

# THE SCOTTISH SOCIETY OF THE HISTORY OF MEDICINE

## REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS

Session 1973–74

It is satisfactory to report that the Society completed another successful session. Membership remained steady, being well over the hundred mark, and the support given at meetings was most encouraging. The papers read all aroused keen interest and in the ensuing discussions time only was the limiting factor. Three meetings were held, at Edinburgh, Glasgow and Perth respectively, the meeting at Perth being the first ever held in that city.

### THE TWENTY-FIFTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AND SEVENTY-FOURTH ORDINARY MEETING

The Society met in the lecture theatre of the Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh, on 27 October 1973, for its Annual General Meeting. At the Seventy-Fourth Ordinary Meeting which followed, Dr. R. L. Richards read a paper entitled, "Rae of the Arctic" (see pp. 176–193) which stimulated a lively discussion. An exhibition arranged by the Director of the Museum appropriately supplemented Dr. Richards's paper.

### THE SEVENTY-FIFTH ORDINARY MEETING

The Seventy-Fifth Ordinary Meeting was held in the Maurice Bloch Lecture Theatre of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow on 1 March 1974. H. Campbell Wapshaw, Ch.M., F.R.C.S., read a paper with the title "A critique of the modern concept of surgery: based on a study of medieval English culture".

### THE SEVENTY-SIXTH ORDINARY MEETING

The Seventy-Sixth Ordinary Meeting was held at the Murray Royal Hospital, Perth, on 26 May 1974. Two papers were presented, one by the hospital group consultant psychiatrist, Dr. Harry Stalker, the other by Professor Alexander Mair of the Mackenzie Chair of Social Medicine at Dundee University Medical School. Dr. Stalker took as his subject:

### THE HISTORIES OF THE MURRAY ROYAL HOSPITAL, PERTH, AND MURTHLY HOSPITAL

The Perth Royal Mental or Murray Royal Hospital, named after its founder, James Murray, was established in 1826, becoming a Royal Hospital the following year.

James Murray, born in 1781, was the younger of two sons of James Murray and his wife Helen Marshall, who occupied a small-holding on Moredun (Moncrieffe Hill). There were also two daughters of the marriage. Mrs. Murray, prior to her

marriage to James Murray, senior, had a son, William Hope, who emigrated to India where in time he became a prosperous merchant in Madras. Hope, deciding that for health reasons he should return with his family to Scotland, made a will prior to setting out on the long and hazardous voyage home. In this will he stated that in the event of any disaster overtaking him and his family, the greater portion of his estate should go to his mother and his two half-brothers, John and James Murray. Disaster did indeed strike Hope and his family, for their ship, encountering a violent storm, sank with all on board in March 1809.

Thus it came about that the Murray brothers inherited unexpected wealth which, in time, enabled James with his share of the fortune, to found and endow a hospital for the mentally ill. James, a bachelor, did not long enjoy his affluence, for his health was poor. Doubtless anticipating the shortness of his life he completed his will during 1813–1814, conveying his whole estate to David Beatson, a Perth merchant and bailie of the city, and to Robert Peddie, town clerk of Perth, as trustees and executors, “particularly for the purpose of applying a certain part of the Trust Estate in the purchase of ground for, and the erection of, an Asylum for the reception of Lunatic persons in the said City of Perth and its neighbourhood.” Following James’s death on 5 October 1814, the legacy passed to the two trustees who discharged their duties with great wisdom.

The legacy was to accumulate for seven years or longer and it was not until 1821 that plans for The Murray took formal shape. During the next five years land was purchased, and plans drawn up by William Burn, architect in Edinburgh, were finally adopted after the most careful consideration. Twenty thousand pounds sterling were spent on purchasing the original land and in building, leaving £12,000, “to launch the infant charity upon its beneficent way”.<sup>1</sup> The hospital, situated on a beautiful site on the northern slopes of Kinnoull Hill, commands a wonderful panorama of the surrounding country with the majestic Grampians in the distant north.

