Postgraduate medicine and personalities—1925

D. Geraint James

Royal Northern Hospital, London N7 6LD, UK.

Background

Sir William Osler (Figure 1) arrived in Britain in 1905 determined not only to guide Oxford medicine as its Regius Professor but also to improve the standard of postgraduate medicine throughout Britain. He felt that each county hospital should have a postgraduate department, using the argument that without postgraduate education a doctor was stale in five years, in the rut by ten years, and by twenty years so deeply in the rut that he would never be able to get out of it. His influence led to the creation of the Post-Graduate Medical Association in 1911, but the 1914–18 war halted its progress. It was redeveloped in 1919 as the Fellowship of Medicine and Post Graduate Medical Association. It was an early success for many doctors, returning from the Armed Services, were seeking higher qualifications. Many from the British Empire overseas were seeking special postgraduate training before returning to their own countries.

The postgraduate movement received considerable impetus in 1925 by two events. The Minister of Health appointed a Committee to draw up a practical scheme of postgraduate medical education centred in London. It was an important influential Committee for it included Lord Dawson of Penn, Sir Humphrey Rolleston, Sir John Bland-Sutton, Sir Thomas Horder, Dr John Parkinson and Alfred Webb-Johnson. The second milestone was the appearance of *The Post-Graduate Medical Journal*. This was founded to give an account of the postgraduate activities in the country and also to chronicle many of the distinguished lectures which were being delivered in various hospitals and at the rooms of the Medical Society of London and the Royal Society of Medicine.

Osler died in 1919 but his influence on postgraduate medicine permeated the nineteen twenties in many different fashions, not the least being his friendship with Henry Wellcome. This London business tycoon was to give considerable support to postgraduate medicine. In 1925, Henry Wellcome lived at Gloucester Gate, Regent's Park, quite near the Wigmore Street headquarters of the Wellcome Historical Medical Museum. Osler, amongst others, had per-

suaded Wellcome to exhibit his historical medical collection at the XVII International Congress of Medicine which was to be held in London in 1913; it was a great success so in the same year it was made available to the public in Wigmore Street. In 1924 he formed 'The Wellcome Foundation Ltd.' to consolidate under one head his various enterprises including Burroughs Wellcome and Co., the Chemical works, the Bureau of Scientific Research, the Museum of Medical Science, the Physiology Laboratories etc. This was a culmination of his life's work, and showed the world that his commercial interests and profits were dedicated to the support of his research interests and love of the history of medicine and pharmacy. In recognition of his services to Science, Wellcome was elected a member of The Athenaeum in 1924, received

Figure 1 Sir William Osler

D. Geraint James M.A., M.D., F.R.C.P.

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an honorary Doctor of Laws from Edinburgh University (1924) and in 1925 became an Officer of the Venerable Order of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem.

The world at large

The year 1925 saw King George V on the throne and Stanley Baldwin was Prime Minister. Hindenburg became President of Germany and Mussolini embarked on the creation of a Fascist state in Italy, and Reza Khan Pahlavi, Prime Minister of Persia, was elected Shah. Sun Yat Sen, founder of the Chinese Republic, died in this year. Calvin Coolidge was President of the United States. Sean O'Casey wrote 'June and the Paycock' and Fitzgerald 'The Great Gatsby'. Charlie Chaplin appeared in 'The Gold Rush'. Dutchman William Einthoven had just earned the Nobel prize in physiology. In that year, Chevalier Jackson dominated American medical conferences with now classical accounts of 'Bronchoscopy'. Warfield Longcope was the professor of medicine at the Johns Hopkins University where iodine was being suggested as a treatment for exophthalmic goitre and where the new Wilmer Eye Clinic had just been opened.

This was the year in which Harvey Cushing was heading for the Pulitzer Prize in Literature for his monumental 'The Life of Sir William Osler' (1926). It must have been a constant source of conversation in the *Postgraduate Medical Journal* offices in those days, for it was the biography of a larger-than-life personality who had done so much on behalf of postgraduate medical education in this country, in the USA and in Canada. Furthermore it was written by an equally charismatic character who was continuing to do just as much in this respect at the Harvard Medical School and, indeed, worldwide, by his advanced techniques in neurosurgery.

In 1925, the Royal College of Physicians of London was already over four hundred years of age whereas the American College of Physicians was only ten years old. The latter was founded in 1915, and its first formal clinical session was held in Chicago in 1920. Its *Annals of Clinical Medicine* (later the *Annals of Internal Medicine*) first appeared in 1922, just ahead of our *Postgraduate Medical Journal*.

My brief is to recreate the atmosphere and the personalities of medical 1925 on the Sixtieth Birthday Anniversary of our *Postgraduate Medical Journal*.

