Honorary Fellow
A Citation

Kenneth Edward Frederick Hobbs, MCh, FRCS

Professor Kenneth Hobbs is one of Britain's most distinguished surgeons, a pioneer in the field of liver surgery. In recent years he has become a highly public figure in the United Kingdom as Vice-Chairman of the Professional Conduct Committee and Chairman of many of its panels of enquiry into the misconduct of doctors at the General Medical Council, where he has been intimately involved in the reform of British medical practice. Since 1998 he has been Emeritus Professor of Surgery at the Royal Free Hospital School of Medicine at the University of London, where he was Professor of Surgery for twenty-five years.

Kenneth Hobbs was born and grew up in London, apart from a period during the Blitz that he spent in the Norfolk countryside – where he now lives. Since the age of seven his only ambition was to be a surgeon. As a child he loved modelling with his hands and building crystal wireless sets with his father, a pioneer in radio communications who worked with Marconi. He was educated at a local grammar school in Bury St Edmunds and in 1954 entered Guys Hospital School of Medicine at the University of London. He did his surgical training working long hours at various English hospitals, covering the whole field of general surgery. He became a Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons in 1964.

One of the turning points in his career came in 1966 when he took up a Lectureship in Surgery at the University of Bristol. There they were beginning a research programme on liver transplants in pigs. These were the early days of such work on an organ that had traditionally presented severe difficulties to surgical procedures. Other challenges in the field included the search for a method of preserving donor organs, a problem Professor Hobbs worked on in 1968 to 1969 while he was a research Fellow at the Harvard Medical School. At the Massachusetts General Hospital he managed to freeze-preserve a rat's heart for several hours, a world record that he still holds!

In 1973, at the age of 37, Kenneth Hobbs broke a tradition of 150 years when he was appointed foundation Professor of Surgery at the Royal Free Hospital. Here he was able to work with the legendary Dame Sheila Sherlock, Professor of Medicine at the Royal Free, and affectionately known as the "queen of liver medicine". Professor Hobbs became part of a small band of surgeons around the world who were pioneers in the field of liver transplants. Among other things his team made important breakthroughs in methods of dealing with portal hypertension and the resultant bleeding into the gut and the treatment of liver cancer. These were exciting years for Professor Hobbs, when promising young surgeons such as our current Vice-Chancellor beat tracks to the Royal Free to learn about the latest techniques in liver surgery.

In 1996 the Professional Conduct Committee of the General Medical Council made headlines in all UK newspapers when it enquired into the surgeons involved in the so-called "Bristol babies heart scandal". The Committee was chaired by the President of the GMC with

Professor Hobbs as the Surgical Member. These Bristol surgeons had kept performing heart operations on babies despite unacceptably high mortality rates, which they failed to disclose to the parents concerned. In the wake of eight months of hearings, Professor Hobbs and the General Medical Council appreciated the need for a whole new approach to medical malpractice in the UK. Whereas formerly the only choice of the GMC had been whether or not to strike a practitioner off the medical register for misconduct, it now developed an innovative assessment of professional performance procedure. This instituted a graduated and remedial approach to any specific deficiencies identified in the performance of medical practitioners brought before the Committee. In many cases practitioners found to have seriously deficient professional performance are now given retraining, thus preventing the waste of resources involved in removing doctors from the medical register. Professor Hobbs has been heavily involved in the GMC's development of this, which constitutes one of the most significant reforms of medical practice in the UK in recent years.

Professor Hobbs has held many important administrative posts at the University of London, such as being Dean of Medicine from 1994 to 1998. He has worked on important local and national British medical committees in the National Health Service, the UK University Grants Committee, the Medical Research Council as well as the GMC. He has had many visiting appointments at leading universities in North America, Australia, Africa, Europe and Asia, including the Chinese University of Hong Kong, where he has been an External Examiner in the Department of Surgery. Here he has participated in many academic meetings and seminars organized by the Department and has given advice that has significantly contributed to the development of Surgery as a discipline at the Chinese University. He has held visiting professorships at, among other places, Harvard, Cape Town, Johannesburg, Beijing, Shenyang, Sri Lanka and Gothenburg. He has been awarded an 'International Master Surgeon' title by the International College of Surgeons and an Honorary Fellowship of the College of Surgeons of Sri Lanka. He has published over 230 research papers in various areas of surgery and medical education. He is a member of the editorial board of several important international medical journals and a reviewer for such prestigious publications as *The British Journal of Surgery*, *The Journal of Hepatology* and *The Lancet*. He is also a member of many national and international societies concerned with surgery, surgical research, hepatology and medical education.

Mr Chairman, Professor Kenneth Hobbs is a highly respected member of his profession, a man of international eminence in the field of liver surgery and a leader in the reform of British medical practice. It is my honour to present him to you for the award of an Honorary Fellowship of the University.