

A window into the past — snippets from *The Journal*, 25 and 50 years ago

To commemorate the the Golden Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II, patron of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society, John Hunt looks back at significant events reported in The Journal 25 and 50 years ago

1952

Death of King George VI

On the morning of 6 February 1952 the 25-year-old Princess Elizabeth had risen early to watch the wildlife at the remote Treetops hotel in Kenya. At 7.30am a valet at Sandringham discovered that King George VI had died in his sleep after a heart attack. Due to difficulties in communication half a century ago, when coded telegrams were used to send the news from London to Kenya, the new Queen was not aware of her accession until lunchtime. The royal party had intended to depart later that day from Mombasa for a tour of Australia and New Zealand but plans were rapidly made for an immediate return to London. A Douglas DC3 "Dakota", the well-known aircraft of the 1939–45 war, was pressed into service to convey the royal party to Entebbe in Uganda, from where they proceeded via Benghazi to arrive at Heathrow at 4pm the following day.

The Journal of 9 February brought a black-bordered announcement of the death of the 56-year-old king, only 16 years after the announcement of his own father's death. To most, said *The Journal*, the king was not the remote figure reading the speech at the opening of parliament, but the gentle, kindly speaker sending out his Christmas message from the fireside. This was, perhaps, a reflection of the increasing power of the broadcast media. "God save the Queen!" concluded the announcement. By June of that year, *The Journal* was reporting that Her Majesty had been graciously pleased to grant her patronage to the Society.

Emerging national health service

In early 1952 the National Health Service was still not four years old and Mr (later Sir) Hugh Linstead, MP, secretary of the Society, addressed the Southend-on-Sea



The Queen, accompanied by the Duke of Edinburgh, visited the headquarters of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society on 18 February 1993. The occasion was a reception to mark the anniversary of the Society's Royal Charter of Incorporation by Queen Victoria 150 years earlier

branch on the topic of "Three years of the Health Service". He reminded his audience that the royal physician, Lord Dawson of Penn, had criticised proposals for the National Health Service on the grounds that it was going "too fast and too far". In contrast, Aneurin Bevan, the minister responsible, had rejoiced that the scheme was going too fast and too far. He said you had to create a certain amount of chaos if you really wanted to get something done, and that if you proceeded by slow methods, you would not achieve as much as you could by the method of revolution.

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It was probably true, said Mr Linstead, that as a result of leaping into the health service with practically no preparation, it had developed to a much greater extent than would have been possible by the traditional British method of caution. There were two big tasks to tackle, concluded the speaker, the first being finance and the second to achieve co-operation between the executive council, with its doctors, pharmacists, dentists and opticians, and the local authority home nursing, home helps and the hospitals.

Prescription charges introduced

The year 1952 was notable for the introduction of the first NHS prescription charge. A *Journal* editorial early in the year noted that the Birmingham executive council had referred to "the high cost of the pharmaceutical service and the enormous numbers of prescriptions issued yearly by doctors to their NHS patients". A correspondent of *The Lancet*, noted *The Journal*, had drawn attention to the fact that proprietary medicines accounted for 40 per cent of ingredient costs and that the imposition of a prescription levy of one shilling would reduce demand by 25 per cent and bring about a saving of £19m, this being preferable to a proprietaries ban, which would discourage research. Shortly afterwards *The Journal* recorded that the chancellor, R. A. Butler, had decided to make a charge of one shilling per prescription form at pharmacies, hospital out-patient dispensaries and dispensing doctors' premises, which he estimated would bring about savings of £12m a year.

This would result, suggested *The Journal*, in large quantities of medicines being prescribed on one form, possibly for more than one person in a family. Meanwhile, the British Medical Association issued a reminder of its resolution of October 1949 "that under no circumstances whatever, shall a doctor be required to be an agent to collect a government charge on prescriptions".

The Journal reported the second reading

of the NHS Bill in April, when Dr Edith Summerskill said that the drug bill was too high, due to the prescription of expensive and unnecessary drugs. Aneurin Bevan remarked that doctors were "an ill-disciplined profession" but that the main reason was the enormous increase in recent years of the use of antibiotics, and that expensive drugs were coming into existence. The new prescription charge was imposed on what *The Journal* called "the inglorious First of June". For 40 years, said the leading article of 31 May, employed persons in the lower income groups had received free medicines, first through the National Health Insurance Scheme and for four years through the NHS. Pharmacists might accept the new conditions with a good grace as a small contribution to economic recovery.

