

British paediatrics

The British Paediatric Association: 60 years

As part of its Diamond Jubilee celebrations the British Paediatric Association (BPA) will commemorate the 60th anniversary of its first annual scientific meeting later this year. The founders of the BPA led by George Frederic Still and Donald Paterson decided that the inaugural meeting should be in some peaceful place in the country away from cities and hospitals. After some debate they chose the Old England Lake Hotel, Windermere as the venue and on 4 May 1928 Still, the first president, and 45 of the 61 founder members of the Association, the *crème de la crème* of British paediatrics, gathered together in the pastoral tranquility of the Lake District not only to discuss scientific subjects but also 'to promote friendship among paediatricians.'

The programme for the meeting is reproduced here. The list of speakers reads like a paediatric roll of honour and many of their names are still remembered with respect and esteem. No less than 14 of them were to become presidents of the Association.

Still was the most eminent of them all. His name is perpetuated in the eponymous title of the disease that he described in his Cambridge MD thesis, *A form of arthritis occurring in children*. He received many honours in his time including the first KCVO to be awarded to a paediatrician. Paterson was the chief architect to the BPA and its first honorary secretary. In 1947 he gave up his posts at Westminster Hospital and Great Ormond Street to return to his native Canada and was appointed professor of paediatrics in Vancouver.

Capon, Spence, Parsons, and Naish were to become professors of child health in Liverpool, Newcastle, Birmingham, and Sheffield. Smellie succeeded Parsons in Birmingham and Neale, the

only guest at the meeting, became professor in Bristol. Spence was the originator of the famous Newcastle 'Thousand Families Survey' and was responsible for starting the practice of admitting mothers to hospital with their children.

Maitland-Jones was paediatrician to the London Hospital and together with Parsons established the Diploma of Child Health for the Conjoint Board in England. Hector Cameron was head of the children's department at Guy's Hospital. The title of his paper gives an indication of his special interest; he was a pioneer of the child guidance movement and his book, *The Nervous Child*, was a seminal work. Pritchard was director of the Infants' Hospital, Vincent Square, London (Westminster Children's Hospital) and played an important part in developing infant welfare clinics.

Schlesinger had been qualified for only five years at the time of the meeting and must have been the youngest member present. He died only a few years ago and his erudition, charm, and humour are still fresh in the memory of paediatricians.

Windermere proved to be a highly popular venue for the annual meeting, largely perhaps for social reasons (and the green fees of 3/6), and the BPA continued to hold its annual meetings there almost without a break for the next 30 years. By 1959, however, the size of the membership and the demands of the scientific programme forced the Association to take its leave of Windermere and transfer the annual meeting first to Scarborough and later to York University, where in 1987 over 1000 members and guests attended. One suspects that those founder members of the BPA who attended the first meeting would not have found such a change to their liking.

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