

# 6 The 1990s: People, Events and Meetings

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The 1990s was a decade of consolidation and steady development for The Pathological Society under the astute leadership of Eric Walker (Professor of Pathology in the University of Aberdeen), who was Chairman and General Secretary from 1992 to 2000. His diplomatic skills were constantly tested during his Chairmanship by a number of different issues and in particular the different needs and aspirations of the microbiologists and histopathologists in the Society. It is a great tribute to Eric's diplomacy that when the decision was eventually taken that the microbiologists would be better placed in another organisation, this was effected and perceived as a positive move for all parties and individuals.

The growing strength, influence and confidence of the Society in the 1990s was underpinned by its sound financial position (see Chapter 4). The credit for this belongs undoubtedly with the Treasurer up until 1993, Munro Neville, who had taken over as Treasurer in 1983 when the Society was in a weak financial position. Through a combination of astute investments, sound and perceptive negotiations with the College, a firm 'Scottish' attitude to finances and an ability to say 'No' when required, he made the Society strong financially and was responsible for our acquisition of the lease on our office accommodation on the top floor of 2 Carlton House Terrace. Munro's talents as a Treasurer were recognised by the College, who recruited him as their Treasurer in 1993. I took over as The Pathological Society Treasurer from Munro in 1993 and, thanks to the mechanisms and arrangements set up by him I (despite limited aptitude for financial matters – ask my wife), did not find the job too burdensome. One of the first things I did as Treasurer, on Munro's advice, was to open up negotiations with the College on extending the lease on the top floor of 2 Carlton House Terrace, which was due to run out in 1999. The negotiations were complex and protracted, but eventually we were able to agree a further 10-year extension to the lease at a very reasonable cost to the Society for excellent accommodation in central London. One of the few pieces of advice that I passed on in 2003 to my successor as Treasurer, Alastair Burt, was to start negotiations with the College over a further extension to the lease, which was due to run out in 2009. From Alastair's report to the Business Meeting of the Society in July 2005 it sounds as though the negotiations this time had extra layers of complexity to be navigated, but he has clearly achieved a very good deal for the Society, with concomitant advantages to the College, and an extension to the lease of a further 20 years. It is extremely useful to the Society to have this base within the same building as the College. The close physical association of the Society and the College has mutual advantages, with the two organisations having been able to respond in harmony to unforeseen crises on a number of occasions. Throughout the 1990s the College and the Society jointly financed and allocated elective bursaries, and our administrative staff benefited and continue to benefit from being linked to the larger College structure and robust pay scales.

We were also able, because of our strong financial position in the 1990s, to take a number of initiatives and set up a number of new schemes for the benefit of members of the Society and pathology in general. Such initiatives included the setting up of the Society's PhD Scheme, the

Trainees' Support Scheme and the Open Scheme. The PhD scheme began in 1995 and provides full funding for 3 years for a PhD student supervised by a member of the Society. The Society supports three students at any one time, with one new student starting each year as one finishes her/his 3 years of support. The scheme has proved very successful and popular with members of the Society. The annual call for applications for one of these studentships always produces a keen and top quality competition. The scheme during 1996–2001 has supported students in departments throughout the land, including Cambridge (twice), Guy's, King's and St Thomas's (twice), Dundee, Glasgow and Leicester, on research topics reflecting the wide research interests of Society members, producing several significant contributions to our understanding of matters ranging from the complexity of the p53 pathway to molecular mechanisms of renal carcinogenesis. Presentations from Society-supported PhD students are now a regular feature of the Society's Scientific Meetings. Specific Trainee support began in 1998 as the Clinical Trainees' Grant Scheme and continues rebadged as the Pilot Study Grant Scheme, a twice yearly competition for grants of up to £5000 for pump priming of a research project undertaken by a trainee. The Trainee Support Scheme has spawned the now established and successful Annual Trainees' Day at Winter Pathological Society Meetings and the embryonic Pathological Society Trainees' Subcommittee.

Part of the move to a proper business base and management of the Society was the move in 1993 to running the financial side of the main Scientific Meetings through the Society's Office and the Society's Administrator. It seems unbelievable now that until 1992 the financial responsibility for the meeting had rested with the host department, which was also responsible for managing the accounts and paying the bills entailed in running the meeting. I actually hosted one of the last meetings to be run under the old scheme (Winter 1992). I can tell this story now because so many years have elapsed, but we were never billed by the caterers for the Society Dinner that year, despite a series of reminders sent by me and the Society's Administrator over a 2–3-year period. By the time 5 years had elapsed, still with no bill, I transferred the Dinner money account from the host organisation to the Society because I reasoned that it had originally been collected for a Society event, and by that time I was the Treasurer of the Society!

