
HISTORICAL ARTICLE

The Scottish Society of Physicians - Fifty Years on

MM Steven

Archivist, Scottish Society of Physicians

Correspondence to

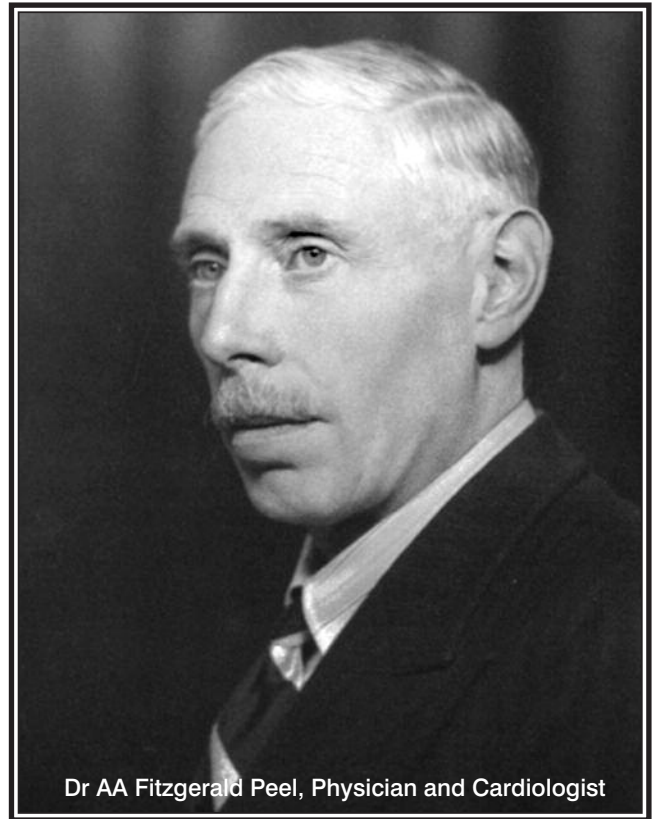
Dr MM Steven, Consultant Physician, Raigmore Hospital, Old Perth Road, Inverness, IV2 3UJ
email: malcolm.steven@nhs.net

Introduction

The Scottish Society of Physicians, one of the sponsoring societies of this Journal, celebrates its 50th birthday later this year by returning to Glasgow, home city of Dr Fitzgerald Peel and site of our first meeting. This review of a fascinating part of the history of Scottish Medicine was compiled from a search of the extensive archive material placed on loan to the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow which is available for review to Society members. Even without the nuances and insights only known to the founding fathers, the records are sufficiently detailed and explicit to excite interest and engender some controversy. I have also been delighted to have some reminiscences from senior members. The views expressed and any errors or omissions are however my own.

Dr Peel

Much has been said over the years at our annual meetings about Dr AA Fitzgerald Peel, Physician and Cardiologist at the Victoria Infirmary, Glasgow who was known to few contemporaries elsewhere in Scotland but was the driving force behind the foundation of the Society with the vision of a new association for all Scottish physicians. Peel, whose Christian name was Fitzgerald and was known as Gerald, was an unlikely founder of a Scottish institution. A true citizen of our United Kingdom he was born in Ulster and grew up not only in Glasgow, where his father practised as a General Practitioner, but also near Belfast where the family had a farm. He went to



Dr AA Fitzgerald Peel, Physician and Cardiologist

school at Charterhouse in England and qualified from Oxford and Barts before postgraduate training in Freiburg with Aschoff. He then returned to Glasgow as a staff member at the Victoria with a developing interest in Cardiology. Peel also held a chair at Anderson College, was an early member of both the Association of Physicians of Great Britain and Ireland (APGBI) and the British Cardiac Society and published regularly. As such he had the confidence and tenacity to press on with his idea for a Scottish physicians' association when the big guns of the fifties appeared somewhat lukewarm in their support. Our records begin with Peel's November 1958 invitation to a number of Scottish colleagues, which established interest in a proposed national physicians' association. Undoubtedly a major factor leading to the Society's creation was the exclusive nature of the APGBI, founded in 1907, which had just celebrated its fiftieth anniversary. Although established to bring together physicians from the whole of Britain and Ireland and including members outwith the Universities, that Association then comprised an invited membership limited to 350 individuals who were distinguished and usually academic physicians. This necessarily excluded the majority of Scottish physicians and particularly those practicing in district hospitals, so Peel, who was himself a member, was particularly selfless in proposing a potentially rival body. His letter of invitation to selected Scottish physicians indicated that Scottish members of the Association would form the nucleus of the new Society and indeed the name which Peel initially proposed was the Scottish Association of Physicians.