By July, a London chemist was reporting how readily the shillings were being handed over and *The Journal* was quoting survey figures which suggested that the reduction in prescriptions in different areas varied from 12 per cent to 18 per cent. By October, prescriptions had settled to 9 per cent below the previous year, with proprietary medicines accounting for 25 per cent of prescriptions but 50 per cent of costs.

Adoption of the metric system for bottles

A committee of the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry had recommended the adoption of metric bottles for wholesale supply in a standardised and restricted range of sizes. Remarking on this possibility, "Onlooker" suggested that manufacturers might like to consider the provision of square bottles for galenicals, this possibly making a saving of around 20 per cent in shelf space. Such bottles, he noted, had successfully been adopted for two popular brands of alcoholic beverage.

Centenaries celebrated

A leading article recorded the centenary of the Society's Scottish department, established on 15 April 1852 and known as the North British branch until 1948. The establishment followed shortly on the provision of a separate Scottish board of examiners by the Pharmacy Bill of that year. A celebration dinner in Edinburgh was attended by 260 guests and the Society's president F. C. Wilson invested H. T. Thomas as chairman of the Scottish department. The Scottish department was not only a creation of the Society, noted *The Journal*, but a step in the development of a tradition with connections to the Society of Druggist Apothecaries of Edinburgh which was founded in 1785.

Also noted as a centenary was the Pharmacy Act of 1852. This Act, *The Journal's* leading article reminded readers, was the first legislation in Britain to deal with purely pharmaceutical matters. It established a register of pharmaceutical chemists, determined the conditions for admission to the register, protected the titles "pharmaceutical chemist" and "pharmaceutist" and entrusted

the Society with the administration of the Act. So far as it went, remarked the article, the Act set the seal on the efforts of the Society to establish a sound educational basis for the practice of pharmacy and stood as a memorial to the foresight and sagacity of those who were responsible in the early days.

A bicentenary was celebrated by Manchester Royal Infirmary, where the pharmacy department contributed an exhibition "Drugs and medicines 1752-1952". This included crabs' claws and tincture of soot, from the 1746 London Pharmacopoeia, and the formulae for viper broth and mithridatum.

Finances: the blizzard of Bloomsbury

On a topic familiar to readers today, *The Journal* reported the Society's annual balance sheet. It noted that in 1951 income had fallen by £3,000 and expenses had risen by £28,000. "The fees must be increased . . . no organisation can live on its past; certainly not financially," suggested the writer. Onlooker's reference was terse: "the blizzard of Bloomsbury".

Product news

A new product to make news in 1952 was Terramycin (oxytetracycline) which became available to hospitals in May. The ministry advised that it would initially be available for limited domiciliary use only in a few cases. These included, oddly, "pneumonia in which there is good reason to suppose that the cause is a virus". It was costly, said the ministry, and only for use where penicillin or sulphonamides were ineffective. At that time, the first cases of aplastic anaemia following systemic use of chloramphenicol were being reported, leading later to its withdrawal from use other than as a topical application.

On the subject of antibiotics, "Onlooker" noted that in 1871 Lord Lister had observed and recorded that when bacterial bodies were present alongside penicillium mould, their growth was "comparatively languid and there was not the same appearance of dense groups". The world would wait until 1928 before Alexander Fleming recorded the same phenomenon and it would be the 1940s before the observation resulted in medical application of the discovery.

Another newly emerging group was the corticosteroids. Cortisone had been in use for some four years, in the United States, for rheumatoid arthritis, and Bayer Products announced that it had just commenced the first UK production of cortisone acetate, using a steroid substance derived from oxible as the starting material.

Extended hours service launched

An interesting and novel enterprise made news when a group of proprietor pharmacists in Sheffield established a co-operative venture, Associated Chemists Ltd.