The *Journal of Pathology* also grew in stature and influence throughout the 1990s (see Chapter 8). Its upward trajectory had been begun by Dennis Wright in 1983, and was continued and accelerated by Peter Toner through from 1993. Peter laid the foundations for the sound business and organisational basis on which the Journal currently operates. Throughout the 1990s the Society was also responsible for and owned the *Journal of Medical Microbiology*. The Editor-in-Chief throughout that period was Brian Duerden, and so successful was his stewardship of that journal that it formed the dowry taken by the microbiologists when they left the Society, and enabled all parties to feel that a fair and favourable business solution accompanied the parting of the ways of microbiologists and pathologists in the Society. Microbiology Meetings Secretaries through the 1990s were R.J. Williams (1991–1995) and Curtis Gemmell (1995–2001). They kept the microbiological section of the meetings alive through a difficult period for their subject and for the microbiological members of the Society, and they always contributed positively at Officers and Committee Meetings.

## MEETINGS

The Pathology Meetings Secretaries through the 1990s were Nick Wright (1987–1992), James Underwood (1992–1996) and Michael Wells (1996–2000). All were very successful, all made innovations to improve meetings and they were not afraid to try new things. Between them they introduced many of the now established features of the Meetings, such as poster prizes, poster rounds in a variety of formats, plenary sessions, various named guest lectures and joint meetings with other societies, and all three entertained the Society royally in their own inimitable and

unique styles at Society Dinners. The duration of the Meetings Secretaries speech at the Society Dinner had been the source of a small wager for some time. Legend has it that this started on the 'Southampton table' but during the 1990s (in part due to the efforts of William Roche) this evolved to involve all at the dinner, a pound being the stake and the best guess of the duration winning the pot! William's strategy for ensuring participation seemed to largely involve the (non-pc) use of pretty SHOs and SpRs to persuade the punters to part with a pound. On one occasion William actually won! Cries of 'fix' abounded but one is sure of complete probity in the process!

The Society ran a memorable series of meetings throughout the 1990s (see Appendix 6). Attendances peaked in the early 1990s with slightly reduced attendances in the latter part of the decade (see Fig. 9.1, Chapter 9). However, the quality of the meetings both scientifically and socially was maintained and enhanced throughout this period. The winter meetings had in fact become so large in the early 1990s that they could not be accommodated by any of the London Medical Schools with the exception of the Hammersmith Hospital. This led to meetings being hosted by one Medical School, e.g. Guy's/Thomas's, but held in another (the Hammersmith), and then to the series of winter meetings hosted by London Schools but held in the Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre off Parliament Square. This location had advantages and disadvantages for the Society. Disadvantages included the cost of the premises, problems with audiovisual arrangements and dissociation from the Host Department. Advantages included adequate space, a prime location in central London (with great views of Westminster Abbey) and, in January 1994, a conducted tour and reception in the Houses of Parliament.

The first meeting of the new decade was held in January 1990 at the Hammersmith Hospital, with N.A. Wright both as host and as Meetings Secretary. An overriding memory of this and the next few winter meetings was the extreme cold! The walk from East Acton tube station to the Hammersmith past Wormwood Scrubb's was particularly cold, with a biting North wind reminding one of the trials and tribulations of polar explorers. The Stamp lecture theatre was not much warmer but it was the biggest Society Scientific Meeting to date and the first time with over 300 abstracts (327). There was a symposium on Cell Differentiation in Pathology and Werner Franke was guest lecturer (and I recall he had two carousels of slides!)

The summer meeting was held in Nottingham with rather stringent security as a consequence of threats from animal rights activists. Wishing to leave a little early and hoping to place his valise behind the registration desk, Peter Hall was slightly embarrassed to have it searched by David Turner's secretary who found (predictably) only dirty clothes! Nevertheless such security issues have actually only rarely been needed at Society meetings, even today. Hall and others. presented papers on the immunohistological detection of PCNA as a marker of proliferation, beginning a flood of interest in this strategy – interest enhanced perhaps by one of the other co-authors being a strikingly attractive blond! At the AGM in Nottingham the Meetings Secretary indicated that because the meetings continued to grow, and with increasing complexity and organisation, there was a need to defray the increasing costs of the meetings. Consequently, and after nearly a decade of discussion and debate, it was announced that there would be the introduction of a registration fee from July 1991.

