

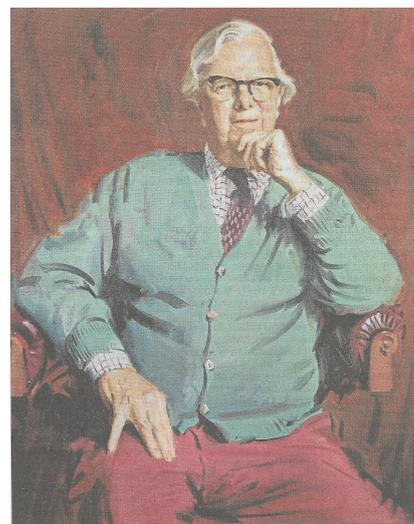
Patron: Lord Cobbold DL
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SIR ROGER GEOFFREY GIBBS

November 2018

Sir Roger Gibbs, #7647 on the family tree, was the scion of a City dynasty who transformed the fortunes of the Wellcome Trust, the UK's biggest medical research charity. Roger Gibbs made his name in the Square Mile as a popular, astute and forward-looking chairman of the Lombard Street discount house Gerrard & National. After an encounter with cancer in 1974, he devoted a significant portion of his energies to medical charities in gratitude for his survival, and was appointed a governor (trustee) of Wellcome in 1983. He and Sir David Steel were the only trustees from the business world - the board otherwise was comprised of scientists - and they oversaw the flotation of the Wellcome Foundation in 1986. A second sale of shares went ahead in July 1992.

The end result of Gibbs's strategy was that the Wellcome Trust became for a time (until the advent of the Gates Foundation in the US) the richest charity in the world; it was able to increase its annual funding for medical research such as the human genome project from £50 million in 1989 to £400 million by the time he stood down in 1999. At his retirement his deputy chairman addressed him as "The Wizard of Wellcome"



Sir Roger Gibbs, courtesy Wellcome Collection / Andrew Festing.

He was born into a family whose business was merchant bank Antony Gibbs & Co, founded in 1808 and originally concerned with selling English cloth to Spain and importing guano from Latin America; the founder's son **Hucks Gibbs, 1st Lord Aldenham, #7511** was a friend of Brunel who helped finance the Great Western Railway. Roger's father **Sir Geoffrey Gibbs #7634** was chairman of Antony Gibbs (now part of HSBC) and of the Australia & New Zealand Bank. His uncle **Walter, 4th Lord Aldenham, #7632** was chairman of the Westminster Bank. Another uncle **Sir Humphrey Gibbs #7636** was governor of Southern Rhodesia at the time of UDI; and his mother **Helen #7635** was the daughter of the cricketer CFH Leslie, who played in the English team that regained the Ashes in Australia in 1883. Among Roger's five siblings was **Christopher Gibbs, #7648** the antiques dealer and style guru of the "Chelsea Set".

At 17 he was moved from Eton to Millfield on what he called "a free transfer" in the hope he might flourish under a different teaching Regime; a gangly youth he was ruled out for National Service by a weak knee. In 1954 his father fixed him a job in the City discount house of Jessel Toynbee, where for **six** months he was a messenger before beginning to make his mark - not least for a facility in mental arithmetic fuelled by familiarity with betting odds. He became a director of Jessel Toynbee in his mid-twenties and moved to stockbrokers de Zoete & Gorton (later de Zoete & Bevan) in 1964 and again to Gerrard & National in 1971, later becoming chairman.

He was knighted in 1994 and the headquarters of the Wellcome Trust was later named the Gibbs building in tribute to him. Sport was another important aspect of Gibbs's life. For more than 25 years he was a director of Arsenal football club at the invitation of his sometime flatmate **Peter Hill-Wood #6725** whose family were major shareholders there. His introduction to the high-speed toboggan track came through his Eton friend John Bingham, later Lord Lucan - with whom he shared a youthful enthusiasm for greyhound racing. In 1959, Lucan told Gibbs "We're going out to St Moritz to ride the Cresta. Why don't you come?" Despite a bad crash in 1965 Gibbs was a regular Cresta runner for many years and a celebrated president of its parent, the St. Moritz Tobogganning Club, whose finances he also rebuilt.

In 2005 at the age of 70 he married his long-time companion Jane Harris.