

# 3 A 75th Anniversary Tribute to the Society<sup>1</sup>

*Alan C. Lendrum*

Firstly, I would thank the Committee for deciding to entrust me with this oration, on the grounds that to be trusted is a greater compliment than to be loved. However, I am at least able to open with a quotation from a real historian. Lord Acton, in a similar situation, said 'I shall never again enjoy the opportunity of speaking my thoughts to such an audience as this, and on so privileged an occasion a lecturer may well be tempted to bethink himself whether he knows of any neglected truth'. And so, fellow members and others, let me offer a neglected truth. A startling example of this neglect occurs in the first four pages of the current Bulletin of our College. The truth is, the findings in one necropsy may be sufficient for the clinician concerned, but to the pathologist, as a student of the processes of disease, the value of one necropsy depends on 99 other necropsies of the same disease. For the young or the immature pathologist, this is where the museum proves of value if it is huge and the curator is a true disciple of Heraclitus, of Virchow and, more recently, of Sir Francis Walshe, who said, almost in Virchow's words, 'The idea of process enters far too little into our thought'. Despite the fact, as Lancelot Whyte maintained, that Europeans lack a vocabulary of change, there is hope, for a man can alter his way of thinking, even after the age of 50.

Our Society did, in its 50th year; it unexpectedly decided to take note of the event, and asked its Secretary to be its historian. No better choice could have been made, as J.H. Dible was dedicated to the well-being of the Society, steeped in its tradition, and no mean historian, as later confirmed by his fascinating book on Napoleon's Surgeon, Larrey. Henry Dible had a truly Hellenic regard for excellence, for the urbanity of Platonic Athens, and his history had no trace of smear or sneer. Some hot-heads could not understand his lack of passion for sudden change, and yet he was an enthusiast for the promising. His immediate warmth in the association with our Dutch colleagues certainly helped to create possibly the most humane international linkage in European history. For all of us, Henry Dible as the Secretary was the man with the oiled feather; for the younger members I would explain that this was how we used to silence squeaking hinges.

In Dible's account he quotes Pye-Smith's statement in 1907 that pathology 'is the foundation or institute on which all scientific prevention and treatment of disease must rest' and adds his own comment, 'These discerning remarks are worth quoting today when developments in state medicine have tended to obscure and to reverse the true relationship of pathology to medicine'. This apparently reactionary comment is recalled because, in a Committee discussion in 1976 on the MRCPATH, two members insisted that the present examination laid too great an emphasis on routine pathology to the detriment of academic work, and quoted Payling Wright 'To confine a man to routine departmental work for a long period is seriously detrimental to his development as an investigator'. If, however, a man wished to follow Virchow as an investigator... of disease in the human being, he would find that the hospital service provides the opportunity to study the

<sup>1</sup> This article has not been published previously. It was written as a 75th anniversary tribute and presented to The Pathological Society Committee in July 1981 on the occasion of the summer meeting in Dundee. It is reproduced here with the permission of Professor Lendrum's family.

processes of disease in man. As J.W. Howie in 1959 well said of Sir Robert Muir, 'He regarded sound laboratory work as the scientific foundation of all clinical practice; and he was successful beyond all expectation in persuading many with great influence in the Universities and in Medicine that this was indeed the truth. For this we are all his debtors'. I might add here that Sir Robert rated... very highly... the pedagogic obligation. His heart was in it. This is no place to detail all the events in the Society's history as Dible did in his paper, but we might look at a few of the innovations in our time: of these, some were forced on us by extraneous events – others by intrinsic events. A few have proved good... but some... resemble the inhabitants of Corsica, immortalized by Gibbon... as easier to deplore than to describe. Let us take a peep into 1954's Minutes... not quoted in Dible's paper. A member suggested that a subject be announced and perhaps speakers be invited from abroad. This was rejected by the Committee unanimously; it was also said that the artificial stimulation of interest in special subjects was not likely to be as fruitful as the Society's normal activities.

## 1957

Two Honorary members' deaths recorded, M.J. Stewart, editor of the *Journal* for many years, and T. Madsen, elected 1929.

## 1958

A member spoke against valedictory addresses, thinking that reference to selected members was invidious. It was agreed that decisions be left to the Committee. Professor G.R. Cameron sent a letter suggesting a series of short addresses to commemorate Virchow's Cellular Pathology 1858. The Committee considered that this would 'introduce difficulties and that it might prove an embarrassing innovation'. The member with the distaste for obituaries suggested non-acceptance of a certain number of papers, the arrangement of symposia with a series of experts and the presentation of papers by invitation. The Minute says 'There did not appear to be any volume of support for these suggestions'.