The London scene

London was gradually shifting its influence in the teaching of medicine from the part-time physicians in

private practice to the full-time academic. Francis Fraser had become Professor of Medicine and Director of the Medical Unit at St. Bartholomew's Hospital, where academic medicine and the professorial system were accepted rather than welcomed. At this time Fraser was dreaming of a new type full-time academic hospital, a dream which was realised in 1934 when he left Bart's for the new Postgraduate Medical School in Hammersmith Hospital (Medvei & Thornton, 1974). But back in 1925, Bart's students were enjoying the bedside teaching of a great Harley Street clinician, Thomas Horder.

Sir Humphrey Rolleston was President of the Royal College of Physicians and about to become President of The Medical Society of London. Sir Bernard Spilsbury delivered the 1925 Lettsom lectures 'On Wounds and Other Injuries'. During that year The Medical Society of London awarded three distinguished and colourful personalities its most prestigious prizes. Professor Sir Frederick Gowland Hopkins was chosen for the triennial Fothergillian Gold Medal and Sir William Hale-White as the year's Orator. Sir Arthur Keith was appointed Lloyd Roberts Lecturer.

It is fascinating to glance through the postgraduate teaching programmes listed for each month of the year in a dozen or so London Hospitals. My old chiefs, Robert Arthur Young and George Beaumont were conducting inpatient and outpatient sessions at the Brompton Hospital, together with our creator Maurice Davidson and pioneer chest surgeon Tudor Edwards.

The Harveian Society was founded in the year 1831 and by 1925 it was flourishing in London. Sir George Buckston Browne provided funds for a Prize in 1927 in memory of his son, Lieutenant-Colonel George Buckston Browne, for an essay on original work. The prize was accompanied by a medal designed at the Royal Mint bearing a likeness to William Harvey. At the time, Sir John Broadbent was President of the Harveian Society (1925) and Kinnier Wilson was about to give the Harveian Lectures on 'The Epilepsies' (1926), followed by Sir Berkeley Moynihan on 'Diverticula of the Alimentary Canal' (1927). Arthur Lawrence Abel, a future Harveian President, had just won the Jacksonian Prize for his essay on 'Oesophageal Obstruction' (1924) when still a registrar at the Royal Cancer (now the Royal Marsden) Hospital.

Sir Humphry Rolleston

Sir Humphry Rolleston (Figure 2) contributed the first paper in the new journal on 'Medical Aspects of Gallstones'. It was based on a postgraduate lecture delivered for the Fellowship of Medicine on January 30th, 1925, at the Royal Society of Medicine. At that time he was President of the Royal College of

Figure 2 Sir Humphry Rolleston

Physicians; Regius Professor of Physics at the University of Cambridge; Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Fellowship of Medicine and Postgraduate Medical Association; Emeritus Physician, St. George's Hospital; Physician in Ordinary to H.M. King George V; and President-elect of the Medical Society of London. He set out the infective and metabolic factors contributing to gallstones, the clinical picture depending upon their position in the gall-bladder, cystic duct, common bile duct, ampulla of Vater and also those impacted in the intestine. He lists various cholagogues and compares medical and surgical managements.

Lord Horder

The first issue contains a skilful essay by Sir Thomas Horder on 'Some cases of pyrexia without physical signs', based on a lecture delivered on 9 June 1925 to the Postgraduate Medical Association. At that time, he was at the height of his career as clinician, lecturer, organiser, committee man, and yes, a great family man, at 141 Harley Street where he lived and worked (Horder, 1966).

Figure 3 Lord Horder

Lord Horder (1871–1955) (Figure 3) was an individualist of strong character, unorthodox views, a ready wit and with an unquenchable love of medicine. He combined a razor-sharp mind with immense erudition and earthy common sense. He was a consultant physician at St. Bartholomew's Hospital (1912–1936) and at the Royal Northern Hospital (1899–1914). Horder was known as the man who brought the laboratory to the bedside because in 1910 he published a book entitled '*Clinical Pathology In Practice*'. In this same year he was called into consultation because of King Edward VII's glycosuria. He showed that the reduction of Fehling's solution, which had been attributed to glycosuria, was due to salicylates in a gargle which had been prescribed to the King (Medvei & Thornton, 1974).

He played an indefatigable part on the Ministry of Health Executive Committee on Postgraduate Education and in ensuring the success of the Fellowship, of which he was Chairman.

In a festival dinner he said '... I served the Great Northern Hospital, as it was formerly called, for fourteen years. Jacob served seven years for Rachel and they seemed to him but a few days for the love he had for her. My fourteen years of service endeared the

Great Northern to me; that endearment has remained until today, and so also has my interest in the Royal Northern Hospital' (Jewesbury, 1956).

A *British Medical Journal* Obituary notice (1955) summed him up accurately:—

'The death of Lord Horder removes the most outstanding clinician of his time, and the personality in British medicine best known to the general public. He was more than a physician at the head of his profession, he was an interpreter of medicine to the public, a dispassionate thinker, never afraid of the truth, and able to employ language in such a way that, whether he

commanded agreement or not, none could mistake his meaning. Although so much before the public, he was first and foremost not a publicist but a clinician — a good doctor — jealous for the honour of his profession and its freedom to serve the community.'

Acknowledgements

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