This pharmacy, which opened in Janu-

ary 1952, was close to the city centre and offered services from 9am to 10pm on weekdays and 2pm to 8pm on Sundays and public holidays, at a time when such extended hours were normally only offered by the largest town-centre multiple branches. The initiators of the project were local proprietors Len Stocks and Cyril Hobson, joined at an early stage by Arthur Wragg and others, to form the initial board of directors. The group aimed to provide a high-class service which would allow independent chemists to compete effectively and avoid the need for health centres. This year, it celebrates half a century of successful operation, during which it has been open every day. The idea was taken up in a small number of other centres, but never to the extent that some had thought probable.

History of pharmacy

At a meeting of the Society's Council in July, under chairmanship of the newly elected president W. J. Tristram, it was decided to establish a committee on the history of pharmacy. Its terms of reference were to include the promotion of study and research, the holding of meetings and the acquisition and preservation of objects of historical pharmaceutical interest. The committee, initially under the chairmanship of Leslie Matthews, was successful, and in 1967 developed into the present British Society for the History of Pharmacy.

The Pharmacy Bill

In November 1952, a Bill was presented to Parliament on behalf of the Society which was followed in due course by the Pharmacy Acts of 1953 and 1954. The main effects were that the separate registers of pharmaceutical chemists and chemists and druggists, resulting from the Pharmacy Acts of 1852 and 1868, were replaced by a single statutory register. Also, the Society was empowered to register any person holding a degree in pharmacy from a British university, paving the way for the present entry by degree only and the ending of the Society's own qualifying examination.

Assistants in pharmacy

A topic which has exercised the minds of pharmacists over the years was current in 1952. The Council published a report in July of that year which was presented to the branch representatives' meeting in September. The Council argued that "the training, examination and control of employment of assistants was a matter in which the interests of pharmacy should be taken in hand by the Society". A lively discussion ensued, with strongly held arguments for and against the proposals, which are familiar to pharmacists today. The president, W. J. Tristram, reminded the meeting that discussions had continued over a period and that the time for a decision had come. In the event, by 4pm it was decided that the time for tea had arrived and the meeting decided "not to continue the discussion any further".

BPC 1952

The year 1952 saw the annual British Pharmaceutical Conference returning to Nottingham, where it had previously been held in 1866 — only the third year of its existence — and then in 1899 and 1922.

The opening session of the 89th conference was held in the great hall of the university with a distinguished platform party and the president, W. J. Tristram, in the chair.

The conference banquet was held in the Astoria ballroom with the Minister of Health, Iain Macleod, as principal guest. Over 500

delegates attended the conference with many staying in the university's halls of residence. An exhibition of historical objects was staged by Geoffrey Trease, head of the department of pharmacy at the university, and the conference programme included visits to Birdsgrove House and Newstead Abbey.

1977



Mr Jim Bannerman: president of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society from 1975 to 1977

Honours for three

The year 1977 began with the announcement of honours for three well-known figures in pharmacy. Dr Frank Hartley, vice-chancellor of London University and former dean of the school of pharmacy, was awarded a knighthood. Dr T. D. Whittet, chief pharmacist of the Department of Health, was made CBE. His retirement was reported later in the year. Desmond Lewis, secretary and registrar of the Society, was made OBE.

Pharmacy closures

While a dispensing doctor was publicly doubting the need for pharmacies, Roland Moyle, minister of state for health, told the Commons in an adjournment debate that the government was worried about the rate of pharmacy closures, following a decline from 15,330 in 1955 to 11,000

in 1976. A reallocation of funds was under consideration, although no new money was on offer and the minister admitted that pharmacists were not “over-rewarded”. In his Department, said Mr Moyle, there was now a tendency to use the term “pharmacist” rather than “chemist”. That was the modern fashion, he said.

Pharmacists outraged!

In the first week of the year a row erupted following publication of an article in *The Sunday Times* by a recently qualified general practitioner from Stratford-upon-Avon, who asked “Will anybody miss the chemist’s shop?” He suggested that, with medicines no longer dispensed “in the old fashioned way”, that doctors should dispense all medicines that were necessary, thus

avoiding the “chemists’ monopoly”. Pharmacists were outraged, reported *The Journal*, and the Society’s president, Jim Bannerman, led a spirited defence by publishing, in the same newspaper, a strong case for the community pharmacist’s importance and clearly setting out arguments which are well known to pharmacists today.

