

Sir Stanley Peart

Pioneering renal physician whose research led to the developme

Stan Peart's research could seem gory and almost medieval in nature, and at one time required the use of thousands of rabbit kidneys. He would go up to Northumberland, where the animals were trapped, cut out their kidneys, put them in Thermos flasks filled with dry ice and bring them back to London by train. He also used hundreds of gallons of cows' blood spun in a centrifuge. His work, however, saved many thousands of lives.

Using equipment and methods that would look laughably primitive to modern researchers, Peart identified two chemicals that are the key to the workings of our circulatory system: angiotensin, the hormone that constricts the blood vessels and increases blood pressure, and renin, the enzyme that counteracts it. The renin-angiotensin system was crucial to a greater understanding of blood pressure and therefore to the development of drugs for treatment of hypertension.

Later, while based in Edinburgh, he was working on a different but related question about which chemical was released when sympathetic nerves — those responsible for stimulating the fight-or-flight response in humans — were stimulated. At about the same time he spotted a set of beautiful pearl-handled knives and forks in a jeweller's window and promised his wife, Peggy, that if he solved the problem he would buy them for her.

Soon afterwards he began using a spleen instead of a liver for his research

and started to find that his experiments indicated that the chemical was not adrenaline, but was perhaps noradrenaline. The results started to build up. Then, one morning, Peggy found the set of pearl-handled cutlery by their bed; there had been a breakthrough. Earlier in his career he had worked at St Mary's Hospital in Paddington, west London, with Alexander Fleming, the microbiologist who had discovered penicillin. Fleming was an unpopular lecturer because he spoke in a whisper, but Peart became his "penicillin registrar".

The work was often shocking: the penicillin-procaine injections caused terrible pain, as Peart discovered when Fleming gave him a shot in an infected street around St Mary's were full of backstreet abortionists, and Peart recalled how women would come in with "tremendous fevers, just about dead... you could give this crude penicillin and it cured, it was quite miraculous". Yet it was sport, as much as science, that was the guiding influence in Peart's life. His father, John George "Jack" Peart, had been a professional footballer, a talented centre forward who played for Newcastle United and Notts County, among other clubs. As a result, the family following Jack's career around the country, first as a player and then as a manager.

William Stanley Peart, known for most of his life as Stan, was born in South Shields in 1922, the son of Jack



Sir Stanley Peart, left, in 2016 and, above



and his wife, Margaret (née Fraser). The family soon moved to Rochdale in Lancashire and then to West Yorkshire after Jack was appointed manager of Bradford Grammar School. When he was 13 his father became manager of Fulham and the family moved to west London. At this point Stan joined the local King's College School, where he soon lost his Yorkshire accent after his attempts to speak French with flat vowels in class were cruelly mocked.

His family were far from wealthy — footballers did not earn the millions they do now — but Stan was bright and won scholarships that enabled him to get a good education. He had high hopes of getting another scholarship, but the entrance exam to Oxford, but he only did well enough to be offered a place, not a scholarship. His first response was to ask how much the place would cost. The figure was small, but he knew immediately that his parents would not be able to afford it. He left disconsolate and the sight of Magdalen Bridge

He broke his jaw on the Murrayfield turf while playing for Wanderers

Wilson knew that Peart had the Churchill's personal physician. One caught his eye: a rugby scholarship to St Mary's Hospital, Paddington. To his father's undisguised disappointment, Peart had preferred the oval-ball code to association football and was by then a talented wing. He applied immediately and was interviewed by Charles Wilson, later Lord Moran, who was Peart's personal physician.

Wilson knew that Peart had the Churchill's personal physician. One caught his eye: a rugby scholarship to St Mary's Hospital, Paddington. To his father's undisguised disappointment, Peart had preferred the oval-ball code to association football and was by then a talented wing. He applied immediately and was interviewed by Charles Wilson, later Lord Moran, who was Peart's personal physician.