

News, Notes, and Queries

Medical Archives and Manuscripts News, 1997

The importance of the Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine for the preservation of medical records is brought home by the latest digest of accessions to repositories relating to medicine produced by the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts. Out of the 75 or so significant individual accessions of private papers during 1996 noted in the digest, about 75 per cent were received by the Wellcome Institute Library. But these accessions were dwarfed, in bulk if not in number, by the deposits of public records from NHS hospitals and health authorities in local authority record offices. Nevertheless, there is still concern that insufficient protection exists for NHS records, particularly patient records, the research value of which was barely envisaged when the statutory framework governing the administration of public records was drawn up in the 1950s.

Most of the NHS records received by archive repositories are of comparatively recent date, mainly post-war, but a few reach back into the last century. The records of **Derbyshire Royal Infirmary** (Derbyshire Record Office, Matlock) date back to 1804, those of **Moorfields Eye Hospital** (London Metropolitan Archives) to 1806. There is little debate about the preservation of nineteenth-century hospital records; the problems begin with our own time and the enormous bulk of post-war patient records. Running one's eye down the lengthy list of NHS hospital records accessioned by London Metropolitan Archives in 1996, for instance, it is impossible to know without inside knowledge what proportion of the original whole is represented by **Brook General Hospital** records 1896–1963 or **Banstead Hospital** records 1871–1981; while the preponderance of minutes as apparently the sole surviving representatives of the records of many hospitals in the list might imply an alarming level of wastage. One practical, though legally somewhat doubtful, solution to the problem of inadequate resources in the public sector is for a university library to step in and act as a place of

safety for vulnerable records of research value, a move pioneered by Exeter University Library. In 1996, additional modern records of **Nottingham General Hospital** were acquired in this way by Nottingham University Library. But such an approach offers no more than a very partial and localized answer to a huge and nationwide problem.

Locating the records of hospitals has been made easier by the joint compilation of a database of such information by the Public Record Office and the Wellcome Institute. Simple searches by hospital name or town can now be made in the **Hospital Records Database**, access to which is available in the Wellcome Institute Library; access will also be provided in the searchrooms of the PRO by the end of the year. The data comprises type and covering dates of records of nearly 2,400 UK hospitals, with administrative background where known. Most of the records are housed in local authority record offices. The database will continue to be updated, so comments and suggestions to the Archivist at the Wellcome Institute will be gratefully received.

The preservation of records in the private sector benefits from the remarkable success of the Contemporary Medical Archives Centre in the Wellcome Institute Library. CMAC's acquisitions in 1996 included papers of **C P Blacker** (1895–1975), Secretary of the Eugenics Society, correspondence and papers of **T L Cleave** (1912–1983), Director of Medical Research for the Royal Navy, and papers of **Sir Allen Daley** (1887–1968), Medical Officer of Health for the LCC. The Cleave papers were one of a handful of accessions received as a result of the closure of the International Nutrition Foundation. Important institutional archives acquired by CMAC in 1996 included the records of the **Society of Medical Officers of Health** dating back to its foundation in 1856, and those of the **British Social Hygiene Council**, founded in 1914 as the National Council for Combating Venereal Disease.

The growing significance of business archives for medical historians is signalled by the inauguration of the Business Archive Council's **Database of Historical Records of the British Pharmaceutical Industry** in 1997. Many of these records remain with the firms that created or inherited them. An exception is the archive of **Thomas Morson and Son Ltd**, of Enfield, manufacturers of fine chemicals and proprietary medicines in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, acquired by the Western Manuscripts department of the Wellcome Institute Library. An alternative use of business archives for the history of medicine is suggested by the acquisition by Tyne and Wear Archives Service of the health records of employees of **Walkers, Parker and Co. Ltd**, lead manufacturers of Newcastle, 1941–48.

The records of pharmaceutical and other businesses may be one of a diminishing number of fields in which significant acquisitions of pre-twentieth century medical manuscripts will be made in future. As the earlier hospital records are garnered in, and the surviving manuscript copies of medical lectures, practitioners' manuals and household remedy books gradually secured by institutional collections, opportunities for important accessions in these traditional collecting areas will inevitably dwindle. This is already reflected in the dearth of such material in the accessions digest for 1996. By contrast, business records of firms and partnerships may yet survive in greater quantity in private than institutional hands. Records of some of the leading chemists and druggists of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century London, such as **William Jones, Savory and Moore**, and **Peter Squire**, are known to exist outside publicly-accessible collections. But privately-held archives usually suffer grievous losses over time. General practice records in particular usually survive only as stray items—a daybook here, a partnership agreement there—making long-term studies of the delivery of GP care in a given area difficult. Societies and associations without fixed premises and with regularly changing officers have a very poor history of records preservation. It is remarkable how little the research, let alone the monetary, value of

routine records of business or professional activity is sometimes perceived by owners. On the other hand, papers of medical or pharmaceutical forebears are often highly prized for family or sentimental reasons, making owners loath to part with them.

