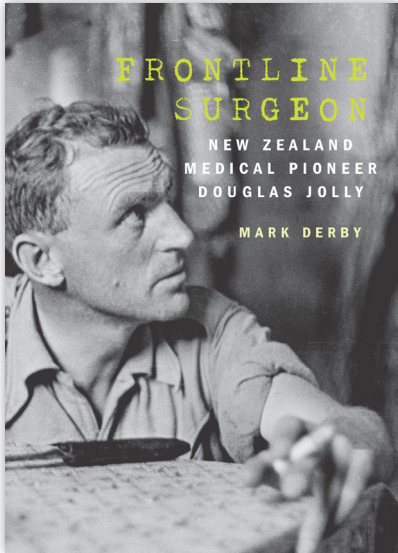




# Frontline Surgeon

## *New Zealand medical pioneer Douglas Jolly*

MARK DERBY



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### AN OVERLOOKED NEW ZEALAND MEDICAL PIONEER

Central Otago-born Doug Jolly was one of the greatest war surgeons of the twentieth century. Tireless, dedicated and courageous, he was among the most gifted Republican Army surgeons in the Spanish Civil War of 1936 to 1939. Jolly developed a system for treating the injured in a far shorter timeframe than in earlier conflicts. His surgical manual, based on his battlefield experiences close to the front line, was widely used in later wars and his methods led to the organisation of today's hospital Accident and Emergency departments.

But his legacy is largely unknown. That is something historian Mark Derby has set out to rectify in *Frontline Surgeon*, published by Massey University Press in July.

'Apart from being a terrific story, what primarily drove me to write about Doug Jolly's life was my astonishment at how he had been overlooked in other accounts,' says Mark.

'Although he clearly is one of the greatest war surgeons of the twentieth century, he doesn't rate a mention in the official war histories of either New Zealand or Britain. Accounting for that lacuna, and aiming to redress it, was a central purpose of the book.'

Mark grew increasingly found of Jolly while researching the project.

'The more I learned of Jolly, the more I liked him. He was a great singer at parties and would perform his school haka in the middle of an operating theatre to inspire his exhausted colleagues. He met key figures in twentieth century culture and politics like the economist Karl Polanyi, the photographer Gerda Taro and the writer Ernest Hemingway. He insisted on operating first on his most critically injured patients, even when they were troops from the opposing side.'

Mark believes there is a combination of reasons why Jolly sank into relative obscurity after the Second World War while many of his colleagues, even those who regarded him as the better surgeon, went on to have glittering careers.

'He was always a non-aligned leftie, and that may have counted against him in the conservative UK of the 1950s,' he says.

Mark is very grateful to Jolly's family for giving him access to personal letters, photos and other family records without placing any restrictions on their use.

*Frontline Surgeon* traces Jolly's remarkable career from medical training at the Otago Medical School in the 1920s to medical director of Britain's largest hospital for amputees, and restores him to the ranks of pioneers of modern medicine.



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



**Mark Derby** is a New Zealand writer whose work has also been published in Britain, Spain and the US. His previous books include *Kiwi Compañeros: New Zealand and the Spanish Civil War*, *Petals and Bullets: Dorothy Morris, New Zealand nurse in the Spanish Civil War* and *Rock College: An unofficial history of Mount Eden Prison*. He lives on Wellington's south coast.