J.H. Dible retires from Secretaryship. C.H. Browning elected Honorary member. The Committee agreed with the desirability of offering facilities as part of this country's contribution to the technical education of overseas students and felt that the Institute of Medical Laboratory Technicians should approach the heads of such departments as the Institute selected.

## 1959

Death of Sir Robert Muir. Among those members who have died since 1956 we have proof of the benefit of membership of the Society, and of a Scottish University – as Dible had. The prime examples are C.E. Dukes (Edinburgh) aged 86, C.H. Browning and J.W. McLeod (both Glasgow) aged 90, Win Boyd (Edinburgh) aged 94, Sir Robert Muir (Edinburgh) aged 95 and, the exception in many more ways than one, Parkes Weber (Cambridge) aged 99. Among the senior survivors we have a precious and unique member Walter Pagel, elected Fellow of the British Academy and almost certainly the only member ever to have attained such an intellectual eminence.

To return to 1959: Honorary members Sir F.M. Burnet and J.H. Dible elected; death of Honorary member Pierre Masson (elected 1955).

## 1960

Letter from Mary Barber stating that, with bacteriological papers always taken first, many bacteriologists were denied the opportunity of attending the dinner. Agreed to alternate as from 1961.

Scaiff said that a histological panel on bone tumour was necessary under a National Research Council investigation on methods of treatment. The British Empire Cancer Campaign (BECC)

had agreed to finance this as a subcommittee of the main histological panel run by the Society and the BECC. Four members were nominated for the panel.

Third joint meeting in Holland held at Utrecht in May. Weather, wit and wisdom all in good measure.

## 1961

July, Aberdeen: J.W. MacLeod elected Honorary member. Death of two Honorary members H.R. Dean and Jules Bordet elected in 1913!

## 1962

January: A group from the Society, headed by J.W. Howie, to meet officers of the Association of Clinical Pathologists (ACP) ... to send a memorandum to all members of both organisations on the matter of a possible College, for definite answers and willingness to support financially. If sufficient answers in favour, the officers of the two societies would arrange a public meeting to appoint office-bearers of the new College.

July, Leeds, with the Dutch: Downie gave an account of the meeting on 21 June to found this College. T. Crawford, Registrar of the new College, expressed the thanks of the Council for help, financial and otherwise, they had received from the Society.

## 1963

May: First joint meeting on invitation from the Norwegian Society, held in Oslo and in Bergen. Very different from war-time recollection were whale-steaks that might have been Aberdeen-Angus.

July, Glasgow: Honorary members W. Boyd, J. Cruickshank, O.M. Dijkstra, L. Kreyberg and Dorothy Russell were elected.

## 1964

May: Joint meeting in Groningen.

July, Birmingham: A request for abstracts of papers to be published quickly after the meeting was countered by the Editor's distaste for accepting unedited material. Two new honorary members Sir Howard Florey and Rebecca Lancefield were elected.

## 1965

Suggestion of a symposium on a specified subject, with invited speakers at each meeting and occupying not more than one session was accepted as worth a trial, preferably at a summer meeting. Sixteen years later we might feel that the current type of 'put-on show to entice the uninformed by a continued dialectic' scarcely merits the term symposium, and further degradation (of percentage unknown) has produced a clutch of minisymposia. New honorary members Sir Roy Cameron and Arnold Rich were elected.

## 1966

R.W. Scarff elected honorary member. Death of J. Cruickshank.

## 1967

The Society to have two journals: *Journal of Pathology* and *Journal of Medical Microbiology*. Oakley thought that the Committee should consider more than two meetings in the year. Honorary membership accorded to Harry Goldblatt.

**1968**

Intimation that the College would appreciate an approach from the Society to define areas of common interest and useful collaboration between the College, the Society and the ACP. Death of honorary members Lord Florey and A.R. Rich. Honorary membership accorded to D.F. Cappell and J.W. Orr.

**1969**

B. Lennox, Lexicographer, wished for some kind of introduction to symposia, to help non-specialists. W.G. Spector elected treasurer. Abstracts of papers given to be published in a form suitable for citation. Honorary membership for Sir Christopher Andrewes, A.W. Downie and Sir Graham Wilson. Death of Sir Henry Dale (hon. member 1941).