It is usually less difficult to acquire the papers of retiring or recently deceased doctors and medical scientists, who may be anxious to preserve the record of their life's work or whose heirs and executors are concerned to fulfil a trust. Unfortunately, individuals sometimes fail to appreciate the need for an overall view of their work, selecting key documents or parts of their records, with resultant loss of context. Such papers are often bequeathed to their creator's university library, so that in 1996, for example, Aberdeen received papers of **A L Stalker** (1920–1987), Regius Professor of Pathology, and Sheffield those of **Harold Miller** (1909–1995), Professor of Medical Physics. Apart from the Wellcome Institute, university libraries account for the bulk of new accessions of non-public records. It is nice to see Cambridge University Library maintaining its habit of acquiring important manuscripts of physician-scholars, this time with the geological notebook of **John Woodward** (1665–1728). The other main destination of early manuscript accessions in the field, the Western Manuscripts department of the Wellcome Institute Library, is also the only repository that makes significant non-British acquisitions; in 1996 for example it acquired a seventeenth-century **French medical recipe book** at auction at Sotheby's. The highest-profile London auction of the year in the medical-historical field, the **Clough-Nightingale** sale at Phillips in June 1996, seems to have generated relatively little interest among institutions. The books and papers of **Arthur Hugh Clough** (1819–1861), poet and co-worker of Florence Nightingale, failed to find a buyer as a single collection and were sold off piecemeal at modest prices. The Wellcome Institute purchased some notes of private conversations between Clough and Nightingale, kept by the former; otherwise it is supposed that most of the Nightingale lots sold went into private collections.

Richard Aspin

Clio Consulted: The History of Medicine and Tomorrow's Doctors Symposium, 11 March 1998

On 22 March 1996 the Section of the History of Medicine of the Royal Society of Medicine organized a symposium on the theme of 'The History of Medicine and Tomorrow's Doctors' in response to the General Medical Council Report *Tomorrow's doctors* in order to promote the role of the history of medicine in medical education. It spurred many to begin to secure the introduction of the subject into the curriculum in various guises. A National Action Group was formed and teachers of the history of medicine in Medical Schools are regionally linked in order to support such teaching. It is now time to review our progress and to plan the next stage of our campaign.

The Royal Society of Medicine with the support of the Wellcome Trust and in co-operation with the Worshipful Society of Apothecaries of London are organizing a follow-up symposium entitled 'Clio Consulted: The History of Medicine and Tomorrow's Doctors' on Wednesday, 11 March 1998, 2.00–6.00 p.m. at the Royal Society of Medicine, 1 Wimpole Street, London W1M 8AE. The symposium, under the chairmanship of Professor Vivian Nutton (Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine), will be split into three sessions entitled (1) 'Infiltrating the curriculum' where Professor Jacalyn Duffin (Queen's University at Kingston, Ontario) as

keynote speaker, supported by Mr John Blair (University of St Andrews Medical School) and Dr Michael Neve (Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine), will debate the issues around the motivation to introduce the history of medicine into the curriculum; (2) 'Suffering the curriculum: a student's view' where we will hear from former and current students studying the History of Medicine whether within the medical undergraduate curriculum or as an intercalated degree course; and finally, (3) 'Changing the curriculum' where Dr Godfrey Smith (University of Liverpool Medical School), a Curriculum Facilitator, together with Mr Robert Arnott (University of Birmingham) and Dr Mark Jackson (Wellcome Unit, University of Manchester), who are actively engaged in teaching the history of medicine at undergraduate level, will address priorities for the future.

This symposium is directed at all those concerned with undergraduate medical education and with the advancement of the history of medicine within the curriculum. A full programme, together with details of conference fees and registration forms are available from the Academic Department, Royal Society of Medicine, 1 Wimpole Street, London W1M 8AE.

Call for Papers

Cheiron: The International Society for the History of Behavioral and Social Sciences

The annual meeting of Cheiron will be held 18–21 June 1998 at the University of San Diego in San Diego, California. Programme submissions (symposia, papers, and posters) which may deal with any aspect of the history of the behavioural and social sciences or with related historiographical or methodological issues, must be postmarked by 2 February

1998. Travel awards are available to assist students who present papers or posters. For further information, contact Leila Zenderland, Cheiron Program Chair, Department of American Studies, California State University, Fullerton, Fullerton, CA 92834-6868. Tel.: 714-278-3800; Fax: 714-278-5820; e-mail: lzenderland@fullerton.edu