

JOHN WRIGHTON

My Lady and Chancellor,

John Wrighton is a man of richly varied distinctions, as an international champion athlete, a consultant in orthopaedics, and as High Sheriff of Dorset.

John first made his name as an athlete, most notably as a 400 metres runner. He took to athletics seriously in his final year at East Barnet Grammar School, where he was Vice-Captain of the School, but then, and afterwards at Charing Cross Hospital Medical School, he committed himself absolutely. With characteristic determination he trained early in the mornings before attending the very full programme of lectures required at medical school. His first international success came at the 1955 World Student Games at San Sebastián, where he had to shake the hand of General Franco three times, as winner of Gold, Silver and Bronze medals. By this time he had become a major force at national level and he was considered for the Melbourne Olympics in 1956, though in the event a pulled muscle kept him away. But other international successes followed, with two Gold Medals in the 1958 European Championships at Stockholm, including the individual 400 metres in 46.3 seconds, a feat which broke a British Championship record that had stood since 1936. He was appointed Captain of the British Athletics Team in 1959, and crowned his athletic career as Captain of the British Olympic Team at Rome in 1960. One of his team members, Robbie Brightwell, has described John as a great team captain; this tribute was well deserved and hard earned, because the team manager was injured and John took on many of his duties in addition to his own, so that his performance on the track suffered to some extent.

On leaving Charing Cross Hospital, John held a commission as a medical officer in the Royal Navy between 1958 and 1961. At this time he was at the peak of his international athletic career, and the Navy made sure that Surgeon Lieutenant Wrighton spent much of his time at the Royal Navy's School of Physical Training. However, after the Rome Olympics, having decided to concentrate on medicine in the future, he chose to go to sea in the aircraft carrier HMS *Hermes* on a tour of operations in the Far East.

Leaving the Royal Navy in 1961, John Wrighton was briefly in general practice in Essex before returning to London for postgraduate training as a Surgical Registrar. At the same time he was also active in sports medicine with Middlesex Cricket Club, ballet companies and jockeys. Then, with his FRCS secured and having decided to become a consultant in orthopaedics, he moved to Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Exeter. Here there was a very strong specialism in joint replacement surgery, and John took part in the development of the 'Exeter Hip', now one of the most widely used cemented hip replacements in the world. He was also a pioneer in what was then the highly innovative process of knee joint replacement.

John's expertise in this area led to his appointment as consultant in orthopaedics at Weymouth and District Hospital in 1972. No joint

replacements had been done in West Dorset, and the need was enormous: John recalls seeing farmers 'in a terrible state' when he arrived. From very limited beginnings he built up a successful Orthopaedics department and team at Weymouth. His reputation opened other opportunities too: he lectured in hip replacement surgery at Exeter Hospital, and was a visiting medical adviser in Europe, Africa and Kuwait, and maintained his link with sport as Medical Officer to the British athletics team.

Though he retired from the NHS in 1993, John continued in private practice until 1998. During the past quarter century he has also made a number of other major contributions to health provision in Dorset. He took a leading part in founding The Winterbourne Hospital in 1981, and also in the formation of the Dorset Health Trust which supports education, the YMCA, local hospitals and health promotion measures. His strong and active commitment to the county was recognised at the highest level when Her Majesty the Queen appointed him High Sheriff of Dorset in 1995-96. Among many other activities, his charity for the year was Dorset Life Education Trust, which provides health and lifestyle education for children, and encourages positive and responsible attitudes to health; his support made possible a major extension of its work across much larger areas of the county.

Bournemouth University also has great cause for gratitude to John Wrighton, who was for eight years a member of the Board, serving throughout as a member of the Personnel Committee and latterly as Chair of the Student Affairs Committee, where he took a very keen interest in the quality of the student experience. Not surprisingly, in view of his background in sport, he strongly championed moves to keep Wednesday afternoons free for sport and other activities. He also gave valuable support to the Institute of Health and Community Studies (now the School of Health and Social Care) at a time of significant change.

My Lady and Chancellor, I have the honour to present John Wrighton, and ask you to confer upon him the degree of Doctor of Science.