First Steps

A summary of replies focused on the name of the Society, eligibility for membership and the location of meetings. A number of correspondents including AG MacGregor (Department of Therapeutics in Edinburgh) favoured a name which did not relate to the Association of Physicians. The Scottish Physicians' Society, the Scottish Medical Society and the Scottish Association of Clinical Medicine were among suggestions but the Scottish Society of Physicians was finally agreed at the first official committee meeting in Perth in January 1959. Several correspondents including MacGregor and Professor Stanley Alstead, (Department of Therapeutics, Glasgow) wished to extend membership to Senior Registrars and Senior Hospital Medical Officers and not to exclude individuals who were members of 'specialist societies' which was a perceived standing of the APGBI but Dr TRR Todd (Edinburgh) wished membership confined to consulting physicians appointed by regional boards and presumably excluding University appointees. A number of academics were concerned about a possible clash with the Scottish Society of Experimental Medicine (SSEM) which was established in 1938 with three meetings per year and a content and membership restricted to research and the four Scottish medical schools. Alstead made a plea for a clinical meeting since he found the recent contributions at the SSEM and APGBI had "such a strong biochemical flavour that...they are entirely indigestible". Tom Anderson (Ruchill, Glasgow) was also supportive and also found the SSEM too 'physiological and esoteric'. Quite what he would have made of cytokines, lod scores, Western blots and the polymerase chain reaction is anybody's guess! In resonance with modern thinking John Crofton (Edinburgh) was concerned at the introduction of 'yet another meeting' and Professor RH Girdwood (Edinburgh) already belonged to eleven societies and had resigned from two on account of cost and intrusion on work and limited free and family time! TRR Todd supported the concept of an annual meeting held in the Autumn

but modified Peel's original suggestion of a five year rotation round the four University centres and a non-teaching region to the formula which has proved so successful with University and non-University venues in alternate years.

And so an ad hoc meeting was held at the Station Hotel, Perth, in January 1959 an administrative arrangement that pertained until recently and was a model of efficiency and conviviality and transacted the entire year's business over a pleasant lunch. Would that today's managers could achieve the same! Drs KNV Palmer (Aberdeen), J Laurie (Dumfries), K Lowe, (Dundee), RM Marquis and RWD Turner (Edinburgh), McCluskie vice Professor Wayne (Glasgow) and J Ronald (Inverness but formerly at the Victoria Infirmary) joined Peel and agreed the new name, a draft constitution and initial membership based on the existing Scottish members of the APGBI and those proposed thereby. Dr T Semple (an assistant physician at the Victoria) was to be the first Secretary and offers of communications of no more than 250 words were invited for the first meeting.

A further meeting at the Royal Scottish Automobile Club in Glasgow in April confirmed arrangements for the first Annual Meeting and reported the proposal of 138 ordinary and eight senior members including 73 APGBI Members at an annual fee of one guinea (which one redoubtable soul continued, unnecessarily till recently – Treasurer's note). The proceedings were to be published in the Scottish Medical Journal. Dr Cameron MacDonald, Local Secretary for the first Annual General Meeting, presented the papers submitted for selection and the arrangements for the inaugural meeting at the Engineering Department, University of Glasgow and dinner at the Royal Faculty of Physicians and Surgeons (since 1962 the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow). Registration was set at one guinea and dinner at two guineas, including the wines. (For reference, a new consultant's salary was £2,000 p.a. at the time.)