The dispute followed a notable case of the time, when two pharmacists in Tetbury succeeded in heading off a move by local doctors to extend their dispensing services. Pharmacists may recall another notable case which occurred, with fatal results, over 20 years later, when a dispenser working for a dispensing doctor issued a patient with a month’s supply of the cytotoxic drug melphalan, which should only have been given in short courses. The value of qualified professional supervision of the dispensing of prescriptions was amply illustrated.

Anniversaries

At the end of May, Boots The Chemists held a reception in London to mark its centenary. Although the company was not registered until 1888, it was in 1877 that Jesse Boot took over his mother’s shop at 38 Goose Gate, Nottingham, from which he began to build his company. Jesse Boot was described by the then chairman of Boots, Dr Gordon Hobday, as a retailing genius, but it was Boot’s marriage to Florence Rowe, a stationer’s daughter, which took the company into areas outside the usual sphere of pharmacy.

A 50th anniversary was celebrated by the Bradford school of pharmacy. Various courses in pharmacy had been offered by Bradford technical college during the years of the 1914–18 war, but in 1927 a department of pharmacy was established. For most of its 50 years only two heads of school had held office, F. N. Appleyard from 1929 until the late 1950s and J. M. Rowson from 1960.

In recent years, the school had pioneered practice integrated teaching and introduced the pharmacy “sandwich” course of undergraduate study and had relocated from the original technical college building to the upper floors of the new university. Also celebrated was the centenary of the introduction in 1877, by John Jeyes, of Jeyes’ Fluid, claimed to be the first commercial disinfectant. A celebration dinner was held in the members’ room at the House of Commons. The company claimed the origination of the Rideal Walker test, the first standard assessment of the effectiveness of disinfectants.

New headquarters

Two major pharmaceutical bodies were on the move in the year. On 5 January the National Pharmaceutical Association received the keys to its newly purchased premises at St Peter’s Street, St Albans. This handsome building, parts of which date back to the mid-18th century, is the fourth home of the NPA, previously based at Tavistock Square, Queen Square and then Southgate, before moving to Mallinson House in St Albans.

Tuesday 22 February saw the official opening of the Society’s own new headquarters at Lambeth. At 3.30pm Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother was welcomed to the Borough of Lambeth by the mayor, and then to the new building by the Society’s president Jim Bannerman. Before a distinguished gathering, Her Majesty

declared the new headquarters open and unveiled a commemorative plaque, following which she was presented with a Lambeth delftware drug jar. The royal party then toured the building and the Queen Mother spoke to many members of staff. *The Journal* marked the occasion with, what was then, the exceptional publication of a colour supplement, showing the major features of the new building, which had been first occupied in September of the previous year.

No compelling case for single transferable vote

At the Society's Council elections three new members were elected, Colin Hitchins, Roger Odd and John Ross, and Mervyn Madge returned to the Council after a brief absence. This was the second election to be held using the single transferable vote. It was noted that only 31.8 per cent of the issued voting papers had been returned, a fall from 35.7 per cent the first time the new system was used and a further fall from 38.8 per cent at the last election by the traditional "first past the post" system.

The Journal rehearsed the arguments for and against the new electoral system and noted that the Council had agreed to review the system after three years. It remarked in a leading article that "it remains *The Journal's* view that no compelling case for the adoption of the STV by the Society has ever been advanced". At the branch representatives' meeting the Dorset branch moved that "the Society should forthwith restore the previous system for Council elections and cease the single transferable voting system", which was, said the proposer, "largely a result of persuasion by the so-called Electoral Reform Society". This subject would provoke discussion for many years to come.

"An astronomical and incredible cut"

The annual negotiations over pharmacists' remuneration for NHS dispensing raised the temperature more than is usual in the year. Under the foregoing heading a leading article in *The Journal* commented on a cut in remuneration of £11m proposed by the ministry. The proposal stemmed from a stock inquiry held in 1975 which suggested that contractors held seven weeks' stock, against 11 weeks' stock which had been assumed earlier.

The Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee mounted a strong case in opposition to the cut, arguing that it would bring about a 10 per cent reduction in remuneration during a period of high inflation. At the Society's annual general meeting the president, Jim Bannerman, referred to the proposal as "a reduction incredible to contemplate", particularly when viewed against the fall in the number of pharmacies over which concern was being widely expressed.

The negotiations were extended and complicated but the matter was eventually settled, at least for the time being, in December. The outcome was the introduction of a system of differential on-costs under which it was expected that the larger contractors would be losing about £5m a year.

