



# The Heart Club

A History of London's Heart Surgery Pioneers

By Tom Treasure

## PRESS RELEASE

*The remarkable account of the magic of medicine, and the tenacity of surgical pioneers, meticulously brought to life by cardiovascular surgeon Tom Treasure.*

Surgery on the heart was explicitly ruled out in the medical teaching of the 1940s. A team of London surgeons led by Russell Brock were determined to challenge and reverse that dogma. Together, they would help to change the history of heart surgery and the chances of survival for future patients. Brock, who had cared for the injured in London throughout the war, was poised to operate on the heart. He knew the young American surgeon Dwight Harken a rising star among the residents at the Brompton Hospital. Harken was appointed chief surgeon at a US army hospital set in a cluster of huts in the English countryside, in anticipation of the 1944 D-day landings. Brock remained a mentor and spent time with Harken who was breaking new ground by operating to remove bullets and shrapnel from soldiers' hearts. reported this surgery on , at a meeting of the British Association of Surgeons in 1945.

Coincidentally, wartime comrades in the allied forces medical services had built a bond between Guy's and Johns Hopkins Hospital, funded by the Clothworkers' Livery Company. This brought the surgeon Alfred Blalock to Guy's in 1947 to perform and teach a new operation for children with fatal congenital heart disease. These were familiar at the time as 'blue babies' and these operations began to save their lives. With this tangible evidence from Harken and Blalock, Brock's group—they called themselves a 'club'—set out to advance heart surgery.

Their work was meticulously chronicled in a rediscovered volume of minutes, central to **The Heart Club** by cardiothoracic surgeon Tom Treasure—with many of the doctors who were members of the club being his teachers and mentors. To complete the story, three survivors, whose lives were saved by early heart operations, tell their life stories from being blue babies of the 1940s to the present. Fascinating and inspiring, **The Heart Club** is a must-read for those interested in scientific and medical innovation, human history and game-changing world figures.

**About the author:** Born in Islington, London in 1947, Tom Treasure started life not far from where the events of this book were taking shape. When he was still young the family left London for Cheltenham where he attended the Catholic primary school but his education was interrupted by severe asthma and he was hospitalised for six months. Seaside boarding school with the Christian Brothers was deemed the best solution. After that being a medical student at Guy's in London was a welcome escape. His first resident post at Guy's was in cardiothoracic surgery which was his lifetime career from qualifying in 1970 to clinical retirement in 2007. He has been active in professional roles including serving as an elected member of council of the Royal College of Surgeons and President of the European Association for Cardio-Thoracic Surgery. He also took a four-month sabbatical at the Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine. He has co-authored a number of medical academic books including: *Explaining Cardiac Surgery* by R Millner & T. Treasure (BMJ 1995) and *Disorders of the Cardiovascular System* by D. Patterson and T. Treasure (Edward Arnold 1993) and authored over 600 academic papers. **The Heart Club: A History of London's Heart Surgery Pioneers** by Tom Treasure (published by Clink Street Publishing 21st September 2017 in hardback and ebook) is available to purchase from online retailers including [amazon.co.uk](https://www.amazon.co.uk) and to order from all good bookstores.

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