

HISTORICAL ARTICLE

The Scottish Society of Physicians Part 2: The Later Years

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Even with the passing of years, the foundation of the Society appears an act of great perception and generosity by Fitzgerald Peel. The senior physician in a Glasgow teaching hospital, who had membership of major United Kingdom (UK) specialist societies, an academic post in Glasgow and a successful private practice, he clearly perceived the need for a focused gathering of Scottish physicians. This was most likely to benefit those in hospitals distant from major teaching centres. A brief perusal of the Medical Directories of the time would show that in terms of physicians the district hospitals were mostly staffed by only two or three generalists. Most had high academic credentials and often Membership by examination of all three UK colleges (which was deemed necessary at that time for promotion). Many had been on prestigious overseas Fellowships and were clearly versed in a breadth and depth of medicine which would be most unusual today. Some had or went on to develop sub-speciality interests in their own hospitals, as well as leading a busy general medical practice. Junior staff then were mainly concentrated in teaching hospitals and support more usually came from nursing staff, general practitioners and a small number of overseas graduates. These physicians must have welcomed the opportunity to meet and update their knowledge, and to network with colleagues from larger centres. It is hard to over-estimate the value of this function in the early years of the Society and despite busy professional timetables, most clinicians were regular attenders at the meetings which continued the successful circuit of the four teaching centres, interspersed with visits to the districts.

Glasgow Meetings

The 9th (1967) meeting returned to Glasgow under the Presidency of Eric Oastler, one of the early clinical endocrinologists in Scotland, who had worked at the Southern General before taking up a post at Glasgow Royal Infirmary (GRI). The 1975 meeting was hosted by former Secretary and founder member, Tommy Semple, a cardiologist and colleague of Peel who was responsible for the introduction of coronary angiography to the Victoria Infirmary. He was a major contributor to the early success of the Society both as local Secretary, Society Secretary and presenter of papers. Two of his sons went on to become physicians in the west of Scotland. The 1975 Annual General Meeting (AGM) raised the ceiling on ordinary membership to 250 to prevent excluding the increasing number of consultants, this limitation on numbers being a perceived flaw in the constitution of the UK-wide Association of Physicians, and, following decimalisation, raised the subscription to £1.50. The Society returned to Glasgow in 1983 for its 25th meeting under the Presidency of renal physician Professor Arthur Kennedy of the Department of Medicine at GRI. Professor Kennedy went on to Chair the British Medical Association and to be President of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow. At this silver anniversary meeting a Presidential Medal was donated by Dr TJ Thomson (Stobhill), at that time the President of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow. A badge of office had first been suggested in 1969 by WC Watson (GRI) but had received little support

from the AGM. The Medal, subject of a short article in the Scottish Medical Journal in 1999,¹ was commissioned from J Finlayson Seel and fashioned in sterling silver with gold plate. It incorporates a St Andrew's Cross, a serpent and a puma representing the body and mind and healing powers. The Society membership was increased once more to 300 and Professor David Carter (at that time GRI and subsequently Edinburgh Royal Infirmary and Chief Medical Officer of Scotland) gave one of the few invited talks to the Society by a practising surgeon. The 1992 meeting was held at the Moat House in Glasgow under the Presidency of John Dagg (Western Infirmary, Glasgow). Local Secretary, Michael Small, organised a highly memorable dinner with a top class selection of wines including champagne served with the dessert! The observant reader will note that the meeting came a year later than the strict eight year cycle due to a "blip" in the order of meetings in the late 1970s. The 2000 meeting returned to Glasgow under the Presidency of Ross Lorimer and was held at the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons. Professor Sir George Alberti, uniquely, gave the Fitzgerald-Peel Lecture for the second time. At the time of writing, the Society's 50th meeting under the Presidency of Gordon McInnes (Western Infirmary, Glasgow) is in the planning stages. A combined meeting with the Scottish Cardiac Society is planned as a joint venture in celebration of the Society's 50th anniversary.