Peddie died within a few weeks of the opening of the hospital but Beatson proceeded to obtain a Royal Charter and, on 28 May 1827, in the terms of the Charter, he called the first meeting of directors of the Royal Asylum. In recognition of his endeavours Beatson was unanimously elected chairman and acted in that capacity till his death in December 1838. James Murray had chosen well in his trustees, for to them must go the credit for the firm establishment of the hospital which at first accommodated eighty patients, besides officials and staff. Since these early days both the grounds and the hospital have been greatly enlarged and extended.

The early directors repeatedly urged the necessity for kind and gentle treatment of patients and the avoidance of any “gloomy appearance of confinement”. The wholesome therapeutic value of occupation was constantly alluded to and the attitude of the directors can be epitomized in their report for 1830 when it is recorded that, “the patients have been allowed the utmost degree of liberty consistent with their own safety, and no coercive measures have been employed but such as were absolutely necessary; every attention has been paid to their comfort, and no exertion has been wanting to promote their recovery.” The records of the hospital show that these sentiments have pervaded its administration and management up to the present day.

A domestic magazine, *Excelsior*, was founded in 1857 and continued to appear at

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irregular intervals until 1917 when it finally ceased publication. It recorded past and current events during its lifetime, including, for example, the attendance of a party from the hospital at the Perth Race Meeting (1856), a visit to Sanger's circus (1860), and a commendation of the Murray football team for defeating a team from Professor Laycock's class at Edinburgh University Medical School. One particularly interesting incident was described in detail. In 1857, a young man from Trinity College, Glenalmond, walked the fifteen miles to and from the school to attend games at the Murray. Later the same young man graduated M.D. with honours at Edinburgh University in 1862, thereafter proceeding from one important post to another to become Lord Chancellor's Visitor in Lunacy. His name? Sir James Crichton Browne.

A distinguished band of psychiatrists served the hospital during its existence, including W. D. Chambers, who wrote a history of the hospital on its centenary in 1927.

Murthly Hospital<sup>2</sup> was probably the second hospital to be built under the provisions of the Lunacy (Scotland) Act, 1854. It opened its doors on 1 April 1864, when the first hundred patients were admitted, a number that had increased to 172 by July of the same year.

Built by the Perth District Board, the hospital was designed by Mr. Edward of a firm of Dundee architects. The original hospital and grounds have since been extensively developed. The Board appointed the first medical superintendent in 1863 so that it should have his advice on "the fitting up of various parts of the hospital," prior to its actual opening.

Like the Directors of the Murray Royal, the Board was ever mindful of the needs and wellbeing of both patients and staff. Food, "of the best qualities," and facilities for occupation, exercise and recreation were provided. In 1901, Adolf Meyer from America visited the hospital and "found a remarkably wide awake spirit for psychiatric work," and never carried from a short visit, "a happier and more helpful and satisfied feeling than from Murthly."

When the National Health Service was introduced in 1948, the two Perthshire mental hospitals were united and a combined board of management was appointed which was subsequently disbanded when the Tayside Health Board was formed in April 1974 under the reorganized Health Service.

Included among the several physician superintendents who have served the hospital over its existence was G. M. Robertson who later became the first occupant of the chair of psychiatry founded at Edinburgh University in 1919, the first such chair in Scotland.

*REFERENCES*

1. William D. Chambers, *Annual report of the Physician-Superintendent of the Murray Royal Hospital, Perth, 1926-27*, Perth, Murray Royal Hospital, 1927, pp. 1-15.
2. Harry Stalker, *Murthly Hospital, 1864-1964: a centenary history*, Perth, Board of Management for the Murray Royal and Murthly Hospitals, 1964, pp. 16.

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Professor Alexander Mair followed Dr. Stalker and spoke on "Sir James Mackenzie, M.D., 1853–1925, general practitioner," a subject about whom Professor Mair had already written a book with the same title (Edinburgh and London, Churchill-Livingstone, 1973). This book has been reviewed in *Medical History*, 1974, 18: 400–401.

Following the lengthy discussion which followed Dr. Stalker's and Professor Mair's papers, some of the members of the Society visited the old farmhouse of Pictonshill where Professor Mair acted as an enthusiastic guide.

This memorable first meeting at Perth brought the session's activities to a fitting close and the Society looks forward with confidence to the future.

T. R. R. Todd, *President*. H. P. Tait, *Joint Honorary Secretary*.