

## The Scottish Society of the History of Medicine - an Anniversary and a Welcome.

The Scottish Society of the History of Medicine celebrates its sixtieth birthday this year.

The Society came into being on 23rd April 1948, when, as its Proceedings noted, "a well attended and representative gathering of medical men and other interested persons from all over Scotland met in the Hall of the Royal College of Surgeons in Edinburgh." A council was elected, with representatives from Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh and Glasgow. The first President was Douglas Guthrie and the first secretary, Haldane Tait, both of Edinburgh. Douglas Guthrie, who had been an ENT surgeon, was a lecturer in the History of Medicine at Edinburgh University and had written a respected and popular text book on the subject.

The aim from the beginning was to hold regular meetings, at least twice yearly, in different parts of Scotland. The constitution was encouragingly flexible, "the place of the meeting shall be in any of the four University centres, or elsewhere." In fact for most of the 60 years since then there have been at least three meetings a year, with four meetings a year since 1992. Meetings have been held in Inverness, Irvine, Melrose, Montrose, Perth, St Andrews and Stirling as well as in Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh and Glasgow.

The meetings are usually on Saturday afternoons, with two papers given by members or invited speakers. There is a welcoming drink and lunch before the papers and tea and discussion afterwards. Papers have covered a diversity of subjects, from the Anatomy of the Mermaid, to Sir John Franklin and Polar Medicine, and from the Maladies of Mary Queen of Scots and her Husbands, to the Monkey Gland Grafts Revisited. Of particular note has been the series of Haldane Tait lectures, named in memory of our first Secretary.

These, held annually since 1992, on a midweek evening in early May, have included a number of distinguished speakers, such as Magnus Magnusson on Viking Medicine and Sir Kenneth Calman on the History of Cartoons and Medicine.



The Society has played its part in hosting Congresses of the British Society of the History of Medicine, in Edinburgh in 1986, in St Andrews in 1995 and recently, in Dundee in 2007. Members of the Society also played a key role in the International Congress of the History of Medicine in Glasgow in 1994.

Membership of the Society has varied over the years, with a paying membership varying usually between 150 and 200 and an active meeting-attending membership of around 30-40. Annual subscription at £10 is modest and very good value. In this, our sixtieth anniversary year, we particularly encourage new members to join us. Those who do are assured of a warm welcome and interesting meetings, where scholarship, entertainment and good company make a very satisfying mix.

The contact details of our secretary, Nigel Malcolm Smith, are given below. He would love to hear from you!

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