

THE POSTGRADUATE MEDICAL JOURNAL

London

July, 1966

THE MEDICAL FACULTY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN—A BRIEF HISTORICAL NOTE

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BISHOP ELPHINSTONE is rightly regarded as the founder of King's College in Old Aberdeen. In 1494, James IV, on the supplication of Bishop Elphinstone, applied for a papal bull to institute a university or "studium generale et universitas studii generalis" for theology, canon and civil law, medicine, the liberal arts and every lawful faculty; and privileged to grant degrees. Although the bull was granted in 1494 the college was not founded until the year 1505. James IV and Bishop Elphinstone endowed it with large revenues which were increased by James VI. It is not generally appreciated that, in its original form, the Chair of Medicine in King's College constitutes the most ancient foundation for instruction in medicine in Great Britain, Oxford was to follow some years later.

A second university, Marischal College, was founded by George Keith, fifth Earl-Marischal, in April, 1593 by a charter which was strongly Protestant. The principal was required to be well-versed in sacred literature and in Hebrew and Syriac, but he was also expected to give anatomical and physiological prelections. A Chair of Medicine in this college was founded in 1700. The two foundations were united and incorporated into one University and College under the style and title of the "University of Aberdeen" on 15th September, 1860. Thus, for more than two and a half centuries, Aberdeen had two universities, which is, perhaps, an indication of the respect for learning which has been a characteristic of the people of this part of Scotland.

Until 1949 the clinical professors held part-time university appointments, and were also busily engaged in private practice. But 19 years before then, Sir Stanley Davidson was appointed to the Chair of Medicine and was the first to establish a clinical department in the modern pattern. Similar appointments followed rapidly in Surgery (Sir James Learmonth) and in Obstetrics and Gynaecology (Sir Dugald Baird). A list of recently established chairs with the names of the present incumbents in parenthesis is as follows: 1945, Mental Health (W. M. Millar); 1947, Biological Chemistry (W. O. Kermack) and Child Health (R. G. Mitchell); 1951, Social Medicine (E. M. Backett); 1962, Chemical Pathology (S. C. Frazer), the first professorship in this subject in Scotland; and 1965, Medical Physics (J. R. Mallard).

The main teaching hospitals (Royal Infirmary, Maternity Hospital and the Sick Children's Hospital), and the University Medical Building, which houses all the clinical and laboratory university departments, occupy a magnificent site extending over 130 acres at Foresterhill. This site is jointly owned by the University and the Regional Hospital Board and the long-term plan is to concentrate most of the hospital facilities of the city upon it. A ward block to accommodate the professorial surgical unit, thoracic surgery, which is at present at Woodend Hospital about 2 miles to the west, and beds for private patients, which are in a very old-fashioned nursing home near the city centre, is almost complete and will be occupied within

the next few months. An extension of the University Medical Building is planned for 1968 and this will be linked directly with the hospital complex. Later hospital building on the same site will accommodate the wards of the professors of medicine and therapeutics with these university departments in close relation to the wards, general surgical units, neuro-surgery and neurology, urological surgery and gynaecology. The erection of an out-patient block is contemplated at a later date to replace accommodation in the old building of the Royal Infirmary at Woolmanhill near the centre of the city. Unfortunately it seems unlikely that the departments of anatomy and physiology will have accommodation on the Foresterhill site in the

foreseeable future; they will continue to be housed at Marischal College along with the steadily increasing accommodation required for the administrative staff.

In the fullness of time, Aberdeen can expect to have one of the most compact hospital complexes in the country, providing a service for a population of approximately 500,000 in the north east of Scotland. The fact that the clinical and para-clinical departments of the university have accommodation on the same site has obvious advantages, which are only partly offset by the physical separation of the Faculty of Medicine from the other Faculties of the University.