

THE SCOTTISH SOCIETY OF THE HISTORY OF MEDICINE

REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS

Session 1970–71

The Society had a satisfactory session, attendances at meetings having been encouraging, and membership maintained. Three meetings have been held, the Annual General Meeting at Edinburgh in October 1970, and two ordinary meetings at Glasgow and Dumfries in February and June respectively.

On 4 November the Society suffered a grievous loss in the death of its President, Dr. M. H. Armstrong Davison.

MEDICO-HISTORICAL NOTES

After 1 August 1970, British ships no longer piped 'Up Spirits' for the daily issue of an eighth of a pint of rum to ratings. The daily issue of the rum ration, started unofficially in 1655 and officially in 1731 thus came to an end at the initiative of the Navy itself. *The British Sailor* (1971) by Peter Kemp, appearing appropriately recently, is a revealing and at times incredible social history of the lower deck.

The first Italian woman doctor of modern times and great educationalist, Dr. Maria Montessori, was born on 31 August 1870, at Chiarovalle in the province of Ancona. Heaped with international honours, including a Fellowship of the Educational Institute of Scotland, Dr. Montessori died suddenly in the little Dutch town of Noordwijk on 6 May 1952.

On 13 October 1870, the foundation stone of the 'new' Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh was laid by H.R.H. the Prince of Wales. This stone was 'lost' for many years but after careful search of the records the hospital's archivist, Mrs. Eaves-Walton pinned it down to the north-east corner of the original building. The stone was eventually found in a basement, completely invisible from the outside and the ground had to be excavated for about thirty inches or so to expose the stone on which a plaque was placed and unveiled on 13 October 1970. On the same day a commemorative plaque was unveiled by Mr. J. R. Cameron P.R.C.S.Ed. a fourth generation Simpson, on the wall of the old Royal Maternity and Simpson Memorial Hospital at 79 Lauriston Place, Edinburgh. The staff magazine of the Royal Infirmary for October 1970, was an anniversary number entitled *One Hundred Years in Lauriston*.

Twenty-five years ago, on 24 October 1945, the United Nations formally came into existence and the first session was held in London on 26 November. Much time at this meeting was devoted to discussion on possible permanent sites for the Organization, and the commission of seven appointed to find a suitable site were almost in despair when John D. Rockefeller, Jr., made his offer of 8½ million dollars to purchase

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a site in Manhattan, New York, on which the present UN building now stands.

On 3 November 1970, a management-in-medicine centre was opened at Ruchill Hospital, Glasgow, by Lord Cohen of Birkenhead. Although management courses for medical men and women had been run on a trial basis for some four years previously, the new centre will provide residential one-week courses in management techniques for doctors.

On 19 December 1970, Belvidere Hospital for Infectious Diseases, Glasgow, celebrated the hundredth anniversary of the reception of its first patients. These suffered from relapsing fever which then raged in the city.

The £2-million extension of the Glasgow Dental Hospital and School in Sauchiehall Street was formally opened by the Duchess of Kent on 3 December 1970. The extensions have greatly improved the hospital and school which is one of the largest now in Europe.

In December it was announced that a grant of £253,000 had been made by the Wolfson Foundation to Dundee University to found and build an Institute of Occupational Health in the grounds of the Ninewells Hospital, Dundee. Professor A. Mair, announcing the grant, indicated that the building should be completed and equipped by 1973. The Institute will combine three elements of occupational health—postgraduate teaching and research, environmental laboratory services, and a related school of industrial nursing.

In mid-January 1971, there died in New York, William Griffith Wilson, a retired Wall Street securities analyst. With the announcement of his death he was revealed as the Bill W. who co-founded Alcoholics Anonymous in 1935. It is said that Wilson gave permission to break his AA anonymity upon his death in a signed statement in 1966. The role of Dr. Robert Holbrook Smith as the other founder was disclosed when that Ohio surgeon died in 1950.

The new £2-million out-patient department at the Western General Hospital, Edinburgh, was used for the first time on 29 March 1971. In the four-storey building are accommodated: medical records; general outpatients; accident and emergency unit; X-ray department; electrocardiography; endoscopy area; and day bed units. The central medical records department for the hospital and for the other Edinburgh Northern Hospitals group will in time be contained in the new building. A super-structure housing a 200-seat lecture hall has also been provided as part of the University's academic accommodation. It will be recalled that this hospital celebrated its centenary in 1968.

Lord Ritchie-Calder launched his controversial campaign to abolish the Hippocratic Oath in New York on 29 April 1971. The noble lord maintains that a new personal ethic for doctors and medical scientists is required and declares his intention to press, internationally, for legislation and pleads for an international tribunal of ethics. In the same month the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R. approved the text of a Doctor's Oath, introduced into the Soviet Union for the first time, and all medical graduates there will be required to take this Oath.

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To commemorate the Third Commonwealth Paraplegic Games, held in Edinburgh in July 1970, a plaque was unveiled on 12 May 1971 at the Meadowbank Sports Centre there and accepted on behalf of the city by the Lord Provost.

The bicentenary celebrations of the birth of Robert Owen on 14 May 1771 were overshadowed by uncertainty about the future of the Clydeside village of New Lanark which he built. Owen was responsible for reforming the educational and social conditions in the area at the beginning of the nineteenth century. He was instrumental in getting children sent to the schoolhouse rather than to the factory and because of his efforts New Lanark became a centre for many interested in educational and social reform. In 1963 the New Lanark Association was formed as a housing company which bought the village to preserve and enhance its appearance but the Association is now in financial difficulties. A more recent body, the Robert Owen Bicentenary Association, founded in December 1969, aims to work with the other body, particularly in trying to preserve the old school.

On 1 June 1946, a monthly journal, *The Silent World*, appeared for the first time. Designed especially for deaf readers the magazine, now called *Hearing* and published by the Royal National Institute for the Deaf, celebrated its quarter century of useful service with its June 1971 number.

In 1908 the University of Edinburgh first granted its diploma in tropical medicine and hygiene (D.T.M. & H.). In June it was announced that the diploma was to be suspended indefinitely.

The bicentenary of the birth of Sir Walter Scott in Edinburgh on 15 August 1771 has been suitably commemorated in a variety of ways, including issue of a special postage stamp. The Scott exhibition in the National Library of Scotland and Parliament Hall, Edinburgh, was impressive in its magnificence and setting. A valuable catalogue to the exhibition was also produced. It will be recalled that Sir Walter wrote the *Bride of Lammermoor* under the influence of opium taken for abdominal colic and later remembered little about doing so (MacNalty, 1969).

The bicentenary of the birth of another Scot, Mungo Park, surgeon and explorer, who was born on 10 September 1771, was also appropriately commemorated in September. Various events arranged included a town and gown lecture in Selkirk on the life and work of the explorer, a one-day conference in Edinburgh, exhibitions in both Edinburgh and Selkirk, and pilgrimages to Park's birthplace, Foulshiels, near Selkirk. It is good to know that steps are to be taken to preserve Foulshiels which is in a ruinous condition at present.

'Sept. 17. At the baths of Pisa, in Italy, after a long and painful illness, Dr. Tobias Smollet, author of the *Complete History of England* and many other books.' Thus ran the announcement of the death of Smollett in the *Scots Magazine* for October 1771. His old friend Dr. John Armstrong, the physician-poet, composed a Latin inscription for Smollett's monument erected near Leghorn soon after his death. Posterity has acknowledged Smollett as a novelist of no mean achievement and by most critics the *Expedition of Humphry Clinker* is considered his best novel.