As with January 1990, the January 1991 meeting in Cambridge was characterised by freezing conditions and profound wind-chill due to icy blasts coming across the Fens. A symposium on Aspects of Genetic Pathology presaged a splurge of papers on PCR and similar methodologies but in the 1990s much of the proffered papers still remained largely immunohistochemical and observational in nature. In July 1991 the Society gathered in Belfast for the first time in many years. The meeting was notable for the introduction of registration fees (£10 per day) and the introduction of camera-ready abstracts. The former had been a contentious source of debate in the Committee for a decade and the latter had been first proposed 2 years before by the Meetings Secretary, Nick Wright, who at the Belfast meeting demitted office to be replaced by James Underwood. The Belfast meeting was a highly successful social event, with an excellent programme, enjoyed by all

who went. Of note was an afternoon trip in beautiful sunshine to the Giant's Causeway, followed by an abortive attempt to visit the Bushmill's Distillery. This was eagerly awaited after the exertions of the walk down to and back up from the Causeway. Sadly no-one had told the organisers that it was shut for their annual summer holiday!

In January 1992, a prompt return of the Society to the Royal Postgraduate Medical School and Hammermith Hospital was dictated by the size of the meeting and the inability of the host departments (University Medical and Dental School, Guy's and St Thomas's Hospitals) to provide large enough venues. Bert Vogelstein declined an invitation but Stanley Hamilton was an excellent replacement. A symposium organised by Peter Hall on the 'nucleus and cell proliferation' included luminaries such as Ron Laskey, Nick Wright, David Lane, Fiona Watt and Andrew Wyllie. This was associated with an odd misunderstanding. In the trade exhibition there were several displays of books. Bizarrely most were not on pathological issues, but on topics related to nuclear power, nuclear non-proliferation, nuclear this and that: all because the word nucleus in the symposium title had elicited an incorrect response! The summer meeting of 1992 was held jointly with the Dutch Pathological Society in Manchester. There was an abortive attempt at that meeting to return to the old tradition of running from Thursday through to Saturday. Although the meeting was a great success (with dinner at the Old Trafford cricket ground, including a visit to the square), the Saturday session (on developmental biology and pathology) was not well attended and one doubts if this timing will ever be repeated.

January 1993 saw the first use by the Society of the Queen Elisabeth II (QE2) Conference Centre in Westminster, with a meeting hosted by St Mary's Hospital Medical School. Although expensive, this venue was felt to be needed, but meetings in this venue (which continued for the rest of the decade) prompted diverse responses from love to hate. Juan Rosai made his first of three visits in 10 years as guest lecturer to the Society (the others being Dublin in 2002 and Bristol in 2003). Figure 6.1 shows the attendees at the January 1993 Committee Dinner. The summer meeting of 1993 was hosted by the Edinburgh pathologists led by C.C. Bird but held at Heriot-Watt University in blazing July heat. Discussion seminars were introduced at that meeting, as were invited lectures from the great and the good: E.D. Williams spoke on Natural Selection and Pathology, and David Page (Vanderbilt University, USA) on breast pathology. Colin Bird had suggested previously to the Committee that the main poster prize be denoted as the Alistair Currie Prize. This was agreed by the Committee, the family were duly asked and having given their assent this was enacted (appropriately) from the Edinburgh Meeting.

The 1994 winter meeting at the QE2 Conference Centre was hosted by St Bartholomew's and the London Hospital Medical School and was notable for a discussion session where we asked 'Do falling autopsy rates matter?', a lecture by Gunter Kloppel on 'pancreatitis' and a symposium on 'The Pathology of Devices'. However, it will be a long remembered meeting, not because of these scientific offerings, nor for a Reception held in the Houses of Parliament (organised by Colin Berry) with an inspiring tour of the various Chambers, but rather because of the Committee Dinner and its dramatic results! This incident is documented in Chapter 10 (p. 121) and in the vignette by Alistair Burt (p. 56). Suffice it to say that I, as Treasurer, delayed paying the bill for the Committee Dinner pending an enquiry into an incident that was being investigated by the Communicable Diseases consultant for the City of Westminster! The Summer meeting of the Society in 1994 was held in Glasgow and it was fitting that the Society honoured a stalwart of the Membership and a long-serving Officer, R.A.B. Goudie, who lectured entertainingly and informatively on the History of Organ Specific Autoimmune Disease.