The Society's First Meeting

The first meeting opened, as it still does, with the Friday afternoon business meeting at which Peel was elected the first President and Drs Semple (Secretary), McCluskie, Marquis (Treasurer), Turner, Lowe, Laurie and Palmer were confirmed as Committee members along with Professor K Donald (Edinburgh), Drs Easton (Perth) and JW Buchanan (Kirkcaldy). Dr James Ronald invited the newly formed Society to hold its second meeting in Inverness. The Constitution and Rules of the fledgling Society were presented to the meeting and were a model of simplicity. It was proposed to allow a more inclusive membership than the Association of Physicians and 'to promote friendship and social contact between physicians practicing in Scotland'. The Committee envisaged 150 Ordinary members with an unlimited number of Senior members over the age of 55 (or having been in practice for 15 years). Senior Members were exempt from the notorious Rule Five, which required a minimum attendance of once every three years and appears to have been borrowed from the APGBI. It remained controversial until it was rescinded recently. The election of the President, whose main duty was to host the annual meeting, was wisely devolved to local members in the relevant region. It is testament to the prior discussions and thoroughness of the ad-hoc committee that the Constitution was passed with a minimum of discussion or dissent at the AGM. Only the debate about including senior registrars excited further comment from Professor Alstead but was defeated in a vote and the relationship with the Scottish Medical Journal brought forth some comment from the editor Professor T Anderson. Papers subsequently presented included

"Acute Renal Failure" by Lowe, "The Role of the Artificial Kidney in Acute Renal Failure" by McCluskie and Short, "Experience with Phenethyl Guanide" by Aikenhead, Walker and Linton (Law Hospital) and "Leukaemia Associated with Acidosis" by Wang (Victoria Infirmary, Glasgow). Dinner guests interestingly included Professor Scarborough, President of the APGBI, Baillie Moore vice the Lord Provost of Glasgow, the President of the Faculty (College) and official representatives of Glasgow University. The Saturday morning session comprised papers on "Mitral Valvotomy" by Turner and Lowther (Edinburgh), "Surgery for Atrial Septal Defect" by Marquis, Julian, Griffiths and McCormack (Edinburgh), "Experiences in an Anticoagulant Clinic" by Peel and Lancaster (my predecessor in Inverness but then at the Victoria Infirmary, Glasgow), "Myeloproliferative Disease" by Goldberg and Seaton (Glasgow), "Hodgkin's Disease" by MacLeod and Stalker (Aberdeen) and "Flexion Deformities in Adrenal Insufficiency" by Wilson (Aberdeen).

Into the Sixties

The 1960 meeting was held in Inverness under President Dr James Ronald, who was formerly a colleague of Peel's in Glasgow. The Local Secretary was Dr Pat MacArthur, the first paediatrician in the Highlands, and a future President (one of two paediatricians to hold the office). The meeting was held in the (old) Caledonian Hotel in Inverness on the 7th/8th October with 73 members and 17 guests attending and new Glasgow and Edinburgh representatives were chosen, establishing the now familiar pattern of representation from the University and non-University centres. Professor John McMichael, renowned academic at the Hammersmith, but trained in Edinburgh and Aberdeen, was a guest and was elected the first Honorary Member of the Society. A subscription of 30 shillings was agreed and a healthy surplus of £22/18/10 was reported from the previous year's inaugural meeting. Noteworthy in the accounts was the expenditure of £41 on wine and over £11 on cigars and cigarettes! Scientific reports included a report on the cluster of cases of Huntington's chorea from the Black Isle village of Avoch, a paper on Hashimoto's thyroiditis (Watson Buchanan and colleagues, Glasgow), Accidental Hypothermia (Duguid, Simpson and Stowers, Perth/Dundee), Noisy Pneumothorax (Lancaster and Semple) and a symposium on long-term anticoagulants (Peel). Interesting data on anticoagulant use and complications after myocardial infarction were reported although the highly beneficial effects reported presumably resulted from the small trial size or the uncontrolled sample. The dinner was held with local dignitaries as guests but Professor McMichael the first Honorary Member does not seem to have been present. Nor was Dr Hunter, President of the APGBI who had been invited in a gesture to the parent Society. Proceedings were published in the Scottish Medical Journal at the Society's expense.

