

# RES MEDICA

Journal of the Royal Medical Society



## Retrospect

### Abstract

#### 224th SESSION

Our Society had no premises of its own until 1775, when the First Hall was built in Surgeons' Square: the Society was fortunate then in having such men as Cullen and Andrew Duncan to plan such a historic step and to raise money for its completion. Again in 1852, when extensions to the old Royal Infirmary made it necessary to vacate the First Hall a distinguished committee including Syme, Christison, and Simpson negotiated the purchase and adaptation of our present premises.

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ISSN: 2051-7580 (Online) ISSN: 0482-3206 (Print)

Res Medica is published by the Royal Medical Society, 5/5 Bristo Square, Edinburgh, EH8 9AL

Res Medica, Autumn 1961, 3(1): 63-64

doi: [10.2218/resmedica.v3i1.380](https://doi.org/10.2218/resmedica.v3i1.380)

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### THE HALL

The Society has now decided that another move is necessary; for the Midlothian County Council wish to buy our premises within the next ten or twenty years and have already bought property around us with a view to expanding their office accommodation. The County Council have power to effect the purchase compulsorily if they so desire. It would therefore be unwise to spend much money on our premises, for although the decaying splendour of the Hall is very dear to us, the rooms have become grossly inadequate as regards the housing of the Library, the furnishings, and heating.

As in the past, we could hardly be more fortunate in the Committee elected to deal with the question of a New Hall. Under the wise leadership of Sir Derrick Dunlop, the Committee has already investigated the possibilities, and as a result space has been reserved for us on the so-called 'Island Site'—the block which includes the Pollock Hall and the shops facing the McEwan Hall. The University plans to demolish buildings on this site, and to use it for new buildings such as a new Students' Union. On this site we should be able to maintain our independence and yet be even nearer to the centre of the Medical School than we are at present. Sir Derrick's Committee deserve our congratulations and thanks for having made such a successful start in the negotiations.

The Society is indeed fortunate in its senior members and friends—not least in Dr. W. A. Alexander, who continues to look after our precarious finances and, by his kindly advice and presence at Council Meetings, does so much to maintain the best traditions of the Society.

### THE APPEAL

To build a New Hall comparable with our present premises we shall have to find not less than £75,000. This is a very large sum, but we are optimistic that senior members and friends will consider the Society an institution worth perpetuating and supporting in this new venture. There is no doubt that new premises are essential for the survival and expansion of the Society, and just as our predecessors have laboured to keep the Society well housed for our benefit, we feel it our duty to maintain the Society and its traditions for those who will follow us.

Sir Derrick Dunlop, as Convener of the Appeal Committee, will launch the Appeal at the Annual Dinner of the Society in the Royal College of Surgeons on 23rd November; appeals for one cause or another are common enough nowadays but we hope that the cause of a historic and virile body such as the Royal Medical Society will commend itself and be successful.

Since we would like to raise as much of the money as possible from

individuals, copies of the Appeal will be sent to our Fellows and Life Members; we hope that others who would like details will write to the Secretaries of the Society.

#### NEW LAWS

At the Triennial Extraordinary Meeting held in April to consider the Laws of the Society, a number of minor changes in the Laws were made. To the relief of many, and the disappointment of a few, a proposal to admit women to the Society was firmly rejected. The franchise for the election of Presidents was enlarged to include members who have at least ten attendances, although those eligible for the Presidency must still have twenty. It was also decided that those eligible for other offices should require ten attendances. It has been made simpler for a prospective member to petition for a seat in the Society, in that now only two proposers are required instead of six. These petitions are, of course, still ballotted on by the Society.

These are the only changes which have emerged from the Questionnaire and the protracted discussions of last year. The fact that there are so few changes probably indicates that the active members are well satisfied with most of the Laws, and that the liveliness of the Society depends not so much on the Laws themselves as in the way in which they are applied, and in the enthusiasm of individual members.

JAMES A. R. FRIEND,  
*Senior President, 1961 - 62*

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