

**The Scottish Society of the History
of Medicine**

(Founded April, 1948)

**REPORT
OF
PROCEEDINGS**

SESSION 1951-52

The Scottish Society of the History of Medicine.

<i>President</i>	- -	Dr. JOHN RITCHIE	
<i>Vice-Presidents</i>	-	Dr. DOUGLAS GUTHRIE	
		Mr WALTER W. GALBRAITH (Glasgow)	
<i>Hon. Secretary</i>	-	Dr. H. P. TAIT, 137 Colinton Road, Edinburgh, 11	
<i>Hon. Treasurer</i>	-	Dr. W. A. ALEXANDER, 9 Randolph Crescent,	
		Edinburgh, 3	
<i>Council</i>	- - -	Dr. W. D. D. SMALL	retires by rotation, 1952
		Dr. A. F. WILKIE MILLAR	„ 1952
		Mr A. L. GOODALL	„ 1953
		Dr. J. MENZIES CAMPBELL	„ 1953
		Dr. A. M. GILLESPIE	„ 1954
		Dr. W. S. MITCHELL	„ 1954
		Professor JOHN CRAIG	„ 1955
		Dr. I. D FERGUSON	„ 1955
		Col. JOHN MORISON	„ 1956
		THE SENIOR PRESIDENT,	
		ROYAL MEDICAL SOCIETY (ex officio).	

The Scottish Society of the History of Medicine.

REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS

1951-52

The Society is now a firmly established institution in the medical life of Scotland. Its membership continues to increase and attendances at the meetings have been most encouraging. The publication of an Annual Report is considered still to be the most satisfactory way of recording the substance of the several papers delivered before the Society, though most of these addresses are published in full in various medical journals some time after their delivery.

At the Third Annual General Meeting in October, 1951, the Society was honoured by having as its guest Professor Edvard Gotfredsen of the Chair of History of Medicine, Copenhagen University. He spoke on the reception of William Harvey's doctrine in Denmark, and illustrated his remarks with lantern slides. In February, 1952, at the thirteenth meeting, held in Glasgow, outstanding papers were delivered by Professor T. K. Monro and Dr. I. D. Ferguson, while the summer meeting at Dundee in June was marked by a delightfully informal atmosphere to which Dr. H. J. C. Gibson and Dr. John Kinnear contributed papers dealing with the medical history of Dundee.

Under the Constitution of the Society, Dr. Guthrie demitted office as President at the beginning of the Session, but he was unanimously elected one of the Vice-Presidents. We feel sure that we voice the feelings of all members when we say that without Dr. Guthrie's inspiring lead and wise guidance, the Society would not be in the secure position it now holds.

The Society suffered a severe loss in April, 1952, by the death of Professor Geoffrey B. Fleming of Glasgow, a founder member and one of the first two Vice-Presidents. A regular attender at meetings, his wise counsel was constantly sought on matters concerning the Society's wellbeing.

The increasing support received by the Society, and the interest shown in its activities permit the Council to look to the future with confidence.

The Twelfth Meeting and Third Annual General Meeting.

The Twelfth Meeting and Third Annual General Meeting of the Society was held in the Hall of the Royal Medical Society of Edinburgh, on Wednesday, 10th October, 1951. Dr. Guthrie, the President, was in the chair. The Third Annual Report of Proceedings of the Society was presented and unanimously approved. The Treasurer reported that the membership of the Society was being steadily increased and that the financial position was sound. Dr. Guthrie intimated that under the Society's Constitution, he was demitting office and proposed that Dr. John Ritchie of Edinburgh be elected President. This proposal was seconded by Dr. A. M. Gillespie and was approved. Dr. Ritchie then assumed the chair. The Secretary, seconded by Dr. Gillespie, proposed that Dr. Guthrie and Mr Walter W. Galbraith, Glasgow, be elected Vice-Presidents in place of Professor G. B. Fleming and Mr W. J. Stuart who retired by rotation, and that Professor John Craig, Aberdeen, and Dr. I. D. Ferguson, Glasgow, be elected members of Council, Sir Henry Wade retiring by rotation. These elections were approved. Colonel John Morison, Edinburgh, was elected a member of Council in place of Professor Charles McNeil, resigned. The President welcomed the new office-bearers and thanked the retiring Vice-Presidents and Councillors for their support of the Society.

Professor Gotfredsen then addressed the meeting. In introducing the subject of his discourse, *The Reception of Harvey's Doctrine in Denmark*,* the Professor remarked that it was a matter of general knowledge that Harvey's discovery of the circulation of the blood did not gain immediate acceptance in the medical world. Above all, the older generation of physician had difficulty in understanding the new doctrine, while among the juniors, some received it enthusiastically, others hardly knew what to believe. In Denmark, both the older and younger generations of physician were well represented.