Edinburgh Meetings

The second Edinburgh meeting was held in 1969 under Professor Kenneth Donald's Presidency. He was like Peel, and several founder members, a cardiologist. His colleague, Dr Michael Oliver, reported on the Atromid Trial (an early, but ultimately disappointing, cholesterol-lowering drug) which had been co-ordinated by the Society. The dinner was held in the Upper Library of the Old College at the University and the meal was interspersed with two Royal toasts and three speeches! Dr Bobby Marquis, founder member and the Society's first Treasurer presided over the 1977 meeting. The deaths of founder, Fitzgerald Peel and the second President, James Ronald, were intimated and in something of an Edinburgh tradition, the dinner included five toasts and a rendition of Floreat Res Medica. The 27th AGM in 1985 was held under the Presidency of Dr Andrew Doig when the Executive proposed an annual travelling fellowship of £500 for the Fitzgerald Peel prizewinner but the AGM referred the proposal back. The prize-winning trainee paper by Ken White (Edinburgh) was on sleep apnoea, an increasing interest of the City Hospital respiratory group and there was also a contemporary paper on the morbidity related to drug abuse in north Glasgow from Dr Horne and colleagues at Stobhill. The Society returned to Edinburgh in 1994. President Elect, Sandy Muir, from the Department of Medicine at Edinburgh Royal Infirmary with local Secretary, Alistair MacGilchrist organised the meeting in the Scandic Crown Hotel on the Royal Mile. In a break with tradition, the Fitzgerald Peel Lecturer, Dr Kenneth Calman, at that Chief Medical Officer at the Department of Health, and formerly Chief Medical Officer for Scotland, spoke on his proposal to shorten

training time by removing the Senior Registrar grade. The introduction of "Calman" Registrars which formed the basis of Specialist Training for the next 13 years, was a matter of concern to colleagues at the time but the change proved remarkably successful in contrast to the current carnage surrounding "Modernising Medical Careers". The most recent Edinburgh meeting took place in the Royal College of Physicians in 2002, under the Presidency of hepatologist, Niall Finlayson, a future President of the Edinburgh College. Dr "Mac" Armstrong, the Chief Medical Officer for Scotland, gave the after-dinner oration at the dinner also held in the College.

Aberdeen Meetings

Following the first meeting in Aberdeen in 1963, where he had deputised for President, Professor Fullerton, who had been ill, Dr Ian Gordon hosted the second meeting in his own right in 1971. The Society then awarded its first ever Fitzgerald Peel Prize to Dr Dai Davis (Western Infirmary, Glasgow) who gave a talk on the biochemistry of congestive cardiac failure. The meeting returned to Aberdeen in 1980 under the Presidency of renal physician Calum MacLeod. The dinner at Elphinstone Hall seems to have been problematic when fifty portions of smoked salmon fell to the floor and the caterers subsequently ran out of the main course! The 1988 Aberdeen meeting was hosted by President, Alan Johnston. This was one of the largest meetings for some time with the first-ever overseas guest Fitzgerald Peel Lecturer. Professor Victor McKusick, the world authority on genetics spoke at some length on this important evolving subject. Prior to the development of modern molecular biology, the topic was highly complex and I may not have been alone amongst the delegates in losing the thread shortly into the talk! In a further innovation, in 1996 Aberdeen elected the Society's first lady President, Dr Audrey Dawson, a distinguished haematologist, famous for her boundless energy, and one of the few consultants on the staff at Aberdeen who then carried a bleep (which frequently went off in meetings!). To date, she remains the only lady to hold the office. Amongst the presentations was that of Paisley physician Alastair Dorward (a previous Society Treasurer) who pioneered the influential concept of Acute Medicine in dedicated receiving wards (The Paisley Pattern). The dinner at the Treetops Hotel was informal for the first time and the Society held one of its infrequent golf tournaments over the Royal Aberdeen Course. During her Presidency, Dr Dawson took the opportunity to update the Constitution and insert the female gender where appropriate. The most recent Aberdeen meeting was held in the Ardoe House Hotel (President Ashley Mowat) in 2004. In an entertaining Fitzgerald Peel lecture on "Biological Terrorism" Professor Alasdair Geddes of Birmingham described the history of bio-terrorism including an early use of disease infested animal carcasses being catapulted into cities under siege. Buff Hardy, an ex-Health Service Administrator and former professional comedian (Scotland the What!) gave an entertaining after dinner speech.