In 1961 two executive meetings were held and confirmed arrangements for the first Edinburgh meeting (President Dr Rae Gilchrist). Dumfries was first proposed as the venue for the following year but Perth appears to have been selected thereafter. The suggestion of an annual oration was proposed by RWD Turner but not supported at that juncture. At Adam House in Edinburgh, the AGM with Mike Matthews as local Secretary, supported the Executive's proposals with Dr Ian Easton (Perth) accepting the post of President-Elect. Members were invited to apply for membership of the International Society of Internal Medicine. Dr R (Bobby) Marquis, the highly effective first Treasurer of the Society, reported an increase in funds to £78, and undertook to obtain allowance for the subscription against income tax.

Papers included a comparison of mortality from Respiratory Diseases in Scotland and England (Eileen Crofton) and the Management of Myaesthesia by JA (Ian) Simpson soon to become a world authority. There were papers on rheumatology, haematology, endocrinology and renal disease and university and non-university centres were well represented. The link between smoking and chest disease was raised but discounted by Professor T Anderson (Glasgow) as being purely co-incident!

In 1962 the Executive agreed to invite the Presidents of the Commonwealth Colleges of Physicians, who were due to meet in Edinburgh that year, as guests at the Perth Meeting, planned for the Gleneagles Hotel. Aberdeen was agreed as the subsequent venue. Gleneagles proved a scientific and social success and to Dr Marquis's credit Society reserves, even without sponsorship, had soared to £424. The Treasurer with a degree of Scots parsimony had graciously 'agreed' that the Royal Colleges would cover the expenses of the special guests and their wives! He also proposed an investment strategy and use of the surplus to give limited support to the Scottish Medical Journal and to pay expenses of the Society's future guests. At Gleneagles the list was indeed formidable, and included Lord Cohen of Birkenhead representing the General Medical Council, and Presidents of the Australasian, South African, Canadian and Irish Colleges, in addition to the Edinburgh College and Glasgow Faculty Presidents. Papers were read on a breadth of clinical topics including an early report of successful cardiac resuscitation after myocardial infarction by Semple and colleagues from the Victoria Infirmary, while Professor Donald (Edinburgh), who appears not to be a supporter of the procedure, raised the question of 'Resuscitation Orders' to nursing and junior medical staff.

The Aberdeen meeting, the Society's fifth, was the principal business of the executive in December 1962 with KNV Palmer to be local Secretary and Professor Fullerton the President. Enthusiasm for a scientific role for the Society led to the formation of a sub committee (Palmer, Lowe, Strong and McGirr were proposed) with the principal aim of organising a controlled trial of hydrocortisone in myocardial infarction. The proposal emanated from Dall and Peel's preliminary presentation to the Society at Gleneagles suggesting a 50% reduction in mortality after myocardial infarction in patients treated with parenteral hydrocortisone. In June the Executive proposed Ken Palmer to take over as Society Secretary while Tommy Semple would replace Palmer on the scientific sub-committee. The first evidence of the Executive selecting the papers for the Annual Meeting is recorded with the impression that then as previously, the papers were largely 'invited' and given by consultants. An amendment to Rule II, nonetheless, indicates the primary role of the Society then as now, and stated 'The meetings shall be conducted in a manner which promotes friendship amongst Scottish Physicians.' The 1963 AGM duly convened at the Medical School at Foresterhill, but the President Professor Fullerton appears to have been absent with Dr Ian Gordon deputising. The Executive's proposals were duly ratified with Dumfries (President Elect James Laurie) being agreed for the succeeding meeting. Amongst the papers were a report of two cases admitted by McCluskie (Glasgow) with addiction to Amanita Muscaria (magic mushrooms), a problem I encountered as a Senior Registrar on rotation to Dumfries and Galloway Royal Infirmary, and where the richest local supply, ironically was in the grounds of the adjacent Crichton psychiatric hospital! Turner, discussing Marquis's 'Heart Disease in Pregnancy', called for abolition of the New York Heart Association classification, something which may have

resonated with Peel, whose most cited paper described the Peel index in heart failure. There was also an early paper on osteoporosis by BEC Nordin (Glasgow), and future Presidents Audrey Dawson (Aberdeen) and Ronnie Strachan (Dumfries) contributed papers on macroglobulinaemia and Takayasu's arteritis respectively.

