**AGENDA ITEM 1.8**

**OBITUARY**

**MR JOHN HARGRAVES HODGSON FRACS
GENERAL SURGEON
01 SEPTEMBER 1924 – 12 SEPTEMBER 2021**

**A Life Well Lived**

John was born in Lane Cove, on 1st September 1924. He was the firstborn child of John Hargraves and Edith Mary Hodgson (nee Jacobs). His brother Bill was born two years later on 12th September 1926 (12th September would be the day many years later that John would pass away), and his sister Judith was born 18th September 1928. John survived both his siblings, and to the very end spoke with much fondness of them. Very much involved in the raising of the three children, were Auntie Bessie and Auntie Jean, sisters to Edith, and much loved by John. A happy childhood in Lane Cove was recounted with stories of playing in the bush across the road, making and riding billy carts on the local streets (including a crash into a neighbour's perfectly manicured garden), design and construction of a garden house, tending to the chooks and enjoying his father's beautiful garden - perhaps even learning a few tips that contributed to him creating his own wonderful garden at the family home in Cheltenham years later.

The Hodgson family attended St Aiden's Anglican Church in Longueville, where John was part of a choir and his life-long faith was born. An active involvement in Scouts was a highlight of John's younger years, where he served as a leader in the 1st Longueville "Coachwood Patrol", attended the 1938 Jamboree in Bradfield Park, and ultimately became a King Scout. In holidays he earned money working in McDowell's General Store, a business managed by family friends.

John went to Lane Cove Primary School, North Sydney Chatswood Junior High School and finally North Sydney Boys where he did his Leaving Certificate, entering Sydney University in 1942 to study a Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery (MBBS). An important part of his university degree was the time spent in training at Sydney Hospital, as was his belonging to the Sydney University Rugby Union Team. TI1e striped jersey he wore as a player for that team remained in our family home for many years, quizzically becoming the wrapping for human bones John had used in his studies - a great fascination to his daughters and their visiting playmates. Testament to John's eye for detail are his precise and beautifully executed histology drawings done while at university, and now held as part of a Sydney University museum collection.

A memory John fondly recalled from his university days was a holiday break where he worked as a Jackaroo at Hillston in Western NSW.

Graduating from Sydney University in 1947, John's first medical posting was to Tamworth and later to Tasmania, where he worked in Launceston General Hospital as well as for Tasmanian Government Health which took him around the state, including a memorable visit to Flinders Island. He thoroughly enjoyed his time working in both Tamworth and Launceston, with Tamworth being the place where a new friendship with (unbeknown to hi1n, his future wife's second cousin), would eventually lead to him meeting his beloved Gaya a number of years later in London, and Launceston being where he joined the local Walking Club - hiking and skiing the rugged mountains and bushland of the area. John's interest in photography at the time resulted in many hand developed black and white photos detailing his Tasmanian adventures- precious prints we are grateful to still have.

John's desire to practice fully as a Surgeon, took him to London in 1952 with the aim of studying to become a Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons (FRCS) where he completed his primary exams in Edinburgh and finals in London. His passage to London aboard The Blue Star, a frozen meat ship, was paid for by working as the ship's surgeon, for which in addition to his board, meals and passage, he received a wage of one shilling. The ship travelled via Wellington, New Zealand to pick up goods, and then while sailing across the Atlantic Ocean, the ship's Steward announced that the King had died. Consequently, John was in England for the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II, lining the streets with the crowds to watch the young Queen pass by. A detailed diary entry for that day speaks of John's excitement and adrenalin at being part of that historic occasion.

John lived in England between 1952 and 1958, making his base in London House. From there he would come and go, including a year of working at Royal Portsmouth Hospital, six months in Bath Hospital, as well working and studying at the Orthopaedic Hospital in Oxford, Nuneaton and Tooting Beck Hospitals. He enjoyed adventures in travels around Britain and Europe with friends Trevor Telfer and Peter Ratcliff, where stories of "brushing his teeth in wine" emerged, as well as fly-fishing with an Irish Consultant in the creeks around Bath, and golfing on the local greens.

December 31st, 1957 turned out to be a pivotal date in John's life, as this was the day of his introduction to Mary Gaya Montgomery, a beautiful young nurse from New Zealand, at a New Year's Eve gathering at 88a Lexham Gardens, London. John was nearing the end of his time in England at this point, returning to Australia in early 1958 aboard The Orontes, a passenger liner, this time working as the Assistant Surgeon, and travelling via The Suez Canal.