Dundee Meetings

The second Dundee visit in 1973 was held under the chairmanship of Professor Ken Lowe, a founder member of the Society. Professor JRA Mitchell of Nottingham, an international authority on thrombosis and cardiovascular clinical trials gave the first ever Fitzgerald Peel Lecture. The Society returned in 1982 under the Presidency of another founder member, James Frew. Chris Pennington (who was to die tragically young) was the local Secretary and Sir Douglas Black, a distinguished St Andrew's graduate and President of the Royal College of Physicians of London and later the BMA, spoke on the aims of the Health Service. He addressed the inequities of health care according to social class and the ever-present relationship between health outcomes and wealth.

His "Black Report", which highlighted these issues, and which was commissioned by the Labour government was buried by subsequent Thatcher government. Dr Matthew Wilkinson hosted the 1990 meeting and was the first rheumatologist to do so with Professor Paul Bacon of Birmingham giving the Fitzgerald Peel lecture on necrotising vasculitis. Local gastroenterologist Ken Wormsley reviewed the extensive literature on gastric acidity and peptic ulcers at a time when the infectious agent, helicobacter pylori, was just becoming recognised as the important etiological factor. This was subsequently the subject of several presentations by Dr McColl's group (Western Infirmary, Glasgow). Charles Forbes, who had moved from Glasgow Royal Infirmary to take up the Chair in Dundee, hosted the 1998 meeting and invited Graham Turpie of McMaster University in Canada to give the invited lecture on anti-thrombotic therapy. Reviews were given by Professor of Surgery Alf Cuschieri who spoke on minimally invasive surgery and Professor Ronnie Harden, a world authority on medical education and inventor of the Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE). Professor Harden showed a memorable film clip of Sir Lancelot Spratt conducting a highly educational ward round! The 2006 meeting was a watershed for the Society. With some shrinkage of attendance at the meetings, Professor Tom MacDonald, a clinical pharmacologist introduced sweeping changes to the Society's Constitution. Membership was opened to Associate Specialists, Staff Grades and Specialist Trainees. Professor MacDonald also introduced a professional medical meeting organiser. Ninety of our 427 members were present for an excellent programme with increased prominence to review and update lectures including talks from Dr Harry Burns, the Chief Medical Officer for Scotland and Professor Sir Graham Catto, President of the General Medical Council (GMC) and a former Treasurer of the Society.

Regional Meetings

The rotation of regional meetings has followed an idiosyncratic course. Inverness, in the Highlands, has been a major contributor since the second meeting which was hosted by James Ronald, former Victoria Infirmary physician and erstwhile colleague of Dr Peel. Paediatrician Pat MacArthur hosted the 12th meeting in Aviemore in 1970 with his colleague Colin Galloway, (a future President) as local Secretary. The Society has had a small number of paediatrician members from its outset, reflecting the time when paediatrics was a subspecialty of general medicine. My former colleague John Knox, a general physician of the old school, held the meeting in Inverness in 1979 and brought another Hammersmith protégé, Dr Chris Booth (by then at Northwick Park and now Sir Christopher Booth), to be the Fitzgerald Peel Lecturer. Colin Galloway hosted the 1995 meeting. As local secretary, I was involved with the arrangements which again took us to Aviemore. Dr Michael de Swiet of Queen Charlotte Hospital, London gave the named lecture on medical disorders in obstetrics. Diners were piped in to a specially composed pipe tune 'The Scottish Society of Physicians Welcome to Coylumbridge'. The most recent Highland meeting was held under the Presidency of John Goodall in 2003. The former Stornoway physician, who had moved to Fort William by that time, took the meeting "offshore" to the Isle of Skye and hosted an excellent meeting at the Aros Centre outside Portree. Dr Simon Wessley, a London psychiatrist, gave the Fitzgerald Peel talk on the topical and controversial Gulf war syndrome.

