

THE SCOTTISH SOCIETY OF THE HISTORY OF MEDICINE

REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS

Session 1971-72

Another successful session has come to an end with membership of the Society well maintained and attendances at meetings encouraging. The usual three meetings were held, the Annual General Meeting at Edinburgh in October 1971, and two ordinary meetings at Glasgow and Stirling in February and June 1972 respectively.

MEDICO-HISTORICAL NOTES

The death of Professor-Emeritus John Glaister took place on 4 October 1971. He occupied the regius chair of forensic medicine at Glasgow University for thirty-one years. Like his father who held the same chair before him, Professor Glaister was a distinguished figure in the field of forensic medicine, especially in Scotland. But it was an English murder that made him well known to the public at large throughout Britain. With the late Professors Sir Sydney Smith and James C. Brash of Edinburgh, Glaister solved the riddle of the human remains which led to the conviction of Dr. Buck Ruxton in 1936. Glaister also claimed to have helped Erle Stanley Gardner in the writing of some of the latter's Perry Mason stories. Only a few months before Glaister's death, Dr. J. Malcolm Cameron, in a paper delivered at Aberdeen, bemoaned the fact that academic forensic medicine in Britain was in danger of extinction. Referring to the rise and fall of the discipline since the foundation of the first chair in Britain at Edinburgh in 1807, all the established chairs in England and Wales had lapsed though there were still personal ones in London. One chair, the regius chair of forensic medicine at Glasgow, is the only one filled at present in Scotland.

Following the recommendation of the Royal Commission on Medical Education, 1965-68, that an organization should be formed to play a major part in training for community medicine, the Presidents of the Royal Colleges of Physicians of Edinburgh and London and of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow announced, in October 1971, that the three Colleges had combined to form a Faculty of Community Medicine within their own structure. The inaugural meeting of the new Faculty of Community Medicine was held in the London College on 15 March 1972.

To mark the 150th anniversary of the foundation of the Edinburgh Medico-Chirurgical Society, a wreath was laid by its President on the grave of the Society's founder, Dr. Andrew Duncan senior, on 3 November 1971. Duncan's grave is situated in Buccleuch Parish Churchyard.

The following day, on 4 November, a plaque was unveiled on the wall of the new Midlothian County Buildings, Edinburgh, to mark the site of the former hall and rooms of the Royal Medical Society at 7 Melbourne Place. The plaque was unveiled

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by the Senior President of the Society which now occupies temporary accommodation at 3 Hill Square.

Scotland's first whole-body monitoring unit was officially opened at the Southern General Hospital, Glasgow, on 30 November, by Sir Harold Himsworth, former secretary of the Medical Research Council. Dr. J. M. A. Lenihan (1970) commenting on the union of science and medicine remarked that modern medicine demands a range of expertise in physics and bio-engineering which no single hospital could provide and so regional development was the obvious solution. It will be recalled that the new Department of Clinical Physics and Bio-Engineering of the Western Regional Hospital Board in Glasgow, of which Dr. Lenihan is Director, was opened in early 1970 by Sir Solly Zuckerman. Strathclyde University's bio-engineering unit moved into the new Wolfson Centre in December 1971 and the building was formally opened on 21 June 1972.

In 1956 Edinburgh University set up a nursing studies unit. This unit steadily developed and firmly established itself. A nursing research unit was subsequently formed in October 1971 and in January 1972, the University Court announced that a Chair of Nursing Studies had been established, the first such chair in Britain, and that a distinguished nurse had been appointed the first incumbent.

The Secretary of State for Scotland in April 1972, announced important projects in hospital buildings in the country for the 1970s. Projects included rebuilding of the Royal Hospital for Sick Children in Edinburgh, new district hospitals in Oban, Rutherglen, the Borders and West Fife; additional buildings on the Ninewells site at Dundee to permit of closure of the Royal Infirmary there; schemes for redevelopment and replacement of facilities at the Southern General and Stobhill Hospitals, Glasgow, and Balfour Hospital, Kirwall; and new psychiatric facilities in Lanarkshire, Glasgow and Aberdeen to replace existing obsolete accommodation.

In our Report of Proceedings for 1967-68: 1968-69 (page 15), reference was made to the removal of the plaque marking the birthplace of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle at 11 Picardy Place, Edinburgh, owing to the demolition of the property to make way for the massive St. James's Square development scheme. Since this scheme is nearing completion arrangements are being made to re-site the plaque on the new buildings. The stone plaque, originally positioned on the old house in 1949, is presently accommodated in the Huntly House Museum, Edinburgh.