At about this time the Officers received a complaint from a notable senior London professor who described the Society meetings as 'elitist and singularly uninformative'. This individual also complained that there were an excessive number of 'case reports' that had flooded the meeting. It is recorded in the Minutes that the Meetings Secretary (J.C.E. Underwood) pointed out to the Committee that the complainer was actually the author of one of the 10 case reports (which



**Figure 6.1** The Pathological Society Committee January 1993. *Front row:* Professor C.T. Doyle, Dr Rosamund J. Williams (Medical Microbiology Meetings Secretary), Professor B.I. Deurden (Editor of *Journal of Medical Microbiology*), Professor F. Walker (Chairman and General Secretary), Professor D.H. Wright (Editor of *Journal of Pathology*), Dr D.W.K. Cotton, Dr Anne-Marie McNicol, Dr S.P. Borriello, Professor J.C.E. Underwood (Meetings Secretary). *Back row:* Professor E.L. Jones, Dr J.G.M. Hastings, Mrs Jacqui Edwards (Administrator), Professor A.M. Neville (Treasurer), Dr N. Kirkham, Dr P. Quirke, Dr D. Lamb. (Missing are Dr M.J. Hill, Professor C.J.L.M. Meijer and Dr C. Wray).

represented less than 5% of the total abstracts at the January meeting)! Nevertheless this marked the beginnings of some concern that the progressive rise in attendance at Society meetings and submission of abstracts was beginning to slow and indeed reverse (see Fig. 9.1, Chapter 9). The genesis of this fall in attendance at the Society's meetings after a decade of growth is complex and diverse and certainly includes the effects of the 1992 and 1996 Research Assessment Exercise and the impact that this had on pathology within Universities. Staffing issues, financial stringencies and changes in training perhaps also contributed to this, and the long-term effects of these effects are still with us.

In January 1995 we congregated in Oxford where Judah Folkman argued for the central place of angiogenesis in cancer biology. Later that year we met with the Dutch Pathological Society in Amsterdam (Fig. 6.2) at a hugely successful meeting and again a luminary of the Society spoke, this time D.H. Wright on 'Burkitt's lymphoma: safaris, translocations, oncogenes and viruses'. During the last two decades poster presentations have been complemented by diverse strategies to promote their attendance and use. In Amsterdam poster rounds again surfaced! The 1996 winter meeting was hosted by King's College Hospital and again held at the QE2 Conference Centre. Guy Brugal (Grenoble) spoke on proliferation markers and a symposium asked 'Is quantitation only for research'? In Southampton in July, Peter Scheuer spoke on 'Thirty years of chronic hepatitis'. It is of note that the Committee Minutes record that at the Annual Business Meeting of 1996 the



**Figure 6.2** Delegates at the Summer Meeting of The Pathological Society held jointly with the Dutch Society in Amsterdam, July 1995.

Chairman and General Secretary, Eric Walker, indicated under 'any other business that: 'D.H. Wright as host is in fact the civilian advisor in Histopathology to the Royal Navy and hoped to exercise the privileges of rank during the Society's Dinner on HMS Warrior that evening. In this capacity he has the power to conduct marriages and bury the dead at sea. Any members who wished to avail themselves of these services should contact him directly'. It is not recorded if any such events occurred.

The winter 1997 meeting was hosted by the Royal Free Hospital Medical School (venue: QE2 Conference Centre) and the summer meeting was in Sheffield where the Royal College of Pathologists' Kettle Lecture was given by M.R. Stratton (Cambridge) on 'genetics and pathology'. D.J. Barker (Southampton) also spoke on the controversial subject of 'the fetal origins of adult disease', and there was a symposium on 'transgenic models and human disease'. The winter 1998 meeting (again at the QE2 Conference Centre), hosted by Imperial and Charing Cross Hospitals, was marked by the introduction of Plenary sessions, a successful experiment promoted by the new Meetings Secretary Mike Wells, and which continues to this day. Chris Fletcher (Boston and formerly of St Thomas's Hospital) gave an impressive exposition on 'Soft tissue tumours: the impact of cytogenetics and molecular analysis' and elegantly demonstrated the loss that UK pathology suffered when he left for the USA. In July the Society gathered in Leicester where the Kettle Lecture was given by Andrew Wyllie on 'apoptosis in cancer'. The Society Committee of the time recorded (summer 1998) that there needed to be more photographic records of the Society and its Meetings. Consequently disposable cameras were purchased, but sadly there is no record of their use!

