

The Guardian

Other lives
Medical research

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Obituary

Geoffrey Woodward obituary



Geoffrey Woodward was principal optometrist at Moorfields eye hospital in London and a member of the College of Optometrists

My friend and colleague Geoffrey Woodward, who has died aged 79, did a great deal to enhance the profession of optometry. He was principal optometrist at Moorfields eye hospital (1976-87) and professor of optometry and visual science at City University, London (1987-99).

Geoff's wish to see members of the public protected in their dealings with optometrists and dispensing opticians led to his service on the General Optical Council (1977-2000). He was also concerned with how the profession should best be run, as a council member of the College of Optometrists (1980-98), with a year as president (1983-84).

Born in Leamington Spa, where his father was a chief inspector of police, Geoff was educated at Warwick school. He qualified in optometry at the Northampton Polytechnic (in London, where it is now part of City University) in 1956. Eight years later, following

national service in Malaya, he set up a contact lens practice in Nottingham, while providing optometric services to the RAF hospital at Nocton Hall in Lincolnshire. His interest in contact lenses led on to a PhD on keratoconus, a condition in which the normal shape of the cornea is lost and in which contact lenses can often restore good vision, while spectacles generally cannot. He also played a big part in the development of standards for the solutions with which contact lenses are maintained, there having been none such previously, and became involved in early initiatives to secure the right to independent prescribing of drugs for suitably qualified optometrists.

Invitations came to take his expertise to Hong Kong, the Netherlands, Scandinavia and the Irish Republic, and he authored or co-authored more than 60 peer-reviewed scientific publications.

In the arts Geoff was a particular follower of Wagner and the writer Anthony Powell. For years Geoff and his wife, Elizabeth, owned a narrowboat, which allowed them to range freely over inland waterways and which became a second home. Latterly, they undertook tours on international cargo vessels, always accompanied by heaps of books.

A ready listener, Geoff was always helpful and generous, both to me and to many others. In conversation, his well-developed sense of humour was always near the surface.

He is survived by Elizabeth, his daughters Leonora and Ann Louise, and five grandchildren.

Edwin Woodward Obituary

Edwin Geoffrey, Emeritus Professor of Optometry and Visual Science, City University, London. Formerly Principal Optometrist Moorfields Eye Hospital, London. Died at home on 9th November 2013, aged 79. Much loved husband of Elizabeth, loving father of Leonora and Ann Louise. Proud grandfather of Nicholas, Eleanor, Rosanna, Rory and Flora. Respected father-in-law of Ian and Matthew. Geoffrey bequeathed his body to The Department of Human Anatomy and Genetics at Oxford University. A Memorial in celebration of Geoffrey's life will be held in the New Year.

ISCLS
Past Greats



Edwin Geoffrey Woodward

Past away in 2013

- 1952 joined the Northampton Institute to study Ophthalmic Optics
- 1955 National Service in Europe and Malaya, OO RAMC
- 1957 Northampton Poly pathology and CL practice
- Worked and taught in London, Newcastle, Denmark and Norway. Friend of Robert Fletcher
- 1962 Nottingham practice of Arthur Forknall
- Doctoral thesis on keratoconus
- Principal Optometrist at Moorfields and CL Dept
- Chaired GOC Professional Conduct Committee
- 1983-84 President, College of Ophthalmic Opticians
- 1987 Head of the Department of Optometry and Visual Science at City University
- Keratoconus and topography research
- 1999 Emeritus Professor
- "An art which became a science"



Professor Emeritus E. Geoffrey Woodward PhD FCOptom
19.09.1934 – 09.11.2013

Geoffrey Woodward, who has died aged 79, was an optometrist of exceptional accomplishment. Dissatisfied with commercial practice, he directed his intellect to more lasting objectives and made significant contributions to the development of his profession in the areas of education, research and regulation.

Educated first at Warwick School, Woodward qualified in optometry at Northampton Polytechnic (now City University, London) in 1956. Following National Service in Malaya, he set up a contact lens practice in Nottingham, while providing optometric services to the RAF Hospital at Nocton Hall in Lincolnshire. Academic and hospital optometry then beckoned and Woodward took up appointments at City University and Moorfields Eye Hospital. In 1976 he was appointed Principal Optometrist at Moorfields, a post that he held until 1987, when he was appointed Professor of Optometry and Visual Science at City University. He remained in this position until his retirement in 1999.

For most, immersion in hospital contact lens practice and academic optometry would have been sufficient, but not for Woodward. His interest in the regulation of his profession resulted in membership of the General Optical Council (the body that protects members of the public in their interactions with optometrists and dispensing opticians) from 1977 until 2000, and in positions on the Council of the College of Optometrists (the professional, scientific and examining body for UK optometry) for 18 years from 1980, including that of President (1983-4). During this time he was also appointed to a number of government committees established under Section 4 of the Medicines Act 1968. Among the tasks accomplished during his time were the development of standards for contact lens solutions (previously non-existent) and early initiatives in securing the right to independent prescribing of drugs for suitably qualified optometrists. Numerous academic honours came his way, including appointments in Hong Kong, the Netherlands, Sweden and Eire. He was referee to several journals and external examiner for many graduate and postgraduate degree courses. He personally supervised 16 higher degrees and gave more than 50 invited lectures at conferences in Europe and at home. He authored and co-authored more than 60 peer-reviewed scientific publications.

Woodward was a Renaissance man. Apart from his scientific pursuits he was greatly absorbed in the arts and literature, with Wagner and Anthony Powell as two of the brightest stars in his personal galaxy. For years he and his wife owned a narrowboat which allowed them to range freely over the British Inland Waterways and which became a second home. Latterly, they undertook tours on international cargo vessels, always accompanied by mounds of books.

Woodward will be remembered by his colleagues and friends as a man who was always ready to listen to them and if possible to help them in their endeavours, whether these were academic or professional. Apart from his generosity, they will also remember the fullness of his character and his well-developed sense of humour. Woodward is survived by his wife Elizabeth and his daughters Leonora and Ann Louise, and five grandchildren. A memorial celebration of his life will be held in London.

Roger Buckley