In May 1972 it was announced that the restoration of New Lanark as a memorial to David Dale and his son-in-law Robert Owen, had become a luxury which could not be afforded unless government help was forthcoming. The New Lanark Association has only been able to modernize two tenement blocks and is already heavily in debt. It is hoped, however, that the Robert Owen Bicentenary Association will be able to go ahead with its plan to preserve the school erected by Owen.

A hundred years ago, in May 1872, 'a new Asylum erected upon Bowden Moor, about half a mile distant from the town of Melrose, was completed and opened.' Such was the announcement of the opening of Dingleton Hospital. A religious service, commemorative lecture, and series of social events were held at the hospital during 14-19 May to celebrate the centenary while a delightfully written and illustrated history, *Dingleton 1872-1972*, was produced by the Hospital Board of Management.

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Twenty-five years ago, on 21 May 1947, the National Health Service (Scotland) Bill received the Royal Assent and so became an Act. Now that service is to be radically reorganized and a new Health Service (Scotland) Bill is currently being discussed at Westminster.

To mark the centenary of the death of David Livingstone on 1 May 1873, the Livingstone Trust launched an appeal in June for £250,000 to build an educational centre at the Livingstone Memorial, Blantyre. The centre will include a log-cabin style residential building with classrooms and canteen for school parties, and a pavilion for displaying life in modern Africa. The actual birthplace building will be renovated for educational purposes, with a wing including the old schoolhouse being devoted to a unit suitable for school pupils and students. Courses are presently being prepared. The Clydesdale Bank has recently been producing a series of Famous Scotsmen notes. One of the latest to appear is their £10 note which carries an engraved portrait of David Livingstone on the front and on the reverse side is depicted an African slave scene as a reminder of Livingstone's work to abolish slavery in Africa. By way of postscript, it was on 10 November 1871 that H. M. Stanley met Livingstone at Ujiji and addressed him in the now classic phrase.

On 27 June 1947 the newly founded Scottish Paediatric Society held its first meeting in Edinburgh. Formed from the Edinburgh and Glasgow Paediatric Club which was formed on 7 July 1922, the Society has produced a brief history of its life, *The Scottish Paediatric Society, 1922-1972*.

A landmark in the history of Scottish public health occurred on 28 June 1892 when the Royal Assent was given to the Burgh Police (Scotland) Bill. This important Act required the appointment of Police Commissioners in all burghs and conferred extensive powers on them in relation to, *inter alia*, environmental health matters such as cleansing, lighting, ventilation of buildings, drainage, water supplies, markets and slaughter-houses, and required the appointment for each burgh of a medical officer of health and sanitary inspector.

In July 1772, it was announced in several Scottish newspapers of the period that in June the death had taken place, 'At Prague, where he had been for some time in a convent, Dr. John Taylor, the famous oculist.' The Chevalier paid his first, and apparently only visit to Scotland, in 1744 when he spent at least two months in Edinburgh. 'Very ample accounts appear in our newspapers, from one Dr. John Taylor, designed Oculist to his Majesty . . . of his own outstanding knowledge and success in the cure of diseases of the eyes, and of his charitable assistance to the poor.' But on 9 July and 11 July 1744 respectively, the Incorporation of Surgeons and the Royal College of Physicians each published declarations representing Dr. Taylor as the very reverse of what he pretended to be. Yet Taylor was not without friends in the faculty, for one, Dr. George Young, a member of the Incorporation, protested against these declarations and asserted that he had attended Taylor for instruction and 'reaped great benefit by it'.

An event, with a note of sadness attached, was the last medical graduation at St. Andrews University on 30 June 1972. To mark the occasion the university held a medical graduates' reunion when more than 300 medical graduates of St. Andrews attended, coming from all parts of the globe for the occasion. Following the establish-

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ment of Dundee University in 1967, agreement was reached between St. Andrews University and Manchester University whereby all St. Andrews medical science graduates will, from now onwards, proceed to the Manchester Medical School for their clinical training and where they will qualify for the Manchester University medical degree. Appropriate accounts of the history of the St. Andrews University Medical School by Sir Donald Douglas and Mr. J. A. Shepherd respectively appeared in the *Practitioner* (1972, 209, 103) and *British Medical Journal* (1972, 3, 38).

