

undoubtedly clever, multi-talented and ambitious, with a wide range of interests. He had incredible drive and tenacity, not only in his major enterprises, but also in smaller, almost comical, endeavours. He spent six years persuading the US Senate to accept a portrait of Pocahontas, and a similar period producing a life-size portrait of George Washington in Masonic dress, for presentation to the Lodges of London. He had a dark side, manifest not only in his treatment of his wife, but also of his mother. Despite affectionate correspondence he failed to visit her in the four years before her death, although he knew she was seriously ill and he had been in America, and he failed to attend her funeral. Contrast this with his lifelong personal and financial support of the American Indian, who had, 'no better friend than Henry Wellcome'. This was a complex man. After reading this book, I will remember Wellcome as a colourful character with a powerful vision—to use science for the betterment of mankind. By recruiting the best possible brains and giving them the freedom to research and publish as they pleased, he established British research institutions that would become renowned worldwide, and raise the standards of pharmaceutical research for ever. This is his legacy to the pharmaceutical industry. His collection, once sneered at, is his legacy to the world.

This is a remarkable book about a remarkable man. It was a pleasure to review it.

Letter from Saudi Arabia

SCOTLAND IN APRIL

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Ex-pats love to go home and as often as possible. A surprise call from our son informing us that he had obtained his MRCP at the first attempt ('beat you to it, Dad'), was an excuse to hotfoot it to Bonnie Scotland for the ceremony.

Edinburgh was at its sunny best. There had been no ceremony in my day but this occasion was compensation indeed. It was above all a family gathering with tiny tots competing with the President's address, and grandparents straining not to miss a word. All colours and creeds seemed to be represented. To us who passed in the sixties the new Members, like new policemen, seemed oh, so young and there were many more ladies, some to our surprise unemployed but, hopefully, by choice. It was a time to meet old friends as well as the new Members. 'Did you get a key?' I asked my son. No, he didn't. My Membership scroll came with a key to the College. I never have had occasion to use it but still keep it. As a symbol it seems to make one belong. The President could not recall when giving a key stopped. Why had it? Did some exulting, joyous member, having celebrated beyond his capacity seek refuge for the night in its hallowed halls? I think not.

Our daughter had driven us back to Scotland from Somerset. We enjoyed being chauffeured. Well, why not? We ferried all the kids up and down, year in and year out and, anyway, they now prefer to drive. In Saudi Arabia the ex-pats drive defensively if they want to survive. Speed limits to the natives are the limits to which the vehicles can be driven; 100 mph bonnet to bumper pursuits are daily occurrences; seat-belts are ignored. Accidents are frequent and spectacular, especially during Ramadan, the month of fasting and the Haj, with the visiting pilgrims, and when on rare occasions it rains. However, returning ex-pats find the UK motorways far from hazard free; the unofficial speed limit seems to be 80 to 85 mph and the inside and centre lanes are dominated by speeding intercity coaches and enormous trucks bulldozing any slow traffic contemptuously aside.

And still the sun shone in Aberdeen which was celebrating five hundred years of university life. Was a sun barrier cream needed? As I could see no hole in the ozone layer above, I settled for a peaked cap. The wind was chilly for balding pates. Then to sunny Inverness.

Was this the same Scotland remembered of old—dreich, wet and cold? To emphasise it was Scotland and not Saudi it bucketed rain, but briefly, and the evening saw us bound for the hills under blue skies. This stage of the trip home was to be the climax. 'We'll do a couple of Munros, Dad'. (A Munro is a mountain over 3,000 feet and Scotland boasts 277.) 'Nice wee hike to the bothy: good sleep and a day in the hills'.

We were three doctors and a male nurse; none strangers to our mountains and all enthusiasts which was just as well, twelve cans of McEwans and 25 kg of coal doing nothing to lighten our collective burdens, but considered essential, and a wee dram forbye. The estimated three-hour nice hike stretched to five hard

joint-pounding, muscle-taxing hours, the track being lost in snow and darkness. But the sky was a panoply of stars like a desert night and the stillness was palpable. Light and noise are overlooked as pollutants of city life but the urban nocturnal photo hemisphere deprives city dwellers of a glimpse of their place in the universe and they seldom know the silence of solitude. 'Still the night, holy the night' they may sing but few seem to find its meaning. My Bedouin patients do. They don't need tranquilisers. I suspect the Scottish ghillies are alike. Both know their kinship with the stars before they mingle with the dust.

