

From Abercynffig to Aksum. Medicine in a Welsh Family

Professor Sir Eldryd Parry

24th June 2016

Gwsety'r Emlyn Hotel, Newcastle Emlyn

The mining village where my father first worked as a GP in Wales and the ancient Ethiopian city, where I last worked after many years of academic medicine in Africa, frame the medicine of our family from 1889 when my great uncle, Cornelius Griffiths, later senior surgeon at Cardiff Royal Infirmary, qualified at Bristol. My father applied clinical science to his work in Abercynffig, and then in Cardiff, from books by James Mackenzie and Sir Thomas Lewis; he practised with my mother, who first was a demonstrator in physics at the London School of Medicine for Women during World War I and for many years medical officer to Howell's School, Cardiff. My sister, who had a chair of family medicine at the University of Iowa, and I were deeply influenced by their dedicated general practice, particularly among poor patients. Harold Scarborough's questioning academic teaching shaped my work, both in Cardiff as student and as his houseman and during our years together in Nigeria. He equipped me superbly for work at the National Heart Hospital and the Hammersmith. My mother's brother pioneered rehabilitation of injured workmen and opened the first hospital gym in 1936 at the Albert Dock Hospital, and their sister was a medical missionary in India for many years. My experience of raw disease in Cardiff in the 1950s has been a great help to me in Africa. Through THET (www.thet.org), the charitable Trust which we established, an active partnership with Jimma University, Ethiopia, continues with rheumatic heart studies.

www.homsw.org.uk