Publications

The year 1977 saw the publication of a new book which was to become a standard work of reference. 'Pharmacy law and ethics' by J. R. Dale and G. E. Appelbe was published in May and quickly became an established title of the Pharmaceutical Press, to be followed by further editions.

Published in June was the 27th edition of 'Martindale — The Extra Pharmacopoeia'. Priced at £30, it was initially offered to pharmacists at £25 and received its usual acclaim, including favourable reference by the minister for health Roland Moyle at the BPC in Sheffield later in the year.

Silver Jubilee

The Journal, in a double issue of 4/11 June, congratulated Her Majesty the Queen on her Silver Jubilee and published a number of articles reviewing the previous 25 years. Mentioned were the enormous strides in pharmaceutical education, the industry's progress in research and development, the development of 'Martindale' from something invaluable to something indispensable, the recognition of pharmacists by the public and, to quote hospital pharmacist "Chiaroscuro", the fact that hospital pharmacy had "emerged from the troglodyte benches".

Community pharmacy, often referred to at that time as general practice pharmacy, continued to undergo a revolution the final shape of which was yet to be revealed, commented the leading article. But hardship had been caused by the enormous fall in the number of pharmacies from 15,150 in 1952 to 10,947 in 1976. Not forgetting its own performance, *The Journal* had doubled in editorial content over the 25 years with a staff increase of only 50 per cent. "A reasonable increase in productivity one might think," concluded the writer of the leader.

20 per cent on the fees?

At the June meeting of the Society's Council, Estelle Leigh was installed as president and John Balmford was elected vice-president. At the same meeting the Council decided that the personal retention fee should rise to £37 and the premises fee to £21. "20 per cent on the fees?" questioned *The Journal's* leading article. The usual series of letters followed, with S. H. Beckett of Grimsby asking "How long will it be before a shop will cost £100 per annum in personal and business premises fees?" Not too long, as pharmacists discovered.

BPC 1977

The 1977 British Pharmaceutical Conference was held in Sheffield, with the opening session taking place at the City Hall. At that session the minister for health, Roland Moyle, declined to comment on the remuneration negotiations which were taking place, but the president, Estelle Leigh, said that the profession was seriously concerned that the level of remuneration for community pharmacists, in an inflationary situation, was inadequate to maintain a satisfactory service and that the rate of pharmacy closures would deprive some communities of their pharmacy service.

At the conference banquet, held in the Cutlers' Hall, Sir George Godber, chairman of the health education council, claimed that the mix between medicine and pharmacy was not as close as it should be, and called for "a greater medical profession".

In its conference feature *The Journal* reminded readers that the Pharmaceutical Society had only had three women presidents in its history, publishing a photograph of two of them, the president in office, Mrs Leigh, and Mary Burr, who was president in 1962-63, both of whom attended the conference. The Society's first woman president, Jean Kennedy Irvine, served in 1947-48 and died in 1962.

History matters

Opened in July 1977 was a museum of pharmacy created in a purpose-built building in the garden of pharmacist John Newstead of Norwich. Collected over a 12-year period from pharmacies closing down in East Anglia, his remarkable collection of artefacts reproduced a pharmacy typical of the period 1880 to 1920. The pharmacy, since relocated to the Bridewell museum in Norwich, is exceptional in that it contains not only attractive items such as drug jars and shop rounds, but is actually stocked and equipped with dispensing equipment, labels and reference books as it would have been on a working day.

In a forerunner of *The Journal's* now popular "Christmas Miscellany", the final issue of the year included an article by Robert Todd, former curator of the Society's historical collection, on the long-used remedy, "dragon's blood" and its sources, noting that the Society's collection included a choice specimen. The tests of identification, he explained, were that the substance was immiscible with eagle's blood but would dissolve gold. He feared that the Council would be unwilling to provide material for the latter test until, perhaps, the retention fee had been raised.

Finally, the Pharmaceutical Society marked the Silver Jubilee by planting a plane tree, chosen for its associations with Bloomsbury Square, in the grounds of Birdsgrove House. The ceremony was carried out by the president Estelle Leigh, supported by members of Council. In this Golden Jubilee year, the Silver Jubilee tree is flourishing.