The 1964 Executive discussed the forthcoming meeting in Dumfries. Professor McMichael, the first Honorary President, was to be an invited guest with the unusual honour of having his expenses paid. The Committee noted the lack of papers submitted from non-teaching centres, a theme which was to resurface many times in the future. Continuing problems with the number of members were apparent when only eight of 17 applicants for Society membership could be accommodated, necessarily breaching one of the new Society's constitutional aims of inclusivity. Dr Marquis having proved a most successful Treasurer was proposed for a second term necessitating a temporary suspension of the Society's constitution limiting office bearers to one four year term. The succeeding meeting in Dundee was intimated and the local membership would be invited to nominate the President. A further trial on clofibrate was to be conducted by the Society. The Dumfries meeting appears to have been successful although the expenses-paid honorary member Professor McMichael sent his apologies. Dr Gavin Shaw, future President of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow was elected to the Executive along with Michael Oliver (Edinburgh). As per previous precedent Professor Hill was invited to be President of the forthcoming meeting in Dundee. Dr Semple reported on the Society's first collaborative study on hydrocortisone in acute myocardial infarction. Although the study failed to confirm Peel's pilot study, it was a good example of the Society's role in co-ordinating multicentre trials which sadly did not continue and expand as was first envisaged. Another highlight was Walker's review of the Aberdeen typhoid outbreak and a paper on cardioversion by Semple and colleagues. Dr Christopher Clayson, a respiratory physician at Lochmaben Hospital, who was to become the Edinburgh College's first President from a non-teaching hospital and chaired the 1971 government report on the licensing laws, proposed the toast to the guests at the Dinner. Dr Clayson went on to become the Society's longest lived member and died in 2003 aged 102.

The 1965 Executive proposed meeting in the Borders for the succeeding year under the Presidency of Dr JB Borthwick (Peel Hospital). Seven new members were elected to fill vacancies from 15 proposals prompting a call for members over 55 or of 15 year's standing to take up senior membership and thus free up spaces for more new members. Professor Hill (Dundee) hosted the seventh AGM in St Andrew's where the Executive proposals were approved and an annual donation to the Scottish Medical Journal granted. Papers included those from Crooks (Aberdeen/Dundee, originator of the excellent and compact drug Kardex) on prescribing errors in hospital and from Goldberg (Glasgow) on drug induced porphyria. There were two papers on self poisoning which was becoming a depressingly familiar part of medical receiving. Oliver spoke on prevention of heart disease and an early paper on native fibrinolysis after myocardial infarction was given by Ogston (Aberdeen). Dinner was held at St Salvator's Hall and included an impressive array of fine wines including Riesling 1961, St Emilion Grand Cru 1958 and Quinta Mileu 1958 (port).

The 1966 Borders meeting which was to complete the first eight year cycle was firmed up at the August Executive meeting in the Station Hotel Perth. The succeeding (ninth) meeting in Glasgow would be under the Presidency of Dr Eric Oastler.

Stays of execution were agreed for four members for whom extenuating circumstances were accepted in respect of their failure to attend three successive meetings, in breach of Rule five, and as a result of which they should have been deemed to have resigned. Even in the early years this ruling was controversial and difficult to enforce since all agreed this principle which was designed to keep the Society with an active and participative membership but it was also accepted that too rigid adherence might exclude colleagues with bona fide reasons for three absences. Dr. Peel and Professors WM Arnott (Birmingham) and DAK Black (Manchester) were proposed as honorary members but only Peel was subsequently confirmed at the AGM.