September, Special Committee Meeting: Symposia should be a recurrent feature, when appropriate, speakers to be invited and subsidised. From time to time host university department to be encouraged to mount a symposium of broad general interest with contributions from its own staff and possibly outside participants. Joint meetings with other societies or groups should be encouraged. Secretaries to meet representatives of the specialist panels financed by the BECC to consider improvement of communication between the panels and the Society.

Specialist groups: To ask members 'What groups should be established'. Groups to meet for not less than one hour, during the demonstration session, with the aim of educating the general membership in the group's expertise by occasional papers or symposia. A group could be associated with an existing group outwith the Society. This secular reformation recalls the danger to an institution that keeps changing its character, and the fact that being up-to-date may merely mean chasing the contemporary fads.

**1970**

Maximum number of honorary members raised from 20 to 30 without restriction therein on the number of UK residents. The Society's account was transferred to a prominent London firm of investment advisers. The Society agreed to sponsor a microbiology Teaching Group. Death of honorary member R.W. Scarff.

**1971**

Middlesex Hospital Immunology Group to have discussion in Edinburgh in July on the case for clinical immunology as a fifth laboratory discipline in the NHS. Honorary membership of the Dutch Society was granted to C.V. Harrison, A.C. Lendrum and G.L. Montgomery. Death of honorary member J.H. Dible.

In view of rising costs, List of Members to be published in full every three years, with list of changes issued in intervening years. The treasurer reported a modest surplus.

**1972**

Professor Dustin proposed a joint meeting with the Belgian Society in Brussels in 1973.

Working party's recommendations on Future Editorial Policy: Editorial Board of *Journal of Pathology* enlarged to 15–20 members; part or whole-time editorial assistant of good calibre to help with both journals. For next three years at least, W.G. Spector to be Chairman of the Editorial Board. Thanks to improved financial situation the treasurer hoped to pay off the debt to Messrs Constable by end of 1972. Death of honorary member C.H. Browning.

July, Leeds: Oakley expressed his gratitude to fellow editors and to Miss Milner for great help and friendliness over the years – 1950–56 as assistant editor of *Journal of Pathology and*

*Bacteriology*, 1956–68 as editor, 1969–72 as editor of *Journal of Pathology* and 1968–71 as editor of *Journal of Medical Microbiology*. At the dinner, W.G. Spector presented the President of the Royal College of Pathologists with the Society's gift to the College, a Georgian silver basket (by Henry Chorner, 1795) to be used at College dinners. W.G. Spector to be editor and D.W. Willoughby deputy editor of *Journal of Pathology*, with editorial board of about 20. Honorary membership for J.B. Duguid, G.L. Montgomery and C.L. Oakley.

### 1973

January: Secretary to write offering congratulations to Miss Mabel Fitzgerald, a member since 1908 who had recently at the age of 100 been given an honorary MA by the University of Oxford. She had qualified with distinction in physiology at the turn of the Century, but under existing regulations could not have a degree conferred on her because of her sex.

April, Brussels: 60–70 delegates from the UK attended a joint meeting with the Belgian Society.

July, Manchester: The Teaching Group had a well-attended discussion on 'What should we teach?'.  
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### 1974

Report on joint meeting of the Society, the ACP and the Royal College of Pathology. Agreed that a suitable diploma in pathology sponsored by the College was very desirable, particularly for overseas students.

The organisation of the coming Cardiff meeting was proving very complex. The Minute reads: 'It was left to Crane, Neville and Williams to sort out the jig-saw as they thought best' which you must agree is a puzzling metaphor.

July, Cardiff: Joint meeting with the Dutch Society. On the dinner, the Minute reads: 'The menu, printed in Welsh, Dutch and French, must surely have been unique in the Society's history' – certainly the understatement of the year.

A.M. Neville to succeed W.A.J. Crane as Meetings Secretary. The debt to Longmans has been cleared and some addition made to the Society's capital. A.G. Lendrum elected Honorary member.

### 1975

The Middlesex: A.M. Neville 'suggested that when the programme included a number of related papers in a particular field, an expert in that field should be invited to give an introductory background paper lasting 20–30 minutes. This would make it easier for non-specialists to understand the significance of the papers that followed'. This echoes exactly B. Lennox in 1969 and the Committee agreed it was worth a trial. Editor reported that the *Journal of Pathology* had a 60% rejection rate over the year and that about one in four of the papers now came from overseas. The *Journal of Medical Microbiology* rejections were down, but still over 55%. Death of honorary member C.L. Oakley.