Oluff Worm of Copenhagen was one of the leading opponents of Harvey's theory. He held that the circulation of the blood was inconceivable, as the entire volume of blood in the body did not come to the heart. Indeed the heart only received a small amount of blood for its own nutrition and for the formation of the vital spirit. Thomas Bartholin (1616-1680), son of Caspar Bartholin the Elder (1585-1629) was the outstanding supporter of Harvey's doctrine, and though he was in error in some of his interpretations of the theory, his son, Caspar Bartholin the Younger, (1655-1738) corrected these misconceptions, and Thomas's pupil, Niels Steensen (1638-1686) showed that the heart was composed of true muscle.

In the evening after the meeting the Council of the Society entertained Professor Gotfredsen to dinner.

*Acta Medica Scandinavica, 1952. 142, 75-86. Supplement 266.

The Thirteenth Meeting.

This meeting was held in the Hall of the Royal Faculty of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow on Friday, 29th February, 1952, Dr. Ritchie in the chair. Papers were read by Professor T. K. Monro and Dr. I. D. Ferguson. Professor Monro speaking on *Sir Thomas Browne, M.D.: The Skull and the Portraits*, recalled that this distinguished philosopher-physician died in 1682 on the seventy-seventh anniversary of his birth, and was buried in a vault under the chancel of the church of St. Peter Mancroft, Norwich. The place of interment was forgotten until 1840 when workmen, excavating at the church, accidentally came across the remains of the physician, as identified by the brass plate also revealed at the same time. The skull, in some way unknown, passed into the hands of a Dr. Lubbock who died in 1847, when it was given to the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital Museum. There it remained for many years at first in a common jar, but later in a more attractive silver mounted one presented by Professor William Osler. At the beginning of the present century it was decided to re-inter the skull and this was done at St. Peter Mancroft in 1922 but not before an exhaustive examination of the skull had been made by Miss Miriam L. Tildesley, who published the result of her researches in a book issued in 1923. Sir Grafton Elliot Smith reported that the outstanding peculiarities of the skull were the lowness of the frontal region and the marked depression of the pre-frontal region.

Of the portraits of Browne, till Miss Tildesley's work was published, three portraits of him were accepted as authentic—one in the vestry of the church of St. Peter Mancroft, one in the Bodleian Picture Gallery, Oxford, and the third in the Royal College of Physicians in London. In addition to these portraits, there are a miniature of Browne in the collection of the Duke of Buccleuch, a portrait in oils in the National Portrait Gallery, London, and a plumbago drawing also in that Gallery. The final result of modern research on these likenesses of Browne suggests that only the portraits at Norwich, at the National Portrait Gallery, the Buccleuch miniature, and probably the plumbago drawing are original and contemporary.

Dr. Ferguson spoke on *Physiological Progress in Glasgow, 1839-1939*, and pointed out that both extra-mural lecturers and University professors in various chairs had lectured intermittently on physiology from the early nineteenth century. The Regius chair, founded in 1839, under the designation "Theory of Physic" was one of the earliest chairs of physiology in the United Kingdom. The first holder of this chair was Andrew Buchanan who was a most versatile man—latinist, scholar, journalist, consultant surgeon and medical politician rather than a physiologist, though he contributed to the knowledge of the clotting of body fluids, particularly the blood. He held

the chair till 1876, when he was succeeded by John Gray McKendrick and the chair was designated Physiology by an Ordinance in 1893. McKendrick was an outstanding man and developed practical teaching of histology, physiological chemistry and, to a lesser extent, experimental techniques. He kept the department reasonably up-to-date, and designed the Institute of Physiology, though his successor, Diarmid Noël Paton was able to modify to his own ideas the new buildings. Under Paton's direction, a period of intense research activity was commenced, especial emphasis being placed upon metabolism studies and nutritional surveys. Paton was succeeded by Edward Provan Cathcart, who carried out distinguished work in bacteriology, enzymology, metabolism, nutrition and muscular activity.

Members and their friends sat down to an informal dinner at the College Club after the meeting.

The Fourteenth Meeting.

