Biographies/character sketches of the key participants of the Council

MA Eastwood
Retired Gastroenterology Consultant and Reader in Medicine, University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh UK

John (later Sir John) Halliday Croom (JHC) (1909–1986) was the ideal Chair. A medical aristocrat, the third generation of an Edinburgh medical family, educated at Glenalmond School, Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge and Edinburgh University. A superb clinician and clinical teacher, besides being a golfer, a fisherman and a horse racing enthusiast.

He graduated in Edinburgh in 1934 and his long association with the Royal Infirmary began as a house physician. In 1940 he married Valerie, an actress. In so many ways JHC was the embodiment of a conventional Edinburgh physician of the old school, but for the rest of his days, he would delight in telling of this unexpected step to his happiness.

JHC was, through and through, a Royal Infirmary consultant, yet because of his interest in diabetes he saw outpatients in Kirkcaldy, Dunfermline, Haddington and Galashiels. He became a chief in the Royal Infirmary in 1966. He was Chair of the Scottish Committee on Smoking and Health, involved in St Columba’s hospice and the College, of which he was President from 1970–1973. The annual Croom Lecture instigated by the Collegiate Members’ Committee commemorates the affection in which he was held.

Christopher Clayson (1903–2005) was the first consultant from a peripheral non-teaching hospital to become President of the RCPE and the first President to live to be a hundred.

His career demonstrates the triumph of intelligence, talent and personality over the grim and life-threatening illness that afflicted him as a student and young doctor. During his final Medical School clinical examination, pulmonary tuberculosis was diagnosed, resulting in treatment at Southfield Sanatorium under the care of Sir Robert Philip. After two years at Southfield, Dr (later Sir) Derrick Dunlop, who had been a fellow student, arrived as resident medical officer. This resulted in Clayson’s rehabilitation work being converted from manual gardening to helping in the laboratory and restudying medicine in the library. Later, Sir Robert Philip appointed him to succeed Dunlop as resident.

In 1929 he obtained the Diploma in Public Health. In 1944, he was appointed Medical Superintendent of Lochmaben Sanatorium. A skillful negotiator and outstanding speaker; he began to devote increasing time to the medical politics of the NHS. He was elected to the Council and then Presidency of our College in 1966 and became the first Chairman of the Scottish Council for Postgraduate Medical Education. Thereafter the Secretary of State asked him to chair a commission on the alcohol licensing laws in Scotland - a very tricky and sensitive assignment, both socially and politically.

JGM Hamilton (1907–1972) Vice President, an honours graduate in medicine, who despite coping with chronic ill health, had carried a heavy clinical burden through the War as a Royal Infirmary physician. He was a stalwart of the British Medical Association (BMA).

Alistair Wright (1913–1985) another BMA supporter, was a consultant at Bangour Hospital, West Lothian and also on the General Nursing Council for Scotland and the Scottish Council for Postgraduate Medical Education.

Henry Walton (1924–2012) was a cultured individual, a psychiatrist of note and also an art connoisseur of distinction. A meticulously well-dressed man, born in South Africa, with a clinical interest in alcoholism and psychotherapy.

RJM (‘Bobby’) Marquis (1917–1989) was a patrician who became a cardiologist. A supreme raconteur with an outrageous laugh, he had landed with the Parachute Regiment as a doctor on D-Day. Whilst his prime cardiology interest was paediatric cardiology, he continued the work of Dr A Rae Gilchrist in retaining the pre-eminence of cardiology in Edinburgh.

Jimmy Williamson (1920–2013) had trained as a chest physician but after the virtual disappearance of tuberculosis became a geriatrician and was significant in the founding of geriatric medicine in Edinburgh. He was to become Edinburgh University’s first professor of geriatric medicine.
Mary Macdonald (1923–2014) a pathologist, with a special interest in renal diseases, became the first woman to be a member of the College Council in addition to her many other achievements.

Willie Macleod (1912–1993), a paediatric radiologist at the Royal Hospital for Sick Children, Edinburgh, was born in Stornoway. He had been present at the liberation of the German concentration camp at Belsen which, like all who witnessed this horror, he found a harrowing experience. He was the Registrar, long-term organiser of the Membership examination and then Treasurer of the College.

Alec Keay (1921–2012), a consultant paediatrician at the Western General Hospital, Edinburgh, was Secretary and later Treasurer of the College. His military service finished when he was captured in Italy, but he strolled out of the prisoner of war camp during an air raid and walked to Switzerland. He began his medical studies at the University of Lausanne before returning to Britain to complete his medical studies in Edinburgh.

Hugh Macleod (1925–) was Treasurer then Registrar of the College and a consultant geriatrician.

Chalmers Davidson (1915–2001) the Honorary Librarian, was a general physician at Chalmers Hospital in Edinburgh. An urbane, charming, cultured individual who brought scholarship to his term of office. He had a curious habit of blowing on his right thumb when perplexed. His Christmas card was invariably a picture of a very contented Labrador, with a wood in the distance. The caption was ‘no garden, no matter how small, should be without its half-acre of rough woodland’.