Peebles has been another favourite meeting place for the Society. Following the 1966 meeting (Dr Borthwick), the Society returned under the presidency of Lanarkshire physician, Dr Robert Walker in 1984. The annual meeting was held in the delightful Peebles Hydro Hotel once more in 1999 with respiratory physician, Dr John Gaddie as President. An excellent Fitzgerald Peel Lecture was given by Professor James Petrie, the hugely energetic clinical

pharmacologist from Aberdeen who had become President of the Royal College of Physicians in Edinburgh and who established the Scottish Intercollegiate Guidelines Network. In a highly memorable after dinner speech, local teacher, Alastair Landles, entertained the company on the history of the Borders and its local rivalries. Uniquely, he managed to have the esteemed company sing along to a heavily transformed version of Tom Jones' 'Delilah'! The Society was back in Peebles again in 2007 with President Peter Leslie and a Fitzgerald Peel Lecture on the renaissance of acute medicine given by rheumatologist, Professor Dame Carol Black, a recent President of the Royal College of Physicians of London.

The first Ayrshire meeting was held in 1968 in the prestigious surroundings of the Turnberry Hotel under President Alex Slessor, a clinical pharmacologist who had previously worked in Stobhill in Glasgow, prior to becoming a physician at Ballochmyle. Dr Ronald Murdoch, who next hosted the meeting in Ayr in 1981 had an interest in cardiology and had also trained at the Victoria Infirmary with Peel. The 1993 meeting visited Troon and was hosted by John Morrow, a Kilmarnock physician with an interest in gastroenterology. Dr Morrow had also initially worked at Ballochmyle before moving to the new District General Hospital at Crosshouse.

Dumfries has been another popular venue since it was first included in the original circuit of eight. The meeting returned in 1978 under the presidency of Dr Robert Wilson. He was one of a group of outstanding Glasgow graduates of 1940, which included Hugh Conway (*vide infra*) who also became President of the Society. Ronnie Strachan, a future President was the local Secretary and Professor Alistair Breckenridge of Liverpool gave the named lecture on clinical pharmacology. At the 1991 meeting Dr Strachan presided over a well attended meeting whose dinner guests included Christopher Clayson, the retired local respiratory physician. Dr Clayson, who was a founder member of the Society, had the distinction of becoming the first President of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh while practising in a district hospital, and had also chaired a 1971 Commission on the Scottish licensing laws. He was made an honorary member of the Society and died in 2005 having become our first centenarian.

Regional meetings were held in a number of venues in central Scotland. Dr Aitchison (Stirling) hosted the 1972 meeting and Perth physician, Ronald MacNeill took the Society to Crieff in 1986. Unusually, the Fitzgerald Peel prize was won there by a district hospital trainee, Dr David Godden (Inverness), for his piece on ultrasound diagnosis of deep vein thrombosis. John Smith, (Stirling) hosted the Society in 1997 with a reception in Stirling Castle and spoke entertainingly at the Society's dinner on his travels and studies on Persian carpets. Cardiologist Dr Ronald Baxter was able to host the Society within Lanarkshire for the first time at the New Lanark Hotel in 2003. Professor Parveen Kumar (London), author of a highly successful undergraduate medical text book, gave the invited lecture on medical education. Paisley physician Hugh Conway (*vide supra*) had taken the Society to Oban in 1974 and Stuart McAlpine hosted the annual meeting in Paisley in 1987. He invited the distinguished neurologist, Sir John Walton, a former President of the GMC, to give the named lecture. The McAlpines currently form the largest family group of physicians within the Society's membership and his son, Howard, is the current Secretary.

Dr JW Buchanan (Kirkcaldy) took the 1976 AGM for a second visit to the delightful setting of St Andrews. Unfortunately subsequent Fife meetings were unable to access St Andrews because of clashes with golf tournaments in the home of the Royal and Ancient.