After a meeting in Cambridge (winter 1999) with a reprise of cancer genetics and Peter Krammer's exposition of the roles of Fas/APO1/CD95 in cell death, the Society visited Dundee where the Royal College's Cameron Lecture was given by Salvador Moncada and a symposium on the molecular basis of cancer was (predictably perhaps) all about p53. It is a funny thing, but most of the things that stick in my mind about the Society's Meetings from the 1990s relate to the social rather than the scientific aspects of the meetings! For the Dundee meeting the Society Dinner was held in The Old Course Hotel in St Andrews and, during a protracted break between the main course and the sweet, Frank Carey suggested we take a stroll to enjoy the air and the

ambience. Even at 10 p.m. it was still a beautiful sunny warm evening as we walked out onto the 17th fairway (the Famous Road Hole of the Old Course). A group of golfers were putting out on the 17th green – and the wine was slipping down very easily. Later that same evening the last bus due to take us back to Dundee broke down and refused to start. During the wait for a replacement bus I am afraid I used my position as Host of the Meeting and Society Treasurer to order beers for everybody on the bus. We had two visitors from Romania who were snoozing quietly, but promptly awoke when the word ‘beer’ was mentioned. We had encountered some communication problems with the Romanians until that moment, but not thereafter.

## JOURNALS AND WEBS

Other important developments for the Society in the 1990s included the signing of a 10-year publishing deal for the *Journal of Pathology* with Wiley in 1994 and the setting up of the first version of the Society’s website. There is always the potential for friction between a publisher and a Society that owns the journal title and selects and edits the content of the journal. I think that the Society has been fortunate to have been dealing with Wiley for some 25 years now. As Treasurer I had considerable difficulties with the various publishers of the other Society journal (*Journal of Medical Microbiology*) during the 1990s. This is reflected in the number of times the publisher was changed throughout the 1990s, and the often highly charged editorial board meetings when publishing issues were under discussion, despite the undoubted financial and scientific success of the Journal. Despite the inevitable differences we have had with Wiley, they are nothing compared to the real difficulties we have had with other publishers. Our relationship with Wiley undoubtedly has been mutually beneficial and continues to develop.

In early 1996 the matter of insurance for both journals became an issue. For example, what would happen if the journal(s) were to be sued or were deemed liable as a consequence of material published in them. Insurance was deemed prohibitively expensive, so the option of ring fencing the journals in a separate Foundation was investigated, thus keeping the Society free of liability. This was in fact set up in September 1996 but disbanded in January 1997 because of the adverse impact on Charitable status and liability to VAT and corporation tax!

In 1995 the internet was increasingly making an impact in academic life. Browsers such as Mosaic were in use and web pages from a small number of academic institutions and societies were appearing. The contents of the *Journal of Pathology* were first placed online on a website hosted by the University of Nottingham and written and organised by James Lowe. A proposal to start a website for The Pathological Society was received by the Committee in 1996 and it was agreed to host a site with the internet provider Netbenefit, with the domain name [pathsoc.org.uk](http://pathsoc.org.uk). The website was created and went live on 30 June 1996. The earliest website had rudimentary graphics and duplicate sets of pages that were ‘text only’ in recognition of the fact that many browsers still ran on text-only terminals. By early 1998 a graphical website was developed because by then most people were using Netscape as their browser of choice. We started archiving with the Internet Archive in 1997, so members may like to review what it looked like then (see [http://web.archive.org/web/\\*/http://www.pathsoc.org.uk](http://web.archive.org/web/*/http://www.pathsoc.org.uk)). It was agreed that Wiley would take over the development of the site in 2003, but this did not progress nearly as well as our dealings with Wiley over the *Journal of Pathology*. Eventually the Society had to terminate its collaboration with Wiley over this matter – a difficult exercise but firmly and effectively managed by Peter Hall, in fact so effectively managed that the Society’s relationship with Wiley was in no way damaged and the Society emerged in a stronger negotiating position than ever before (and we got all our money back!). The development of the Society’s new website is now being led by Jim Lowe and Peter Hamilton. The Society is fortunate to have individuals within its membership with the knowledge and skills to take on and develop such an important activity for a modern organisation.



