

1940. In it were twenty-six articles by authors well-known at that time for their distinction in science and literature. They included W. H. Auden, Albert Einstein, E. M. Forster, J. B. S. Haldane, Julian Huxley, Bertrand Russell, Beatrice Webb, H. G. Wells and Rebecca West. These men and women had very different reactions to orthodox religious teaching, but there was within each of them some inner driving force which urged on their creative activity.

Doctors who have made a name for themselves either in the care of patients or in research laboratories, or both, have been people with energy above average. What has motivated them? What made them tick? We hope that this series will interest all our readers; also that it may be a spur that drives some of them on, especially the younger ones, to harder work and the longer hours necessary to provide kindly care and effective treatment of patients, and to add to the sum of medical knowledge and understanding.

DR WILFRED (BILL) SIRCUS AND *PROCEEDINGS*

Bill Sircus who has now retired from the editorship of *Proceedings* of the College has made an outstanding contribution, and the occasion causes one to ponder how he came to be suited for the role. Kind thoughts and words of tribute tend too often to emerge late in the day.

Bill came to Edinburgh in the middle 1950s, from Liverpool via Sheffield, and in both medical schools he had already earned respect. He joined Wilfrid Card in the joint medical/surgical gastrointestinal unit that had been established by Card with John Bruce in the Western General Hospital. This was the second of the units to be founded in Stanley Davidson's grand vision for the special branches of medicine that were emerging after World War II; it was, however, the first to acknowledge the essential interdisciplinary nature of modern medicine. It is strange how such an obvious truth has still not fully taken hold. Bill, throughout his active clinical life, fostered the development of teamwork with all the cognate disciplines that contribute to the best standards of clinical care and practice, and the group (and their successors) did outstanding work, at first on gastric physiology and peptic ulcer, but later on all aspects of gastrointestinal disease. I had experience of an interesting sequel. When I went to Sheffield in the early 1970s, there was some consternation and dismay because a certain Dr Sircus had refused to approve a senior registrarship in gastroenterology, unless a joint medical/surgical unit was established in the shortly to be completed new teaching hospital. However, Bill's evangelism and insistence did not fall on deaf ears and a very successful unit on the Edinburgh model was created forthwith.

I got to know Bill some 40 years ago for a quite different reason. He introduced me to what is now known as 'evidence based medicine'. Some of his pioneering work on gastric function was based on observations in dogs and for want of a proper locus for his studies, many of these were painstakingly and humanely done in an office-cum-laboratory which we shared in the old Department of Medicine.

Over the subsequent period, Bill maintained his original girth but grew enormously in stature. Despite his allegiance to a special branch of medicine, he was a first class general physician, highly regarded not only by his immediate hospital associates, who recall his ward rounds with great admiration, but also by the general practitioner community who made heavy demands on his opinion. From the outset, he understood the need to communicate fully and honestly with his patients who held him in the highest regard and equally importantly with his medical colleagues. Being highly articulate, he was an outstanding lecturer and lucid writer with much published original work to his credit. His skill as an endoscopist was enhanced by his skill as an artist and this he used in recording what he saw. He quickly developed a national and international reputation being recognised by high office in specialist associations. And so in Bill Sircus there were all the best attributes needed in British teaching hospital medicine, the sound physician, the careful scientist, the well read scholar, the good teacher but more than that, a man of integrity with a friendly and humorous personality who was at all times modest, kindly and courteous.

The *Proceedings of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh* arose gradually

by metamorphosis from the *Chronicle*, a house journal started in 1971 providing an account of what went on in Queen Street. The College was also publishing, separately, reports of some of its Symposia. It was often difficult to get manuscripts from all who had contributed to a symposium. Furthermore, as sales of these reports were small, publication achieved little. It was decided to move to printing contributions to symposia in the *Chronicle* when David Boyd was Editor. The first such articles appeared in the January issue of 1984. Volume 14 of the *Chronicle* with four issues totalled about 150 pages and for the first time had as a subsidiary title, *Proceedings of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh*. It was growing slowly and contained occasional articles on the history of medicine, travel and other general interest. When, in 1987, David Boyd stood down, the College was extremely fortunate in finding that Bill Sircus, with his most appropriate background, was willing to take over and continue the evolution of the quarterly journal at a time when the whole face of medical practice was changing, as was the role of the College. It was at this time that the title *Chronicle* was dropped and the expansion with further innovation brought us to the present day. The 1987 volume had 325 pages and by a steady progression the one of 1995 had 720 pages.

The expansion has not been even. As in the first *Chronicle*, there is still the Queen Street news, but this has required only a little more space. The clinical material has increased greatly and besides accounts from the symposia, there are many contributed articles and reviews and a few brief original papers. It is hoped that this part of *Proceedings* is a significant contribution to Continuing Medical Education. But, the historical and literary part has expanded even more and in the July 1995 issue it exceeded the clinical part. Most of the historical and literary papers have been written by Fellows, often encouraged by the Editors, but in the July issue there were two papers, both unsolicited, by authors, one in London and one in Holland, who have not had previous association with the College. Both papers can be appreciated by specialist scholars and can be read with enjoyment by any of us. Thus, *Proceedings* has become known far beyond our Collegiate Members and Fellows.

It is certain that Bill Sircus had no idea what he was taking on in 1987. He would be the first to agree that throughout his tenure of Editorship, he has been loyally and ably assisted by Reg Passmore as Deputy Editor. I can personally testify that the two of them spend, unselfishly, up to 30 hours per week in their task. Gradually the two of them have increased their support with Assistant Editors and in a limited way with an Editorial Board.

Inevitably, there are differing opinions. Some feel that *Proceedings* should concentrate more on reviews and educational update, but there are plenty of journals that cope with this need. Others feel that more news of College activities would be appreciated, but these are now well described in the College's Annual Report and other occasional publications in the College's circulation. Moreover, the President's Reviews, which do appear in *Proceedings*, partly meet this wish.

And so to summarise a widely held view, *Proceedings* has developed into a splendid amalgam of excellent editorials, scientific papers, reviews, historical accounts, literary gems and some College news and diary. It is very widely read and I know from meeting our Fellows and Collegiate Members all over the world that it is greatly enjoyed. I hope that it will prosper and remain very much as it is.

It is a great pleasure to salute Bill Sircus's achievement. He is leaving us a splendid legacy and on behalf of all his readers, I send him our warmest thanks and best wishes.

John Richmond
Edinburgh

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Since Bill Sircus took over the editorship of *Proceedings* in 1987, the journal has gone from strength to strength. It certainly is a publication of 'scientific, literary and historical material' and the diverse contents is noteworthy. Much thought and care have gone into each issue as it cannot be easy to maintain scientific excellence as well as have the right balance of other subjects. I have found the editorials and leading articles topical and informative. Many editorials have been of great interest but 'The Training of a Physician: Problems and Proposals' and 'On Meat' were most illuminating, to cite two recent examples. My meagre knowledge of history, medical or otherwise, has also been much enhanced.

The *Proceedings* has always been international, perhaps because so many Fellows reside outside of the United Kingdom. However, the international aspect has increased: 'Letters from ...' and commentaries on health issues and medical education in countries as widely apart as Papua New Guinea and Canada are very special.

Personally I always find something of scientific and literary interest in each issue and we owe a great debt to Bill Sircus for not only expanding the College journal, but making it a highly readable, educational and entertaining publication.

David Todd
Hong Kong