Dr AAH Lawson of Dunfermline, who had established the highly esteemed Scottish Poisons Centre, a valued national resource in the days before the internet, hosted the 1989 meeting at North Queensferry. Professor Collee (Edinburgh) was the first Fitzgerald Peel Lecturer based in Scotland, although many previous speakers had been ex-patriots. Ian Campbell, Kirkcaldy diabetologist, who holds a Chair at St Andrew's, took the meeting to Airth Castle in 2005. For the first time resignations and deaths exceeded new applications at the AGM and two thirds of members had failed to attend a meeting within the previous three years. Professor Campbell moved a number of proposals to modernise the Society's structure including the removal of Rule Five (requiring at least one attendance every three years) which was being fulfilled more in the breach than the observation.

Fitzgerald Peel Lectures

In the early years, the Review Lectures were usually given by Society members but in the early 1970s the decision to formalise the invitation of a prestigious lecturer was taken. Professor JRA Mitchell from Nottingham was the first speaker to give the lecture named in honour of the Society's founder. Since then a series of prestigious speakers have addressed the Society. The majority has been from England, most frequently from London, with a particular emphasis on the Royal Post-Graduate Medical School/Hammersmith Hospital. On two occasions, they have come from overseas. Topics have encompassed the entire breadth of clinical medicine and its sub-specialities with additional talks on the structure of the NHS and training. Diabetes/endocrinology/cardiology and infectious diseases have been the most commonly visited sub-speciality topics. Professor Sir George Alberti has the unique accolade of having been invited twice (to Glasgow meetings on both occasions) and reflecting the eclectic nature of his career, spoke first whilst a clinical biochemist in Newcastle, and again following his election to the Presidency of the Royal College of Physicians of London. In addition to a number of London College Presidents, speakers have included more than one President of the General Medical Council, several Knights/Dames of the Realm and Professors in every clinical discipline. It is intriguing that even the most prestigious of curriculum vitae would seem incomplete without the Fitzgerald Peel Lectureship!

The Fitzgerald Peel Prize

From the outset, the Society's educational role was largely clinical. Established consultants and trainees presented clinical reviews, investigational studies and some clinical trials. Clinical science was initially less prominent, as the Scottish Society of Experimental Medicine already provided a forum. Over the years however, a number of departments did present basic scientific studies and they feature prominently amongst the Fitzgerald Peel Prize-winners. Although trainees (presumably at the behest of their seniors) presented clinical papers from early on, it was some time before a prize was agreed. In the Executives of the 1960s and 1970s, it was decided after much debate, that the best presentation by a non-consultant would be awarded a prize but an accompanying financial award came later. This was intended to allow the winner to travel to present the work at national or international meetings and the Society's good financial standing subsequently allowed all trainees who presented at the AGM a travel bursary. A wide range of topics has been successful but, not surprisingly, the bulk of papers have come from teaching hospitals with all four schools well represented. On a rare occasion the prize went to a district hospital with David Godden (Inverness) winning at the 1986 Crieff meeting with a paper on Ultrasound Investigation for Deep Vein Thrombosis and Alastair Pell (Dunfermline) presenting successfully on echocardiography in 1989.

Several physicians and units have contributed regularly and popular topics have included cardiac failure (Western Infirmary, Glasgow), hypertension (Aberdeen), diabetes (Edinburgh Royal Infirmary), asthma (Dundee), peptic ulcer (Western Infirmary, Glasgow), renal disease (Aberdeen) and respiratory disease (City Hospital, Edinburgh). In a further gesture of support for postgraduate education the Society established 'sabbatical' awards for consultants to undertake educational visits in 1998 and a fund to support pilot research projects was also established although uptake has been disappointing.

Executives of the Society

From the outset, the Society designed a pragmatic and functional executive structure. The President of the Society (for one year) took office at the Annual Meeting which he or she hosted and organised with the help of a Local Secretary and considerable other input, usually from his own clinical/academic secretary. The national organisation was in the hands of the Society's Secretary, who has mostly been appointed in rotation around the teaching hospitals, while the Treasurers in recent years have rotated round the non-teaching hospitals. The Secretary has been responsible for organising the Executive meeting which was traditionally held in the Station Hotel in Perth each summer. With equal membership from the teaching and district centres, members of the Executive serve a four-year term and, over a convivial lunch, prepare a report for the Society including proposals for new memberships, elections to senior membership, discussion of the forthcoming meeting and choice of future venues. Papers for presentation and invited speakers have been quickly decided. On relatively few occasions, the Secretary's report to the AGM has been queried or overturned by the membership. The initial plans to have a named Lecturer and a prize for non-consultant presentations were both held back. More often, matters fiscal excited the interest and opprobrium of the membership.