The eighth meeting at Peebles Hydro, under the Presidency of JB Borthwick, wisely raised the ordinary membership from 150 to 200 to avoid the exclusion of legitimate applicants and Dr Slessor (Ayr) invited the Society to convene there for the 1968 meeting. The Treasurer commended the (unknown) local Secretary of the St Andrew's meeting for the exceptionally parsimonious expenses of 12 guineas which undercut by some margin even the prudent efforts of Aberdeen in 1963. The profit accrued by the meeting further bolstered the Society's reserves which Dr Marquis had wisely invested in a charitable, tax free, unit trust. The majority of the nine communications which, were given, had been invited as only three had been submitted to the Executive. The Rt. Hon Alec Douglas-Home, local MP and a future Conservative Prime Minister, was amongst the dinner guests.

The Society Established

The Peebles meeting completed the first circuit of Scottish teaching and non-teaching hospitals and the Society then had a well established membership, format and place in the annual calendar of events. Despite the development of medical sub-specialties, it remained the premier postgraduate date in physicians' diaries and fully lived up to Dr Peel's hopes for an inclusive Scottish Society with both educational and social content. Physicians then and now subsequently enjoyed the unique opportunity afforded by the Society to renew acquaintance with former teachers, peers and trainees whose paths had led them to different corners of Scotland and different specialties. Trainees took the opportunity to cut their teeth in presenting research work and to meet prospective future colleagues. Review lecturers provided an annual educational update across the breadth of medicine from Scotland's top clinicians. In part 2, I will review the Society's subsequent meetings (Table 1) and innovations including the establishment of the Fitzgerald Peel Lecture and the Prize. The Society celebrates its fiftieth meeting in Glasgow in September and we will see if our Society and Peel's aspirations continue to resonate alongside the many recent changes in medicine and its workforce.

Acknowledgement

The author is grateful to the family of the late Dr AAF Peel for the photograph and for the biographical details used in this article.

Presidents of the Society

1959	AAF. Peel	Glasgow Victoria
1960	J. Ronald	Inverness
1961	R. Gilchrist	Edinburgh
1962	ID. Easton	Perth
1963	Prof.H. Fullerton	Aberdeen
1964	J. Laurie	Dumfries
1965	Prof. IGW Hill	Dundee
1966	JB. Borthwick	Borders
1967	EG. Oastler	Glasgow Royal
1968	A. Slessor	Ayr
1969	Prof.K. Donald	Edinburgh
1970	P. MacArthur	Inverness
1971	ID. Gordon	Aberdeen
1972	JD. Aitchison	Stirling
1973	Prof.KG. Lowe	Dundee
1974	H. Conway	Paisley
1975	T. Semple	Glasgow Victoria
1976	JW. Buchanan	Kirkcaldy
1977	RM. Marquis	Edinburgh
1978	RB. Wilson	Dumfries
1979	J. Knox	Inverness
1980	Prof.M. MacLeod	Aberdeen
1981	WR. Murdoch	Ayr
1982	JS. Frew	Dundee
1983	Prof.AC Kennedy	Glasgow Royal
1984	RS. Walker	Lanarkshire
1985	A. Doig	Edinburgh
1986	RS. McNeill	Perth
1987	SG. McAlpine	Paisley
1988	AW. Johnston	Aberdeen
1989	AAH. Lawson	Dunfermline
1990	M. Wilkinson	Dundee
1991	RW. Strachan	Dumfries
1992	JH. Dagg	Glasgow Western
1993	JJ. Morrow	Kilmarnock
1994	Prof. AL. Muir	Edinburgh
1995	CAS. Galloway	Inverness
1996	A A. Dawson	Aberdeen
1997	JFB. Smith	Stirling
1998	Prof. CD. Forbes	Dundee
1999	J. Gaddie	Borders
2000	Prof. AR. Lorimer	Glasgow Royal
2001	J. Goodall	Fort William
2002	NDC. Finlayson	Edinburgh
2003	RH. Baxter	Lanarkshire
2004	Prof. NAG. Mowat	Aberdeen
2005	Prof.IW. Campbell	Kirkcaldy
2006	Prof.T MacDonald	Dundee
2007	PJA. Leslie	Borders
2008	Prof. GT. McInnes	Glasgow Western