The Fourteenth Meeting of the Society was held in Dundee on Saturday, 21st June, 1952. After an informal lunch, the members and their guests adjourned to the Board Room of the Dundee Royal Infirmary for the meeting over which Dr. Ritchie presided. Dr. John Kinnear spoke on *Early Dundee Doctors*. He said that the earliest records of doctors in Dundee were of barber-surgeons, the first physician was mentioned late in the sixteenth century while no trace of an apothecary existed until the middle of the seventeenth century. In the Dundee civic annals, from 1495 there are records of these early barber-surgeons buying and selling drugs, suing their patients for fees, acting as medical referees, and trading or quarrelling with their neighbours. Among these barber-surgeons was Finlay Duncan, an ancestor of Admiral Duncan, victor of Camperdown.

Of the physicians, David Kinloch was an outstanding figure. He toured the Continent of Europe at least twice, and on the second occasion was seized by the Spanish Inquisition and condemned to death. Thanks to his skill, however, in curing the Grand Inquisitor of some obscure malady, Kinloch was set free, loaded with honours. Returning to Scotland he was appointed physician to King James VI. An eminent scholar he died at Dundee in 1617. Patrick Blair, M.D., F.R.S., had many claims to fame. He was the first man in Britain to dissect an elephant, the animal having died near Dundee in 1706. Blair was an eminent physician, botanist and anatomist and published many works. He was a friend of Sir Hans Sloane, Mead and Pettiffer in London, and they were able to get him a last minute reprieve when he lay under sentence of death in Newgate for the part he had played in the 1715 rebellion.

Dr. Kinnear in his fascinating paper on these early doctors showed how they were, apart from their success in their chosen profession, the founders of notable families, traders, travellers, writers, famous scholars and scientists, and often served their native town well in public office.

Dr. Gibson, the Medical Superintendent of the Royal Infirmary, gave a paper on *The Portraits in the Board Room of Dundee Royal Infirmary*, in which he described the life and times of the benefactors, physicians and surgeons who had been associated with the Infirmary and with its predecessor, the Dundee Dispensary. Both these institutions were established in the eighteenth century. Among the notable figures whose portraits adorn the walls of the board room were Archibald, Lord Douglas, the central figure of the memorable "Douglas Cause"; the Reverend Dr. Small and the Reverend Principal Nicoll, both Moderators of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland; and Lord Panmure, a celebrity both local and national.

Dr. John Crichton was a distinguished member of the Infirmary medical staff. Qualifying as a surgeon in 1790, he soon became a well-known lithotomist. Out of fully two hundred cases, varying in age from two to eighty-five years, on whom he performed the operation, only fourteen died, the rest making excellent recoveries. This, be it noted, was accomplished in pre-Listerian days. While he attributed his skill to "a serenity of mind and a hand that never trembled," his success was also largely due to his solicitude for his patients, particularly after operation. His term of office as a visiting surgeon extended over nearly sixty years, and was followed by an appointment to the honorary consulting staff. He died in 1860.

Dr. Alexander Bell held an appointment on the staff of the hospital from 1807 to 1837. He was an able surgeon, a great advocate of vaccination, a good man of business and "well disposed to the house."

Finally, there was Dr. James Arrott, pathologist and physician to the hospital who built up the medical practice of the house on the sure foundation laid by his master, the illustrious Laennec.

This very successful summer meeting was brought to a close after informal afternoon tea had been served through the kindness of Dr. Gibson.

JOHN RITCHIE, *President.*

H. P. TAIT, *Secretary.*

The Scottish Society of the History of Medicine.

CONSTITUTION.

1. The Society shall be called "THE SCOTTISH SOCIETY OF THE HISTORY OF MEDICINE," and shall consist of those who desire to promote the study of the History of Medicine.

2. A General Meeting of Members shall be held once a year to receive a report and to elect Office-Bearers.

3. The management of the affairs of the Society shall be vested in the Office-Bearers, who shall include a President, one or more Vice-Presidents, a Secretary, a Treasurer, and not more than ten other Members to form a Council. The Council shall have power to co-opt other Members who, in their opinion, are fitted to render special service to the Society.

4. All Office-Bearers shall be elected annually. The President shall not hold office for more than three successive years, but shall be eligible to serve again after one year. Not more than eight Members of Council, or two-thirds of the total number, shall be eligible for immediate re-election.

5. The Annual Subscription shall be Ten Shillings, payable to the Treasurer, who will submit a balance-sheet at each Annual Meeting.

6. The Secretary shall keep brief Minutes of the proceedings, shall prepare Agenda, and shall conduct the correspondence of the Society.

7. Meetings shall be held at least twice yearly, and the place of meeting shall be in any of the four University centres, or elsewhere, as the Council may decide.

8. This Constitution may be amended at any General Meeting of the Society on twenty-one days' notice of the proposed amendment being given by the Secretary, such amendment to be included in the Agenda circulated for the Meeting.