### 1976

Society representatives to College Standing Committees: Histopathology, R.C. Curran; Medical Microbiology, A.A. Glynn; Lab. Technician, J.C. Sloper.

Qualification for membership: 'With greater emphasis on the MRC Path examination, pathologists of quite senior standing might now have few or no publications to their name'. Agreed other criteria were relevant. 'In general, however, membership should not be offered to those below the Senior Registrar grade'.

July, Newcastle: The extroversion of the Society grows apace. At the symposium on capillary abnormalities of the glomeruli, taking part were Dr Liliane Morel-Maroger and her Parisian team. Death of Honorary members G.H. Whipple, D.F. Cappell and O.H. Dijkstra.

### 1977

Charing Cross: Symposium jointly with Association of Clinical Pathologists, celebrating their 50th year, on Techniques in Pathology. This cordial union led to four mini-symposia.

July, Aberdeen: The Dutch Society elected P.M. Bakker to follow C.A. Wagenvoort as their representative on the Committee. A new feature was a social function on the Thursday afternoon, a visit to Crathes Castle and its famous garden. A symposium on The Autopsy had a demonstration of direct colour television from the autopsy.

Sir James Howie was elected honorary member. M.G. McEntegart to succeed B. Moore as general secretary. Death of honorary member Harry Goldblatt.

### 1978

Barts: A.M. Neville observed that all the available accommodation at Barts had been taken up, and clearly met a need. A book exhibition by H.K. Lewis was on display during the meeting. The Editor of the *Journal of Pathology* said that the first solicited review article was now passed for press.

July, Southampton, Joint meeting with the Dutch Society: The contribution to the European Congress of Pathology had been repaid plus 10% interest. Request from Dr Foster for help towards the cost of a permanent home for the Colchester Collection of Historical Instruments; agreed to give £100, on request. Thursday afternoon to H.M.S. Victory in Portsmouth. Death of honorary member, J.W. McLeod. Edith K. Dawson and R.A. Willis elected to honorary membership.

### 1979

Charing Cross: Letter of thanks from M.T. Parker for the Society's support to the VIIth International Symposium on Streptococci. Inaugural C.L. Oakley Lecturer, C.S.F. Easmon, spoke on 'Experimental Staphylococcal Infection in Mice'. The Lectureship is funded by an endowment from the 6th European Congress of Pathology.

July, Leicester: Congratulations to Professor H. Smith on his election as Fellow of the Royal Society. Agreed to sponsor, along with the Pharmacological Society and the College, the J. Barnes Memorial Lecture in Toxicology. Agreed that the Meetings Secretary should approach A.C. Lendrum to prepare and deliver an account of the 25 years of the Society's life since that given by J.H. Dible on the occasion of the 50th Anniversary. Elected to Honorary membership: Sir Theo Crawford and Dame Janet Vaughan. The treasurer reported that the Society's assets had doubled in the past five years. The *Journal of Medical Microbiology* is attracting more papers, about half from overseas, but papers on virology have fallen to almost nil, due probably to the proliferation of virology journals.

### 1980

Oxford: The Editor announced that from May the *Journal of Pathology* would be printed by Ballantyne Spotiswoode in Colchester. Longmans will continue as publisher. This brings to an end a tradition as old as the Society, Constable having been associated with the original publisher Oliver and Boyd since about 1890.

Agreed that abstracts would be stringently edited and published. Meanwhile, the Committee Minutes every six months become more voluminous! The Standing Advisory Committee on Laboratory Staffing and Organisation supported in principle the suggestion of a forensic NHS

commitment per region. The second Oakley Lecture was given by B.I. Duerden on 'The identification and occurrence of bacteroides species in the normal human flora and from clinical infections'. 265 Members and guests signed the attendance book; 16 members acted as Chairmen of sessions; and in all there were 100 papers and 8 demonstrations, the total membership now standing at 1668.

May, Joint Meeting in Groningen: The Society presented to our hosts an engraved silver plate, and received from them a Commemorative Medallion. The agenda was overcrowded and some papers overlong, otherwise successful.

