



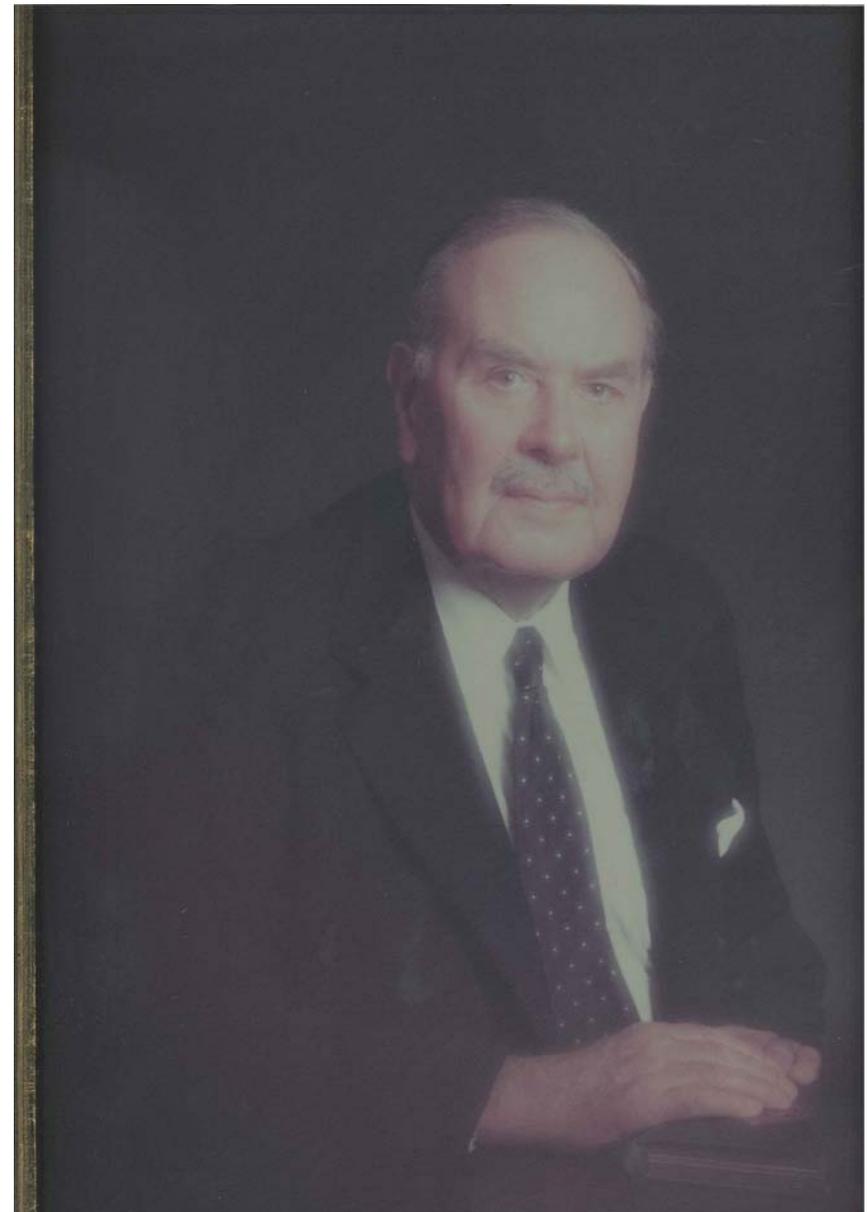
## **The Cameron Fund - Provider of help to GPs retired GPs and GP dependents for 40 years**

### **Dr R J Givans recalls the events that led to the creation of the Fund**

**Celebration of the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the creation of the Cameron Fund by the Conference of LMCs** is also a time to recall and celebrate the achievements of Sir James Cameron. In the early 1960s, general practice was in dire straits: workload was heavy; earnings were poor; establishing, maintaining and improving GP premises was difficult and financially crippling; GP Assistants felt badly used; general practice was unattractive and recruitment poor (does anything change?).

**In 1964, at a stormy Special Conference of LMCs, Dr James Cameron**, a Scot practising in Wallington, was elected Chairman of the GMSC (General Medical Services Committee, now the GPC – General Practitioners Committee). Jim Cameron proved to be an inspirational leader and skilful negotiator, arguably the most successful Chairman of the GMSC.

**Jim Cameron negotiated a new contract for GPs which greatly improved their lot.** Following its implementation in 1966, he recalled a comment by an official concerning £800,000 lying dormant in the Group Practice Loan Fund. This fund had been set up by government in the late 1950s, with the agreement of the GMSC, to encourage GPs to practice in groups from purpose-built premises! It had been created to make interest free loans to doctors wishing to build their own group practice premises. Skilfully, Government arranged for the fund to be serviced by a deduction of £100,000 a year from the sum allocated for the remuneration of GPs. Jim Cameron persuaded government that the £800,000 should be returned to GPs to be used to found a charitable trust.



**The 1970 Conference of LMCs resolved**, after much debate and amendments to the motion, that a charitable trust be set up to provide “*the relief of poverty, sickness or distress*” for GPs, retired GPs and dependents of GPs and “*that the name Cameron be included in the title of the charitable trust in recognition of the outstanding contribution to general practice made by the (then) chairman of the GMSC*”.

**The first Council of Management was elected by the Conference** and comprised two representatives from Scotland, one from Wales and Monmouthshire and thirteen from English constituencies. The Fund was established by October 1970 with Dr B Holden as its first Chairman of Trustees. The first operational year began in April 1971 and, in his first annual report, Dr Holden stated that 82 awards had been made and the sum of £26,000 disbursed as grants and loans; 25% of the applications were initiated by Local Medical Committees. Over the past three years, the referrals from Local Medical Committees have been 20% of total applications; although many enquiries now come via our web site, which may account for the reduction. In the early years many of the beneficiaries were GPs (or their dependents) who had retired soon after the start of the NHS and had very little in the way of pension provision.

**Recently the rules of the Fund have been updated**, among other changes Northern Ireland has been included and the eligibility criteria have been widened to include registrars/trainees. The Fund has modernised itself and invested in up-to-date technology. Over time, the status of beneficiaries has changed and now the Fund is helping younger GPs struck down by injury or illness and others who have lost their living by having been deemed unfit to practice due to mental illness or poor performance.

**In 40 years, the Fund has had only seven Chairman** but the stars over recent years are past treasurers: £800,000 in 1970 money translates as £2,627,200 now but the Fund's assets are valued currently at £4,459,474. However disbursements to beneficiaries increase year-on-year and every penny of the Fund's assets is needed to provide the income to service grants and interest-free loans to beneficiaries. Without the generous donations from Local Medical Committees, individual doctors, those attending the Annual Conference Dinner and legacies, the Fund would be unable to meet the demand for help.

**The primary aims and objectives of the Fund remain unchanged** and today's Trustees are as watchful as ever to ensure assets are protected and that applicants in genuine need are given appropriate help promptly. In celebrating the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Cameron Fund, we salute the achievements of Sir James Cameron.

© Dr R J Givans



[www.cameronfund.org.uk](http://www.cameronfund.org.uk)