The Queen’s shilling

On 6 January I received a message from my friend in Dublin to remind me that it was the exact day 36 years earlier we first ‘took the Queen’s shilling’. How much water has passed under the bridge since then? And a good many ‘shillings’ too!

Anne’s message caused me to reflect on the past and recall those people who have been instrumental and important in the shaping of my life and my career in perioperative practice.

There are a number of individuals who stand out for me, who were hugely influential in the decisions and career moves that I made within this area. These were hardworking people who demonstrated their leadership by example, always endeavouring to do the right thing, with the patient as the central focus, but never forgetting the other members of the team. People who were brave enough to be honest and forthright when that was required and also kind, fair-minded, inclusive and professional in equal measure.

I vividly recall my first experience as a student in theatres. Those days we spent six weeks on placement there. Without doubt this was the most unhappy and traumatic experience of my entire training. I vowed never to return.

Quite by coincidence, if you believe in coincidence, shortly after I qualified as a staff nurse I found myself ‘helping out’ in a theatre suite in a west of Ireland hospital. The theatre sister there saw something in me that I was certainly unaware of and as the saying goes ‘the rest is history’.

As I moved through my professional life in the perioperative area, there were again many people and experiences which have contributed to the person I am today. I am privileged to have worked with some fantastic people, nurses, ODPs, support workers, managers, surgeons and anaesthetists, and I never fail to be amazed at the things that are surgically possible to be achieved. What a position of privilege we occupy?

One of my heroes, a very talented and accomplished surgeon, has recently undergone major surgery himself. When reflecting on the influential people in my life he always comes to mind. I am honoured to have participated in surgical fetes with this man, that are nothing short of miracles, and which still, on reflection, continue to amaze me. I wish him well and look forward to being ‘knocked out’ by his genius in the future. I would not have wanted to miss the journey for the world.

This month’s journal features a range of interesting articles including the emotive topic of the presence of parents during child resuscitation. Additionally, we can read about the Italian experience of dealing with pressure sores in theatres, and a study comparing surgical hand scrub and alcohol hand rub effects on reducing microbial growth. The open learning zone invites us to update our knowledge on legal, ethical and professional issues within perioperative care.

The article, which explores the experience of students within theatres, is for me an invitation to revisit and explore our own personal experience of student or early days in theatres. Let us be aware of our power to influence or indeed destroy the hopes and dreams of practitioners. For that I believe we are all responsible.

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Trustee

GUEST EDITORIAL