**Figure 6.3** Officers and members of the Society with Japanese delegates in 1996.

## THE COMMITTEE

A crucial element of the Society's functioning is its Committee, made up of Society members elected by their peers for a 3-year term. In addition, there are of course the Officers (see Fig. 6.3) who are similarly elected and serve for periods of 5 years. During the 1990s a range of weighty and not so weighty matters were considered by the Committee. For some considerable time a matter of great concern was discussion of whether the Committee Dinner should or should not be a black tie event! Indeed this matter swayed back and forth and eventually a vote on this issue went 15 against and 6 for continuing the tradition of black tie! Some traditionalists have ascribed the food poisoning incident at the Winter 1994 Meeting to divine retribution as opposed to a viral aetiology! It is noted that in 1996 a Committee wine tasting was held and a 1993 Cotes de Nuits Village and a 1994 Artea Sauvignon Blanc were purchased and laid down for future Committee Dinners. Regrettably none remains and the Committee has not repeated the experiment of wine tasting and laying down a cellar. The author views this with sadness.

More weighty matters considered by the Committee in the early 1990s included succession planning: for example, for Dennis Wright who had by 1993 served 10 years as Editor of the *Journal of Pathology*, and for Munro Neville who had similarly acted for a decade as Treasurer. Ultimately Peter Toner and David Levison were elected to these important positions. Nick Wright was replaced by James Underwood in 1991 as Meetings Secretary and in 1996 Mike Wells took over this role. One of the traditions of the Society that was challenged (unsuccessfully) several times during the 1990s is that the Society does not pay the expenses of Officers or Committee members for attending Officers' or Committee meetings that coincide with Scientific meetings. The rationale is that the Officers and Committee members would be at the Scientific meeting anyway, and should not be treated differently from ordinary members. However, the one perk/thank you that the Officers and Committee members do enjoy in repayment for their efforts on behalf of the Society is attending the Committee Dinner, which takes place after the Committee meeting and the evening before the start of the main meeting. This is usually a well-supported affair, but



I think apoplexy accurately describes what I experienced when I was presented as Treasurer with the bill for the Maastricht Committee Dinner in 2001. However, members will be pleased to know that strict guidelines now prevent a repeat of such extravagant ‘thanks’.

Interactions with other organisations were also of concern to the Committee. The Society began to be much more outward looking in the 1990s – an example of this is the development of our relationship with the Japanese Pathological Society. Since 1995 a series of delegations from the Society have attended Japanese Pathological Society meetings to present posters and give oral presentations, and Japanese pathologists have attended and presented at our meetings in alternate years (Fig. 6.3). I think this was the beginning of the Society really starting to be outward looking. Closer to home, in March 1996 it was suggested that the British Division of the International and Academy of Pathology (BDIAP) move into 2 Carlton House Terrace and join with the Society in the use of the 3rd floor offices. The Minutes state that ‘the IAP decided they could not afford this... although the Society stated that the door was still open’. Of course this would actually have been difficult because the terms of the lease cannot be varied by the Society. But it is perhaps a shame that some development of this kind was not achieved, given the burgeoning interactions of the Society with the BDIAP (see below and Chapter 7). Other discussions with the IAP at the same time were in relation to joint meetings, and an initial overture was sadly hindered by financial considerations because it was felt that a joint meeting might cost ~£12000 and the IAP thought that this was too much<sup>1</sup>.

The issue of the Society’s name exercised some during the 1990s and indeed on into this century. On several occasions the possibility of a Royal Charter was proposed. At the January 1992 Committee meeting there was a proposal to change the Society’s name to the ‘Pathology Society’ and to seek a Royal Charter in time for the centenary in 2006. This was discussed at the summer Annual Business Meeting held in Manchester and after heated discussion the name proposals were royally (!) thrown out... with Roche commenting ‘that no one ever talked about the Royal Horticulture Society...!’ The idea of a Royal Charter was also raised again in 1999 and in 2004, and similarly rejected on both occasions. It is minuted (July 2004) that the issue should not be reconsidered for at least a further 5 years (present Officers then having thankfully demitted office!!).