A drug addicted chief surgeon on The Orantes, meant that although John was only the assistant, he ended up doing most of the work. Gaya returned to New Zealand in March 1958, receiving letters from John at every port along the way, showing her that he was definitely keen and wanting to continue the relationship. Not long after returning home, Gaya responded to John's request to "come and work in Australia" where in November 1958, John and Gaya became engaged and later married on 6th March 1959 at St Steven's Presbyterian Church, Macquarie Street, Sydney.

By this time John had joined the Pennant Hills Medical Practice of Clyde and Harold Davis, later known as Hampden Clinic, a surgery that John would work at all his professional life, serving families and the community with dedication and personal care for many years. Testament to John's care as a Doctor are the many words of gratitude and appreciation flowing through to the family since his passing.

After a honeymoon in Narooma on the NSW south coast, John and Gaya lived in a small unit above a butcher's shop on Pennant Hills Road - at that time only two lanes, not six, with very little traffic. TI1is butcher's shop would later become "TI1e Black Stump" restaurant. A move to Malton Road, Beecroft in August 1959 began a life-long association with the Beecroft Cheltenham community, and was where Christina (19/2/1960), Felicity (12/6/1962) and Annabel (9/8/1964) were born. The family home was built at 12 Argyll Place Cheltenham and the family moved there on 15th February 1966, the day after decimal currency came in, and this was where Georgina was born ( l/3/1968) and the family of four girls grew.

Family life in Cheltenham was warm, loving and full, with John continuing to devote much of his time to his work, while also being a dedicated and hard-working Dad. John completed further study for his Fellowship of the Royal Australian College of Surgeons (FRACS), attended Lodge meetings with his friend Alan Bruce, in the tradition of his father and grandfather, and became part of the Beecroft Presbyterian Church with his family, where he was an elder for 3 years between 1977 and 1980. The addition of Sirius, the beloved family Dalmatian to the family in 1973 added much richness and fun, as well as giving John a morning running companion. Fitness was important to John, with regular running, squash and golf being part of his life, as was a commitment to the latest research into healthy eating and ensuring the family menu reflected this research - not always to the agreement of the family! Family life was enriched for all when John and Gaya joined with three local families in the early 1970s to initiate and build a community pool shared between the families. The unique nature of this project brought the local paper to the pool's opening, where a photograph showing all the families' children gathered on "the love seat" was taken and published. Many happy times were spent swimming in this pool.

John's decision to join the Rotary Club of Beecroft in 1972 was the start of a 47 year long association which saw John involved in countless community service projects, fellowship and long-lasting friendships. An achievement of which Dad was very proud was his involvement in the world wide eradication of Polio, during his tenure as Club President in 1987-88. In 1993 John was made a Paul Harris Fellow, and in 2020 he was made an honorary inember of the club. It was touching to hear from the Club's current committee, that on hearing of the passing of John on Sunday, the club honoured him at their Monday night meeting with a minute's silence.

In addition to John's involvement in his local community, he prioritised yearly family holidays with trips to the NSW south coast in summer and Perisher in winter. Accepting an invitation to join the Kiandra Pioneer Ski Club in 1968 was the beginning of a treasured family connection to the Snowy Mountains for all the generations that have followed.

When John retired in 1991, he continued to involve himself in the community, as well as tapping into his creative side once more. He joined Gaya in her Friday morning painting outings with "TI1e Plein Air Painters", travelling each week to beautiful Sydney locations, often on the harbour, to capture the landscape in oils and watercolours. He also joined the group on a number of painting holidays to various parts of the country, as well as being involved in the Ryde Art Society and Medical Art Group.

He and Gaya travelled to Tahiti with the Kuringai Medical District Association in 1990, to Thailand with a group of teachers, led by friend Bill Grant, in 1991, and then in 1993, they undertook a special retirement trip traveling through Eastern Europe on a Musical Tour, which they thoroughly enjoyed. Joining a "Growth Group" with the church at this time, saw him dedicate himself to studying the bible and seeking to know more about God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

In 2014, John and Gaya moved to TI1e Lakes Retirement Village, Cherrybrook, where John continued to contribute to community life as always. Deteriorating health in 2019 meant that John lived his final days at Mark Donaldson VC House in Galston, where he was fondly known as "Dr John", and even with declining mental capacity, showed concern for fellow residents, by offering to write them scripts when they were feeling poorly.

John lived life to the full, with colour, style and dignity. He was steered by an energetic, compassionate and enquiring mind, and a heart that loved to care for others. He lived in service to his profession, community, family and God, passing away at 6am on 12th September 2021, at the grand age of 97 years.

You were loved by many and will be missed deeply. Rest in Peace dear John.

*This Obituary was written by John and Gaya's daughter: Annabel Dodd*