

## DEMISE OF HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH, THE QUEEN MOTHER, 4 AUGUST 1900 – 30 MARCH 2002

It is with great sadness that we respectfully record the death on 30 March of our oldest Royal Honorary Fellow, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother, aged 101. The College has always enjoyed a close affinity with the Royal Family, particularly its Scottish branches. This dates back to the very origin of the College and the granting by Charles II of our Royal Charter in 1681. Indeed, it is a time-honoured tradition in every official banquet of the Edinburgh College that after the 'loyal toast' the lights in the Great Hall remain dimmed, and all stand and the health of all of our Royal Fellows is toasted.

Our association with the Queen Mother was particularly special. She was elected to the Honorary Fellowship of the College in 1953 and visited the College for the first time to sign the Roll of Fellows on 7 November 1957, when she dined in the Great Hall with the then President, Dr Rae Gilchrist, members of Council and assembled Fellows and their spouses. The Queen Mother spoke after dinner of the pre-eminence of Scottish medicine and paid tribute to the crucial role played by the College in preserving and raising standards of practice. After dinner Her Majesty was escorted to the New Library where the President read to her the Promissory Obligation; she signed the Roll of Fellows and graciously accepted a copy of the 'History and Laws of the College' together with a golden key, before she received from the President the right hand of Fellowship.

The Queen Mother's second and last visit to the College was on 14 May 1985 when she formally opened the new Conference Centre in the College, which had been named in her honour. Her Majesty's speech on that occasion has a profound resonance nearly 20 years later:

President and Council, I am delighted that you have invited me to return to your historic Royal College of Physicians in order to witness and advance its growth with the completion of the new Conference Centre. It seems very appropriate to me, as a Scot, that I should be asked to set the seal on this new and most important development of this ancient Scottish institution with its charter granted in 1681 by a Stuart King. It is 26 years since I was last here, when you complimented me by making me an Honorary Fellow.

The influence of the Royal Colleges on the progress



The opening of the Conference Centre by HM Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother.

of medicine and the maintenance of health in this country has seldom been more important. The independence of the Royal Colleges of Physicians from the National Health Service, from Government and from the Universities provides them with the opportunity to speak out on issues of increasing complexity . . .

The Queen Mother's peaceful passing was described in the international and British media as the end of an epoch for Britain. She occupied a very special place in the history of our College, and her association with it will continue to be remembered with affection, loyalty and singular gratitude. Perhaps Winston Churchill best captured her spirit in the phrase: 'That valiant woman, with the famous blood of Scotland in her veins.'