

Robinson, Mervyn Henry Bowzer (1903- 1963)

Mervyn Robinson was born in January 1903 in Melbourne, the son of the Rev Thomas Robinson. He received his early education at St Paul's School, at that time associated with the Cathedral, where he was a chorister and acquired his knowledge and love of music. He then proceeded to All Saints School and Melbourne Grammar School. From the latter he obtained an exhibition in English, first-class honours in Latin and the White scholarship to Trinity College, Melbourne University. While at the University he rowed in the Eight. He qualified MBBS in 1926, followed by a residency at the Alfred Hospital in 1926-27 and the Mooroopna Hospital in 1927-28. He then worked as a ship's surgeon for a time and came to England in 1931.

As this was the period of the depression, to go overseas demanded parsimonious self-denial, but on reaching England he was lucky enough to obtain a research appointment at the Royal College of Surgeons, working on the parathyroid glands and being paid four guineas a week. He was one of the earliest students to live in London House, then quite new, and at the same time was able to work for the Primary. In 1932 he married Marie Heath, and while working for his Final was at Highgate and St Charles' Hospitals, being given the post of resident surgical officer at St Charles' after being admitted FRCS in 1935.

In 1937 he returned to Australia and in 1938 joined Dr J Gardiner and Dr H Pearce in practice in Ballarat. Soon after, he was appointed surgeon to Ballarat Hospital and the Queen Elizabeth Home for the aged and infirm. He also joined the reserve of the RAAF and in 1939 served with No 3 MRS in New Guinea attaining the rank of Wing Commander. In 1945, reverting to the Reserve, he returned to practice in Ballarat where he was appointed orthopaedic surgeon to the Repatriation Department.

In 1953 he was elected to represent the Ballarat Subdivision of the Council of the Victorian Branch of the British Medical Association, remaining on it to become President in 1963 shortly before his death. Conscientious to a degree, he made the long journey from Ballarat to Melbourne many times a year in all weathers.

In addition, he acted as an examiner in surgery for the Victorian Nursing Council. He carried out good, sound surgical work in all fields, with special interest in orthopaedics in which he was a skilled operator, and he took great care in the training of his house officers and nursing staff. He was widely read with a great knowledge of history, music and the arts. An ardent member as a cellist of the Ballarat Symphony Orchestra, he served on its committee and, for a period, as its President.

He died on 6 July 1963 suddenly at the annual dinner of the Victorian Branch of the BMA aged 58, survived by his wife Marie and their two sons and daughter.

Last updated 31 March 2025.

Sources: RCS "Lives of the Fellows", E005316; Liber Melburniensis; MJA 4/1/64, P.21.

Draft compiled by Allan Mawdsley