July, Glasgow: The Committee discussed the question of sponsorship of another journal with more slant towards histopathology. The Officers of the Society were empowered to negotiate with possible publishers and to report back. Agreed to make a donation of £750 towards the 4th International Meeting on Future Trends in Inflammation at the Royal College of Surgeons, refundable if a profit is made. Death of honorary members William Boyd and R.A. Willis. Elected to honorary membership: Sir Ashley Miles and Sir Thomas Symington.

## 1981

Middlesex: Teaching Group debated the motion 'Poor Recruitment is due to Poor Teaching at the Undergraduate Level'. (Question: Had any of the speakers studied the paper on students' aspirations, *BMJ* 1976; **11 Sept.**: 631?) 3rd Oakley Lecture by D.N. Slater, 'Expectations in Diabetic Mellitus – Pancreas Transplantation': in all, 116 papers.

Death of honorary member J.B. Duguid. Two travel fellowships awarded to attend the joint meeting with the Canadian pathologists in June in Toronto.

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### Anti-freeze

My first contribution to the Path Soc was as a young lecturer in Edinburgh. It was the Winter Meeting at Bart's starting on 2nd January (!) 1969, and it was my first ever scientific meeting. The title, 'The vasculature of Brown-Pearce carcinoma in growth and regression', conveys little of what the Communication and demonstration involved. The B-P carcinoma was maintained in rabbit testes, being passed from generation unto generation by intra-testicular needle inoculation. The late Andy Shivas, then Senior Lecturer and part-time tympanist in the Edinburgh Department, had read about the use of latex casts to demonstrate blood vessels in anatomical preparations, and set me to work on the B-P carcinoma. After three months of careful, if somewhat kitchen-sink, methodology, I had produced a series of (five) casts. When viewed through a stereoscopic microscope with the cast floating in water, these were rather impressive – at least to me. They were a striking brick-red colour and their tubes and fronds looked like something from the Great Barrier Reef. One of my more senior colleagues was less impressed, asking me on at least one occasion if I was still playing with my rubber balls. On the strength of a few complete casts, however, Dr. Shivas submitted a poster. Had it been



simply a poster with photographs I would have been spared several problems, but my mentor thought that I should take 'normal' and 'tumour-bearing' casts to the meeting. Remember, the casts would collapse if taken out of the supporting water. I found two suitable glass jars with screw-top lids to transport them to London and took the casts home ready for my journey on New Year's Day. When I went to pick them up from the window-sill in the porch ('You're not bringing those into the house!'), both my casts were frozen solid. I couldn't risk rapid heating as the cast might have deformed, so it was a slow thaw on the radiator.

With one eye on my testes (as it were) and one on the clock (I was running late for the train by this stage), I watched as the ice slowly melted. With fluidity restored and the prospect of carrying these jars through the Arctic conditions prevailing around Edinburgh's Waverley station, I decided that a sensible precaution would be to add some anti-freeze. There then followed a long and, at times, cold journey in which a bag containing the precious casts was maintained in a strictly level position in one hand, while I held a suitcase containing a microscope wrapped in underwear and socks in the other. At last, the casts were in situ at Bart's. I had carefully changed the 'transport medium' for clean water and invited Dr Shivas to inspect the casts prior to the session. As he stared down the microscope he declared, 'Well I never, some of these vessels have even got a bluish tinge – like venous sinusoids!'. I didn't have the nerve to tell him that was the anti-freeze!

**Mike Dixon**

### **A moving experience**

One of the most moving experiences (!) for several members of the Society was at the 1994 Winter Path Society meeting hosted by the The London Hospital. Earlier in the week there had been the traditional Committee Dinner which was hosted at the Reform Club by Colin Berry. A sizeable proportion of the group were struck down by a very unpleasant gastroenteritis during the course of the meeting. This was subsequently shown by one of our microbiological colleagues to have been due to a real virus which had been lurking in the oysters (who had the audacity to go on to publish this in a clinical microbiology journal!). I will always remember the moment that I was personally struck by this nasty virus. I had been asked to mark the posters and was halfway through this task when I had to exit stage left; I left a rather dumbfounded young investigator mid-sentence! Not all of those that had attended the dinner were so afflicted. Based on preliminary observations of those that had been there, Nick Wright proposed a hypothesis that alcohol in excess afforded protection against the effects of the micro-organism. To my knowledge this has never been formally tested. In spite of the evidence base however, it appears that many members of the Society have adopted a strategy of using alcohol as a 'prophylactic' at Society meetings.

**Alastair Burt**