes the hospital fell silent.

Returning to 1979. On appointment John further developed his skills in hand surgery and undertook a number of presentations and publications. He became a member of the British

Society of Surgery of the Hand otherwise known as the Hand Society, ultimately being elected to Council and finally serving as President in 1999.

John held his Presidential meeting nearby in Blackpool. It was a joint meeting with the Swiss Hand Society. Whilst all those who attended will have particular individual memories, the meeting could only be described as “particularly unique”.

Prior to that in 1996 John had been appointed Professor of Hand Surgery at the University of Manchester. A rare appointment in those days.

The ultimate accolade, however, came in 2016 when John was appointed “pioneer in hand surgery” by the International Society of Hand Surgery. To put that in perspective, there have only ever been 10 such nominations from the United Kingdom. As such John’s name now sits alongside all the greats of hand surgery from around the world, those that have been, those that are now and those that will come after. A fitting and lasting tribute

John also supported other groups involved in the delivery of hand surgery. For example he was President of the British Association of Hand Therapists. He was also President at the British Rheumatoid Arthritis Surgical Society as well as being a founder member of the British Elbow and Shoulder Society. In addition he was an honorary member of the British Orthopaedic Association having given a prestigious Robert Jones lecture.

Towards the end of his career John developed an interest in surgery more generally and was elected to Council at the Royal College of Surgeons of England. Between 2010 and 2012 he served as Senior Vice President. The President of that day John Black is with us here today.

John, however, was more than a list of titles and appointments. He was also a great researcher. There are over 100 published articles on hand surgery in peer review journals that bear his name. I am honoured to say that I am a co-author on a number of them. He was also

a great writer and he wrote a textbook of hand surgery, particularly wrist arthroscopy but also multiple chapters for other books. His particular strength, however, was a teacher or lecturer and speaker. Whether that was to the Fellows at Wrightington who he taught up to last summer just before lockdown and more regionally, nationally and internationally. John would enthral his audience. He gave invited lectures to the American Hand Society, the Australian Hand Society amongst others. He also spoke at pretty much every European Hand Society including the Greek, Spanish, Dutch, Belgian, German and the French several times. He was an honorary member of most of those societies. I used to joke with him that that was rather ironic given that he was an avid brexiteer.

John also had an excellent relationship with patients. Many of them stayed under his care for all of his professional life whilst he reconstructed problems in their hands and wrists. Many of them suffering from that dreadful disease rheumatoid arthritis. Many of them still ask after him to this day. I was reminded earlier that John had the uncanny ability to assess the outcome of a surgical procedure merely from a patient's expression or appearance and if appropriate transfer the consultation to a colleague or willing Fellow.

As a final exercise I tried to identify one word that best described John's professional contribution, a descriptor if you like. Another difficult task. There are so many alternatives. He was obviously highly intelligent, cared for his patients and would always go the extra mile for them. He had a great sense of humour, a great teacher. He was also an innovator in that he helped to develop prosthesis to replace the finger joint and elbow joint as well as instruments for use around the wrist. He was also a pioneer, by that I mean he helped develop new techniques for hand surgery or refine older ones. Many of them are still in use today. He was described by many as charismatic. Certainly, in the operating room he was a master craftsman, master technician if you like. He made things look so easy annoyingly so at times. Many a visitor who came to watch him operate would say "how did he do that?" or "can you

show me that again?" The word I have chosen, however, is INSPIRATIONAL. John was inspirational to all those around him. This is not simply because of what you have just heard although that in itself would be enough. As you are aware, however, John had significant health issues for most of his professional life. Certainly all the time I knew him I can't remember how many times I have visited him in hospital. Gail would often say from a health perspective there were many dark days in John's life. Yet despite that, and at times he would talk about his health, it's effect on himself and others and it would be wrong to say that he took it lightly. He certainly didn't but he always appeared positive and enthusiastic. John was the definition of a glass half full. He retained and indeed refined his marvellous sense of humour. He would lighten many a tiresome journey or meeting usually with managers with amusing anecdotes. His disdain of authority was legendary. For me the most lasting memories will be of the fun and jokes we shared. John was also an ideas man, in fact brimming with ideas on occasion. Many of them brilliant, some let's say a little less practical. He was also a doer. He would put his shoulder to the wheel when needed to get an idea or project over the line. Yes John Stanley was truly inspirational to his colleagues, juniors and all those in his professional life and outside.

He will of course be fondly remembered and sadly missed by all his friends, colleagues, staff and patients at Wrightington Hospital past and present as well as his friends and colleagues at the Hand Society and the College of Surgeons. He will also be remembered more widely by all people from all four corners of the globe whose life he touched. On a personal note and I think I can speak for his close colleagues that we have lost a dear dear friend who will be sadly missed.