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Examinations examined Pathological democracy

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CONTENTS

Editorial

Curse of the viruses	3
So farewell then...	3
Welcome to the new boys and girls	4
The NHS quality agenda and pathology	4
Puff: the Magic Dragon	5
Professional re-design	5
Pathological Democracy	5
Missing doctors	5
La Bella Genova	5
Letters to the Editor?	6
Editorial Team	6
Also in this issue...	6
– Dr C Gray	

Leading Articles

After Alder Hey II

A first class pathology service	
– Prof Liam Donaldson	8
The future of the coroner service	
– Mr MJC Burgess	9
After Alder Hey... can we survive	
– Helen Rickard & Michaela Willis	11

Examinations examined

The SHO Aptitude Assessment in Histopathology	
– Dr R Thomas	13
Reflections of MRCPPath	
– Dr D Scott	15

Missing Doctors

Stopping medicine; starting pathology?	
– Dr L Barker	17

Pathological democracy

An independent candidate in Darlington	
– Dr C Platt	19

News

‘Beating Bowel Cancer’	22
ACP 75th Anniversary: memorabilia	
for purchase	23
ACP Prize for Journalism in Pathology:	
2001 prize winners	25
Specialist Registrar’s Club in Chemical	
Pathology	26

New members

Membership Changes	27
--------------------	----

Practical Pathologist’s Meeting List

Calendar of Forthcoming Meetings	28
----------------------------------	----

Articles

The World of Forms or why design can be a	
matter of life and death	
– Dr F Charlton	29
Pathology Record New (and used) Faces	
centre spread	

Histopathology source-specific request forms:
an endoscopic biopsy example

– Dr DN Poller, Ms J Buckley, Mr S Traer
and Dr H Duncan 34

The Artful Codger... The duty of irresponsibility

– Dr MW McEvoy 35

Trainees

Editorial

– Dr M Whittaker 37

The Young Person’s Guide to Pathology II

– ‘The Desperderata’ 39

– Dr D Patterson 39

Reports

Report of Honorary Secretary

– Dr WA Telfer Brunton 41

CPA Conference 2001

– Dr K Kerr 42

National Scientific Meeting, London

– Dr C Gray 47

– Dr WA Telfer-Brunton 49

– Dr I Cook 49

ACP Cambrian Branch, Summer Meeting, Wales

– Dr C Gray 50

Travel Reports

Bronx, USA – Dr K Murray 52

Banff, Canada – Dr I Gibson 53

Atlanta, USA – Dr S Finn 56

Columnists

I’m Lucky – My partner is a Paedophile

– The Masked Pathologist 58

Fifth Columnist... All in a week’s work

– Dr M Lapsley 59

Dennis writes... Hip Hop Hop Hooray

– Prof Dennis Wright 60

Curetings

Mere Pathologist (with Mere Hacker, Mere

Tonsorialist, Dr Golgi, Mere Felonist,
Solo Uomo and Mere Photographer) 61

Cartoon Strip: Phelps and Clagwell

– Quanda 63

What’s On

A Date for Your Diary 6

British Society for Clinical Cytology 26

ACP Study Day 34

Royal College of Pathologists – Symposia 38

ACP Management Course for Pathologists 40

The UK Interstitial Lung Diseases Panel 46

Hammersmith Surgical Pathology Course 57

Consultant Personal/Career Development Award 2002
back cover

Front Cover Acknowledgment

Photo by the Editor.

Phrenological bust by LN Fowler, 337, Strand.

Editorial

Carl Gray, Editor

Curse of the viruses

Having tempted fate two issues ago, the viruses have struck back. The Editor had most of this issue already in various media and just ready to assemble for the presses. Then his PC went through a series of crashes reminiscent of the fate of *HAL* in Kubrick's film '*2001: A Space Odyssey*': the bit at the end where function is progressively lost as the human takes out various memory banks. To cut a long story short – sorry to disappoint all you nerds wanting the gory details – an e-mail sent from somewhere contained the new virus '*W32/SirCam@MM*'. This evil worm sends itself back out to everyone in the e-mail address book and disables large chunks of *Windows*. Re-installation of *Windows* is prevented and the machine is just about fit for the skip. Without being unduly boring, the hard drive had to be taken out, hosted on a different machine and its files examined and replaced. *HAL* got off lightly.

