
Geoffrey Hirst Bateman (1906-1998) [Epsom College 1916-1924] was one of the most important Ear, Nose and Throat Surgeons of the 20th century. At a time when new microsurgical techniques for cancer treatment and to relieve deafness were the major skills practised by the ENT Surgeon, Geoffrey Bateman played his part in this change, achieving international fame when, in 1959, he restored a patient’s sight by implanting radioactive seeds into her brain tumour – the first operation of its kind in the world. He was the son of Dr W. H. Bateman, J.P., of Rochdale, and brother of Dr Donald Scrimgeour Bateman [Epsom College 1916-1922]. At Epsom College, where he was a prefect, he won the Da Silva Scholarship to University College, Oxford; was awarded the Theodore Williams Scholarship in Anatomy, and went on to complete his medical training at King’s College Hospital. He graduated B.M., B.Ch. in 1929, and took the F.R.C.S. in 1933. In 1934 he was appointed Chief Assistant to the ENT Department at St Thomas’s Hospital and in 1939, Consultant ENT Surgeon. In due course he became a Governor of St Thomas’s Hospital (1948); Chairman of the Medical Advisory Committee at St Thomas’s (1956-1971), and from 1966 until 1971, Consultant Adviser in ENT Surgery to the Department of Health and Social Security. Other appointments included Consultant Adviser in ENT Surgery to the Army (1966-1971); President of the Association of Otolaryngologists in 1970-1971, and Honorary Treasurer to the Royal Medical Benevolent Fund. He was President of the Section of Laryngology of the Royal Society of Medicine, and an Honorary Fellow of the R.S.M. Geoffrey Bateman was a founder member and member of Council of the British Association of Otolaryngology and its President in 1970-1971. He was elected a member of the Collegium Otolaryngologicum Amicitiae Sacrum – an international grouping of academics in Ear, Nose and Throat Surgery. In 1964 he was elected an Honorary Member of the Australian Society of Otolaryngology, Head and Neck Surgery. From 1961-1978 he was Editor of the Journal of Laryngology and Otology. In the 1960s he visited Sweden and learnt the technique of removing the pituitary gland through the paranasal sinuses. On his return, he was the first surgeon to introduce this operation of trans-sphenoidal hypophysectomy to the United Kingdom, and with this he acquired a considerable reputation.

During the Second World War, Geoffrey Bateman joined the RAF as a Wing Commander, before returning to the bomb damaged St Thomas’s Hospital. He was then appointed Chairman of the rebuilding committee, which completed its work when he ‘topped out’ the north wing in 1974. For his contribution to the Nightingale School of Nursing at St Thomas’s he was one of the first men to be awarded a Nightingale badge. It was said of Sir Geoffrey that he “worked steadily to improve the quality of service and the training of the juniors and, by the time that he retired in 1971, his department had become renowned as a training centre for those wanting to enter the specialty.” Salmon fishing was his other great interest. After being introduced to the River Dee in Aberdeenshire by a patient in 1959, he spent one or two weeks there every May for 25 years. His careful records of those years – the weather, the state of the river, and the catch – form a gloomy record of the decline of that great river.