The limitations imposed by age can now be kept at bay by modern technology. Heavy laden but well designed rucksacks when shouldered can be tolerated; Mountain boots gaitered from knee to toe take limbs through torrent, bog and snow, snug warm and dry; all wool garments under Gortex breath out sweat and prevent heat exhaustion or chills when resting. It was cold. I thought luxuriously of the college key and sneaking into a warm interior. But at last the bothy loomed dark and still and beckoning. The coal soon brought warmth external and a tot or rum the internal equivalent. Scots in the know favour rum to whisky as a reviver, though no clinical trials are available. The bothy, due to the selfless efforts of the Mountain Bothy Association, was like a wooden box inside stout stone walls; no draughts blew, the candles never flickered. Sleep was deep and finally banished by sun streaming from blue skies. Porridge-filled and refreshed we set out with ice axes, crampons, emergency clothing and rations—the lot, or almost! What had been forgotten? Sun barrier cream and lipsalve. In Saudi they are a sine qua non. Desert sands and tropical seas reflect UV almost like snow. The snow was deep and dazzling; the sun warm; the climb inspiring and the views spectacular. Seven hours in snow and sun burned everyone's type 11 skin but it was all worth it.

Back here in Saudi the shade temperature is 104°F. My sunburn has become suntan but actinic herpes labialis remains to heal. And so to quote that popular psychologist, Susan Jeffers, 'Life is an adventure and we are adventurers. It is full of opportunities and learning experiences'. I agree. Live it to the full but don't forget the sun cream and lipsalve, even in Scotland in April.

Letter from South Africa

LIVING IN SILENCE—OR TRYING TO

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'Noise' or 'sounds' differ only in degree and quality. Most noises are unpleasant but certain sounds are very acceptable and together they can be roughly divided into two categories. First there are obligatory noises which one cannot avoid such as neighbourly disturbances, children and nearby or distant industrial activities; secondly there are the sounds specifically desired, such as the music records and classical TV videos that one selects and plays to one's liking at an appropriate volume; also there is the sound of bird calls which one can appreciate and record with pleasure.

My home now is in a pleasant rural area with considerate neighbours, not closer than 100 metres. Noise and one's reaction to it are, of course, relative features, and I can remember well sleeping peacefully and continuously on uncomfortable hard moist ground not 10 metres from ear-splitting high velocity artillery weapons laying down lengthy barrages during the Italian Campaign.

Silence can be considered to be completely attainable only in Trappist monasteries and to a much lesser degree in our Superior Courts—'Silence in Court!' being enforced by all the weight of the Law. However one could hardly live in a Trappist monastery without taking vows and in a Law Court, Learned Counsel may bellow at the witnesses for effect or to impress the Bench.

Of the obligatory noises, the most persistent and usually unavoidable are those emanating from a spouse, happy children, some mistresses or servants, or indeed the welcome bark of a guardian dog which may well be incessant. These can only be avoided if one is in the enviable position to abjure female company and live by one's self in a simple cottage in a rural region—a decision recently made easier for me by the 4-weekly implant of an anti-hormone for inoperable prostatic carcinoma. Naturally one has to choose whether or not to have a wife, mistress or dog. Perhaps the most obtrusive sound is that of happy children.

Some years ago I lived in a suburban town afflicted with the horrifying banditry which characterises the 'New South Africa'. All the neighbouring residents were petitioning for dogs to be silenced at nights and they approached me to sign their petition. I sent them packing. Under certain circumstances nothing is more reassuring than watchful dogs and I never had to pay for their food or veterinary expenses. Unfortunately in our stressful times here, one has to leave the telephone on, and of course the Civil protection 27 MHz Radio, which has already served me well in a dire emergency but is often loudly obtrusive.

Having lived in a number of noisy cities, I believe now that silence may be a potentially effective passport to a full appreciation of life—almost as good as wine and other judicially administered beverages. I cannot help believing that it has a material effect on the treatment of stress hypertension, which I never thought existed until being afflicted with it. I cannot imagine that even an eager researcher could conclude a statistically significant study on the effects of silence (or comparative silence) on expectation of life—in the exhausting rating manuals of the insurance offices there is no reference to it.