The Society and its Officers and Committee were brilliantly served (and indeed could not have functioned) throughout the 1990s by the Society Administrator Mrs Jacqui Edwards. Jacqui always kept us right and up to date, and provided us with the facts and figures needed for presentations at business meetings; she also kept a close eye on institutions and individuals who did not deal with the Society in the meticulous way that she always (rightly) expected. Jacqui was joined in 1999 and eventually succeeded on her retirement in 2001 by Ros Pitts, whom we also greatly appreciate. We wondered how we would find an adequate replacement for Jacqui, but (with Jacqui’s recruiting skills) we did.

## **THE END OF THE 1990s: MICROBIOLOGY, MEETINGS AND THE PRESIDENCY**

The issues that most exercised the Committee in the latter years of the 1990s were the increasing tensions within the Society in relation to the place of the microbiologists, the falling attendance at meetings and the potential need for a President. An Awayday to discuss such issues of relevance and in particular the meetings and governance was held in Birmingham on 8 December 1998. Among the points made at this was that 60% of microbiologists favoured leaving the Society and joining the newly formed clinical section of the Society for General Microbiology under

<sup>1</sup> Ironically the first joint meeting in July 2001 ran at a deficit of ~£48000, covered entirely by The Pathological Society.

the auspices of the Federation of Infection Societies (FIS). This was presented as 'realignment not schism' and was recognised to be the beginning of an endplay that had in reality begun two decades before and that the 'time had come for an amicable separation'. The place of microbiology within the Society had been a major topic of debate for some time. For example, in the Committee Minutes of 1994 it is noted that there is a general feeling that microbiology and the rest of the Society may be pulling against each other and some discussion of realignment should occur. It is interesting to note that the Committee Minutes defined the numbers of microbiologists and pathologists separately only from 1994! This coincided with the use of a computerised membership records system and it was thus, of course, easier to establish these data from this point onwards, but it may also reflect an increasing tension and need for identity of the two groups.

Another view that was firmly held by those at the Awayday was that the Society needed to develop a higher profile and that a President might be a vehicle for doing this. A personal perspective on the genesis of this Office is given by Eric Walker, the then Chairman and General Secretary, in the vignette on p. 79, and the Office and its effects are discussed in Chapter 7. Mike Wells presented a paper on the future of meetings, pointing out the falling number of registrants and abstracts. The issue of the Society's constituency was discussed but no clear definition of this was provided. Various suggestions were made, including the idea of joint meetings with other organisations and a move to one meeting per annum. With regard to the former issue it was proposed that the Officers of the Society should meet with the Officers of the BDIAP to discuss the idea. Nick Wright, the incoming President, contacted the IAP who responded favourably to the idea of collaboration and all four officers of the IAP were invited to a dinner with the Officers of the Society; this was held on 19 May 1999. It is minuted that those present 'agreed that there were opportunities and benefits for all, and that a 4 day meeting every second year might be a way forward'. A Joint Meeting Programme Committee was suggested but sadly was not formed. In addition, letters were to be sent from the Secretaries of both Societies (Eric Walker and Eamon Sweeney) to their respective memberships. With regard to The Pathological Society membership, sadly there were very few replies but they were supportive (actually there were four replies – a 200% increase on any previous solicitation!). Consequently, at the 1999 Annual Business Meeting in Dundee the idea of joint meetings was put to the membership. This was approved, with the first planned for 2001.

With regard to the proposal to move to one meeting per annum, this was eventually agreed but why it was the winter and not the summer meeting that was viewed as the one to be stopped remains a mystery because perusal of the data on attendance and abstract submission (see Fig. 9.1, chapter 9) clearly makes the summer meeting the more obvious target for abolition? Commitments had already been made so the last ever winter meeting was planned for Maastricht in January 2001 (in fact it turned out only to be a suspension of the winter meetings, with restoration in 2005).