The Society's Treasurers have supervised the collection of the modest subscription which has been increased on only four occasions, sometimes with criticism from the floor of the AGM. The most taxing duties have been encouraging ordinary members to become 'Senior' thus freeing ordinary memberships, which were limited in number, for new applicants and to get members to cease paying a subscription on retirement. A number of individuals have mistakenly paid their annual subscription monthly and several long-since retired members continue to pay their initial subscriptions! With considerable voluntary input the running expenses of the Society have been minimal until recently, with the cost of the honoraria for the Lectures and the Prizes sometimes borne by the local meeting and sometimes by the Society. In general, the local organisers have generated sufficient surplus for the Society to enjoy a healthy surplus. The foundation Treasurer, Bobby Marquis from Edinburgh established a capital fund to support the Society's activities which has been helpful in evening out cash flow through the years and formed the basis of the Fitzgerald Peel prizes, travelling fellowships, consultant sabbaticals and research grants.

The Society, like many medical meetings, has enjoyed and perhaps under-appreciated the support of the pharmaceutical industry over the years. This has made the cost of the meeting and associated dinner, which were a constant worry for the Presidents and their Local Secretaries, more manageable. The recent recruitment of professional organisers and transfer of the meeting costs to more realistic levels have necessitated substantially increased costs. These are currently borne by a reducing number of pharmaceutical companies and by the Society's reserves. It is likely that the Society's subscription and/or meeting registration fees will have to rise to keep pace with this development.

Much of the Society's Minutes and correspondence is rather mundane and dry, but there are a few treasures, including the amusingly feisty correspondence between Treasurer Bertie Wood, (Perth physician and later Post-Graduate Dean in Aberdeen) and miscreants who had inadvertently transgressed financial rules. The Secretaries have perhaps been most exercised in keeping the membership list up to date, organising the Executive and assisting local organisers.

The Society is perhaps most indebted to the ten Society Secretaries who have carried the major burden of organising our business over fifty years and each of them is to be commended for their considerable and often unappreciated contributions. Local Secretaries, often 'volunteered' by senior colleagues and not always acknowledged in the Minutes have, with the help of local NHS or academic secretaries and the Society secretaries, borne the burden of hosting our meetings and should also be remembered and acknowledged.

The Future

Throughout the life of the Society, there have been many pressures on the members to preclude their attendance at the Society's meetings. The evolution of specialist societies, increasing amounts of College examining and managerial activity have all been factors in this respect. It remains to be seen if the new format of meetings and the opportunity to meet colleagues past and present, remains sufficiently attractive to bring physicians to an annual meeting. In an ever changing professional world, the value obtained in regular meetings with peers is hard to estimate but once dismantled would be hard to reproduce.

The Society can thus be seen to have satisfied and sustained for fifty years, the founders' hopes for an inclusive national meeting with a clinical template which successfully promotes friendship between colleagues. It provides a focus for reunion and networking between colleagues separated by geography or subspecialisation. With a small executive and devolved organisation the Society runs at little expense and with a minimum of bureaucracy. The physicians of Scotland certainly owe a permanent debt of gratitude to Peel and the founding members who established a national focus and identity for Scottish physicians which has sustained us collectively through times of great change.

Note

Lists of the Fitzgerald Peel Lecturers, the Fitzgerald Peel Prize-winners, the Treasurers and Secretaries of the Society and the Local Secretaries can be found on the SMJ website at <http://www.smj.org.uk>

The Archives of the Society are held on loan at the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow where they are available for view by Society members.

References

- 1 Forbes CD, MacKay N, Boyle IT. The badge of the Scottish Society of Physicians. *Scot Med J* 1999; 44: 191