

Obituary

KENNETH D. KEELE, MD, FRCP (1909–1987)

With the death on 3 May 1987 of the distinguished physician and medical historian, Kenneth Keele, the world of scholarship has sustained an irreplaceable loss, especially in the field of Leonardo da Vinci studies.

Kenneth David Keele was born on 23 March 1909 in Highbury, London. He came from a medical family; his father and grandfather were medical practitioners, as were his two brothers, one of whom, Cyril Keele, is Emeritus Professor of Pharmacology at Middlesex Hospital Medical School, London. Kenneth was educated at Epsom College (where Alfred White Franklin was a fellow pupil), and in 1927 proceeded with a scholarship to St Bartholomew's Hospital Medical School. As a student, he won the William Harvey prize for physiology and was president of the Abernethy Society. He graduated in 1932, and two years later obtained the MD and MRCP.

Following junior posts at St Bartholomew's and the Royal Northern Hospital, London, he developed an interest in cardiology and was clinical assistant to Sir John Parkinson at the National Heart Hospital, London. He was appointed to the staff of St Pancras Dispensary, Evelina Hospital for Children, London, and King George Hospital, Ilford; he also established a Harley Street practice.

With the outbreak of the second world war, Kenneth became consultant physician at St Bartholomew's Emergency Medical Service Hospital at St Albans. In 1941, tragedy befell him when his first wife (née Doris Berther) died suddenly in late pregnancy from the rare complication of spontaneous haemorrhagic infarction of the suprarenal glands, which Kenneth described in a classic paper based on personal observation of his wife's illness.

The next four years, 1942–46, were spent serving with the Royal Army Medical Corps, in which he rose to the rank of lieutenant-colonel. He was posted to India and as officer in charge of sprue research at Poona he made important contributions to the study of tropical sprue, which was prevalent among the Chindits and other troops engaged in the Burma campaign. At Poona too, Kenneth met his second wife (née Mary Thrussel), then serving as a Queen Alexandra's Royal Nursing Corps nursing sister. Their marriage was a happy one and three children were born to them, but sadly their elder son was killed in a traffic accident. Mary Keele was later the author of *Florence Nightingale in Rome* (1981).

On demobilization in 1946, Kenneth was appointed consultant physician at Ashford Hospital, Middlesex, where he remained for the next twenty-five years until his retirement from clinical practice in 1971. At Ashford, his clinical talents were stretched to the full, his major interests being the study of pain and the development of angiocardiology. He was the first in Great Britain to apply the latter technique to the diagnosis of congenital heart disease (1948). He was elected a member of the Association of Physicians of Great Britain and a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians of London in 1951.



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With the introduction of the National Health Service in 1948, his colleagues at Ashford soon recognized Kenneth's administrative and organizational flair, and he served as chairman of the Medical Committee, a member of the Hospital Management Committee, and a member of the Medical and Research Committees of the North West Metropolitan Regional Hospital Board; he was also Chairman of the Middlesex Medical Society. His numerous clinical publications included *Intra-abdominal crises* (1961), written jointly with his surgical colleague, Norman Matheson.

All this clinical activity was merely a backcloth to what was to become Kenneth Keele's abiding passion, the study of his hero Leonardo da Vinci, as well as medical history in general—interests that dated back to his student days. His published works on Leonardo da Vinci are too numerous to itemize here and a comprehensive bibliography will, no doubt, appear in due course. Suffice it to mention his *Leonardo da Vinci on movement of the heart and blood* (1952), *Leonardo da Vinci and the art of science* (1977), and *Leonardo da Vinci's 'Elements of the science of Man'* (1983). In addition to these monographs, there were numerous articles and essays contributed to journals and collected works, including studies on Leonardo and the central nervous system, the physiology of the senses, and anatomical illustration.

Kenneth Keele participated in several important exhibitions of the works of Leonardo da Vinci for which he wrote the medical and anatomical introductions to the catalogues. These included the quinqucentenary exhibition of the Royal Academy of Arts, London (1952); the exhibition at the Queen's Gallery, Buckingham Palace (1969–70); and the exhibition of anatomical drawings from the Queen's collection at Windsor Castle, held at the Royal Academy (1977). He delivered lectures on Leonardo at the Royal Academy in 1952 and 1977, as well as at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, in 1984. Kenneth's studies of Leonardo were crowned by the publication of the magnificent three-volume *Corpus of the anatomical studies in the collection of H.M. the Queen at Windsor Castle* (1979–80), which he co-edited. Kenneth developed a remarkable facility for reading Leonardo's quaint Italian mirror-image script, and became acknowledged internationally as the greatest authority on the anatomical and medical aspects of Leonardo da Vinci's works.

Kenneth Keele was intimately associated with the Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine, London, where he was Research Fellow 1970–75. His close friendship with Noël Poynter led to their joint authorship of *A short history of medicine* (1961) and it was appropriate that Kenneth should deliver the second Poynter Lecture of the British Society for the History of Medicine at the Wellcome Institute in 1985.

Kenneth Keele was much in demand as a lecturer both at home and abroad. He was Fitzpatrick Lecturer at the Royal College of Physicians of London (1960–61), his lectures being published in book form, *The evolution of clinical methods in medicine* (1963). He was Noguchi Lecturer at Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore (1958), Guthrie Lecturer at the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh (1965), Arnott Demonstrator at the Royal College of Surgeons of England (1966), John Fulton Lecturer (Inaugural) at Yale University (1978), and Cohen Lecturer at Liverpool University (1979). While visiting professor in the history of medicine at Yale University in 1958, he delivered the Beaumont Lecture entitled 'The Genesis of Mona Lisa', in which he considered pregnancy to be the secret of her enigmatic smile. Subjects

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of his lectures other than Leonardo da Vinci included John Hunter, Thomas Willis, and William Harvey. Of the last, he wrote an outstanding study *William Harvey, the man, the physician and the scientist* (1965).

Kenneth Keele was the recipient of many honours. A Fellow of the Royal Society of Medicine, he served as a member of Council and was president of the Section of History of Medicine 1960–62. At the Society of Apothecaries of London he was a Liveryman, an Honorary Fellow of the Faculty of History and Philosophy of Medicine and Pharmacy, and delivered the Osler Lecture (1960) and Sydenham Lecture (1973), as well as lecturing to the diploma course. He served as vice-president of the British Society for the History of Medicine, was a member of the Osler Club of London, an Honorary Member of the Harveian Society of London, and a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts. He was also elected a member of the International Academy of the History of Medicine and of Ente Raccolta Vinciana.

Kenneth Keele's industry and the magnitude and excellence of his published works were phenomenal. All who came in contact with him were impressed by his modest intellectuality, his complete integrity, and his kindly, loveable nature. Towards the end of his life, his failing eyesight proved a problem which he overcame with characteristic fortitude. Neither did this handicap dampen his enthusiasm for his final project—the creation in 1986 of the Leonardo da Vinci Society. This society was Kenneth's brain-child and it was therefore appropriate that he should be elected its first president. Following his death, it will be even more important to ensure that the Leonardo da Vinci Society flourishes as a permanent memorial to the inspiration and scholarship of its founder.

ALEX SAKULA

LEONARDO DA VINCI SOCIETY

It is proposed to establish a fund to enable the Society to make a study award to a young Leonardo student or scholar in memory of Dr Kenneth D. Keele. Contributions will be gratefully received by the Hon. Secretary, Professor J. B. Trapp, The Warburg Institute, Woburn Square, London WC1H 0AB. Cheques should be made out to *Leonardo da Vinci Society*.