The end of the 1990s also saw the Society get both a logo and a Mission Statement and the *Journal of Pathology* undergo radical change. The idea of a logo developed out of conversations in Committee and in 1999 David Levison offered to approach the Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art (part of Dundee University), who held an undergraduate competition for the design of a suitable image. This is now to be found on all Society literature and is on the cover of this book. The Mission statement was the brainchild of Philip Quirke and was originally based upon a similar literary device used by the British Society of Gastroenterology. The original version was somewhat modified and substantially shortened in 2004 (see Chapter 7). Finally, the end of the century saw a determination to take the *Journal of Pathology* to a new level. The success of the 1998 Awayday prompted the Society and Peter Toner, with the help and involvement of the publishers, to hold a two-day meeting to discuss the Journal on 6 and 7 December 2000 at Beaconsfield. The outcomes of this are detailed in Chapters 7 and 8.

The final acts of the century were the alterations in Governance that had been promoted at the Birmingham Awayday and agreed at the 1999 AGM in Dundee. Eric Walker stepped down as

Chairman and General Secretary. Nick Wright and Mike Wells were duly proposed and elected as the first President and new General Secretary, respectively, with Simon Herrington being elected to replace Mike Wells as Meetings Secretary. The Society thus entered the new millennium. Further change was imminent and pathology was to be wracked by upheaval because of events in Bristol and Alder Hey!

### Acknowledgements

James Lowe is thanked for his information regarding the website and Peter Hall for much of the information on the meetings gleaned from his readings of the Society Minutes.

### On the Origin of the office of President

From its inception the Path Soc. was egalitarian and self-contained in a professional, Edwardian manner. This was reflected in the original minimalist constitution and in the conduct of the Annual Business Meeting which was chaired by a member of the host department and considered only matters 'properly the concern of the Society'. Dible, in his history of the first 50 years, comments... thus the Society has never had a permanent Chairman or President, which is sometimes a little confusing to those unfamiliar with its constitution. Path Soc. as an entity saw little need to attempt to influence or be influenced by outside forces other than disease processes. This may be exemplified by the formation of the NHS in the late 1940s. This antedated the foundation of the Royal College of Pathologists by more than a decade. By way of the Royal College of Physicians the Department of Health consulted appropriate professional bodies including the Society about, *inter alia*, Merit Awards. The response was that the Society had no view on such matters. Over succeeding decades outside forces, notably government policies and paymaster directives, increasingly impinged on research, education and service, matters properly of concern to the Society.

Fast forward to the 1980s. The General Secretary was Rab Goudie. He was concerned that many communications to the Society were addressed to the Chairman and that when he responded as General Secretary many of the recipients felt they were being fobbed off by a lesser officer. Accordingly his title metamorphosed to 'Chairman and General Secretary'. His duties and responsibilities did not change, it was merely a change in the Society's addressee.

The priming of the events – in so far as such can be recognized – which ultimately led to the introduction of the Office of the President occurred in 1989 at the January meeting held at University College. A tongue in the cheek poster of little scientific merit drew the Society's attention to the upcoming 'research selectivity exercise' and indicated the potential effects on the Society and on academic departments of pathology. The subsequent poster discussion session was packed. The Chairman (Kevin Gatter) was relatively inexperienced and announced his intention not to discuss this particular poster. The audience became restive, there was prolonged murmuring then a loud clear voice (it was Tom Anderson's) said 'Why, Mr Chairman, do you think there are so many of us here?'. And so the poster was discussed and the episode was probably forgotten by the end of the meeting. Six years and two RAEs (as the research selectivity exercise became formally known) later, views and opinions among Society members had moved considerably. This was appreciated by the officers who were of the general view that changes of direction were essential and that this could be facilitated by changes in the constitution.

It was arranged to hold an away day (actually a 2 day away) meeting of the officers and a select cross section of the active membership. (This idea was first floated to me by Mike Wells in a conversation at Leicester railway station after the 1998 meeting but there may well

have been antecedents of which I was unaware). Later that year such a meeting, organized by Jacqui, was held in Birmingham – we meant business. Remarkably clear proposals emerged one of which was that the Society should have a president. At the subsequent officers' meeting this was approved and it was left to the Chairman and General Secretary, assisted by the Administrator, to implement. The redraft of the constitution was on the agenda of the 1999 annual business meeting and was approved without dissent. Thereafter all that remained was to take soundings amongst the members. A single preferred name was clearly identifiable and that individual agreed to be nominated. By intent the old Chairman and General Secretary had intimated at the time of his nomination for a second term that he would be demitting office before his term was complete. By good fortune his demittance coincided with the election of the new President and the election of a New General Secretary.

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