Four men, all students of medicine at Edinburgh but never graduating, formed a group which contributed to the birth of the science of oceanography. Indeed Edinburgh may be regarded as the birthplace and home of modern oceanography. Edward Forbes (1815–54), a brilliant natural historian, successively professor of botany at King's College, London, and of natural history at Edinburgh, laid the foundations of marine biology and oceanography. He died at the early age of thirty-nine. But the seeds he had sown fell on fertile soil. W. B. Carpenter and Charles Wyville Thomson became obsessed with an intense desire to explore the sea bed where the whole history of evolution might be revealed for both firmly believed in Darwin's theory. To cut a fascinating story short, the famous *Challenger* Expedition was formed with Wyville Thomson (1830–1882), having now become the occupant of Forbes's chair, as leader. H.M.S. *Challenger*, put at the disposal of the scientists by government, began her round-the-world voyage to investigate the oceans. She sailed from Portsmouth on 21 December 1872, returning on 24 May 1876 to Spithead, having sailed 68,890 nautical miles through every ocean save the Arctic. Soundings and dredgings were taken at 362 stations and enormous collections of specimens were brought back for detailed examination. On the return of the expedition Wyville Thomson was appointed Director of the 'Challenger Expedition Commission', located at 32 Queen Street, Edinburgh, for the purpose of seeing to the investigation of the vast collection of specimens and the publication of the results. He died from overwork before this task could be accomplished. It was taken over by John Murray (1841–1914), yet another medical student who deserted to natural history, and who had been a member of the expedition. Murray completed his editorial task and the fifty volumes of the *Challenger Reports* were duly published in 1895. Perhaps the most important result of the work of these men was the ready co-operation of scientists throughout the world towards a common goal so that oceanography came into being as an international science. Maybe Conan Doyle in his *Lost World* paid tribute to the expedition when he named his scientist Professor Challenger. To mark the centenary of this epoch-making voyage a splendid exhibition was organized at the Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh, from July to September 1972, a book, the *Voyage of the Challenger*, was written by Eric Linklater, and a visit was paid to Leith by the most up-to-date 2,848-ton Naval survey ship, H.M.S. *Hecate*.

On 6 August 1872, a great social and educational event took place in the country. The day marked the coming into force of the Education (Scotland) Act of that year. The Act, repealing all previous educational Acts—and there had been several—set up school boards elected popularly, whose responsibility it was to ensure the adequacy and efficiency of education provision within their areas and for the attendance of *all* children aged 5–13 years. All schools under the management of school boards became

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'public'. This major event in Scottish social history was suitably celebrated throughout the country and many schools chose health topics for display in their exhibitions.

A hundred years ago, during a period corresponding to that covered by this Report of Proceedings, stirring events were taking place in Edinburgh on the question of admission of women to the university and their medical education, centring round the figures of Sophia Jex-Blake and her six fellow women medical students. So hotly disputed was the issue that social life in the city was disrupted for bitter feelings were engendered between the protagonists and antagonists of the issues at stake. Those of one party could no longer meet with those of the other.

THE TWENTY-THIRD ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AND SIXTY-EIGHTH ORDINARY MEETING

The Society meet at the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh on 23 October 1971 for its Annual General Meeting. At the Sixty-Eighth Ordinary Meeting which followed, Mr. David Mackenzie, Product Manager of Ethicon Ltd. gave a paper entitled:

THE HISTORY OF SUTURES

The title of this paper should more correctly be 'A Short History of Surgery with particular reference to Sutures' for the two subjects are inseparable. May I also clarify the word 'Sutures' in the title, for I mean both sutures which hold a wound together until it has healed, and ligatures which are used to tie off a vessel such as an artery.

Somewhere between 50,000 and 30,000 B.C. eyed needles were invented and by 20,000 B.C. bone needles were of a standard unsurpassed until the Renaissance. It is reasonable to assume that these needles were used to sew wounds together, for Neolithic skulls have been found, showing that during this period trepanning was successfully carried out. Bone growth inward from the edge of the hole shows that the patient was not only alive at the time of the operation but survived for a considerable period afterwards.

Primitive men in backwaters of the modern world give some indication of how early surgery was performed. North American Indians used cautery. East African tribes ligate blood vessels with tendons and close wounds with acacia thorns pushed through the wound with strips of vegetation wound round the protruding ends in a figure-of-eight. A missionary, Robert Felkin, described a caesarean section he saw performed in Uganda in 1879. It was skilfully performed using cautery and a skewer-like means of closure. A South American method of wound closure uses large black ants which bite the wound edges together, their powerful jaws acting in a similar manner to Michel clips. The ant's body is then twisted off leaving the head in place.

Returning to ancient times, about 1900 B.C. Hamurabi, king of Babylon, codified the laws and engraved them on a temple pillar. Some of these laws related to surgical practice. One stated that, 'If a physician shall make a severe wound with an operating knife and kill a patient or destroy an eye, his hands shall be cut off.' Although these laws show that surgery was performed, it also indicates why Babylonian medicine