An ashen-faced Editor now publishes *acp News* reconstructed from fragments. Apologies to anyone who got a dose from us. Prophylaxis is essential. Put a condom on your PC and practise safe e-mails.

So farewell then...

At the Annual General Meeting, held at the *National Scientific Meeting* (NSM) in London 14th-15th June 2001, three famous officers completed their distinguished terms of office.

Professor Archie Malcolm retired as Chairman of Council after five years. The Chairmanship is a minor ACP post in which the Chairman sits at the front and decides when to have lunch. He has to know everybody in pathology and yet not repeat what they said to him. He has to go to lots of meetings unless they are in Ireland when he can attend the following week. Very importantly, he has to have some idea of what the ACP is for and where it is going. He has the power to ask the Honorary Treasurer 'How the money is going...?' and to receive the traditional reply from the Honorary Treasurer, 'OK, just about, but there are some worrying trends...' He is careful not to give any instructions to the Editor and ideally should never speak to the Editor as the risks are too great.

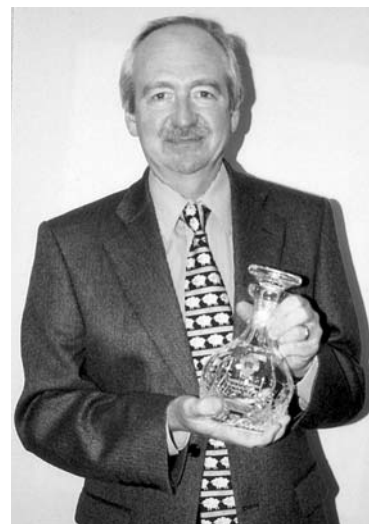
Archie has been a great success as Chairman. He knows everything and everybody and he has kept the ACP running and moving during terribly turbulent times in pathology. While enjoying the continuity of tradition, he has not been afraid to take risks and to address issues. He is a famously warm leader and has been very accessible to new boys and girls and to our trainee colleagues whom he is careful to welcome and

to encourage. Informal to the point of never wearing a suit, he has recently replaced a sports jacket. This caused consternation in the Merchant Tailors' Guild and the United Nations High Commission for Refugees have convened a special meeting to adjudicate competing demands for the old one from national ethnic dress museums around the world. Archie is pictured here receiving his decanter from Council. It is engraved: '*Honorary Officer 1993-2001*'. No liquid substance has the physical properties needed to remain contained within it for long enough to be photographed. Thanks Archie: we'll meet again

Dr Mansel Haeney retired as President of the Association after an extra-long term of office caused by precession of the equinoxes. The Presidency is a minor ACP post in which the President must attend meetings looking gravely handsome, beam urbanely during crises and speak suavely to trouble-makers. He has to look especially jolly if dinners give the superficial impression of being about to go wrong. He should jump out of the window if the Editor enters the room and must never hold an alcoholic drink – or indeed any object whatever – if anyone has a camera with them. He is obliged to meet the other Honorary Officers in cities and towns of their choice around the British Isles and to buy their beer. He gives a lecture to the NSM but traditionally the Editor misses this and, excellent though it must necessarily be, it goes unreported.

Mansel has been a huge success as President. Having previously been Editor of *acp News*, the Presidency must be a bit of a come down. He also enjoys office in some less important organisations and has brought a *moue* of power and a bat's-squeak of charisma to the practical world of the ACP. He has been to Zog and back. He can look as worried as any man alive and yet still radiate optimistic confidence in all directions. He has that First-Officer-Murdoch-look of knowing there are icebergs about while under orders to maintain speed. Mansel is both approachable and forbidding; rather like the North face of the Eiger. It can be chilly at the top but Mansel always wraps up warm and has the fires of conviction to see him through. With Mansel, we know Pathology will be a success when judged against the new CPA Standard J2: '*Disciplines and specialties – recognition of success: evidence base and documentary integrity, document management, evidential continuity streams and criteria for publication management successwise.*' Thanks Mansel: keep on keeping on!

Dr Bryan Warren retired as Scientific Meetings Secretary after numerous years' arduous duty. The



Archie Malcolm



Mansel Haeney



Bryan Warren

Meetings Secretaryship is a very great ACP post as he has to arrange Spring and National Scientific Meetings each year and the associated dinners. He must visit venues and negotiate rates. He must sample dining menus and meet chefs and restaurateurs in the steaming world at the back of the kitchen. He must entice trade stand exhibitors and help lift their gear. He must recruit, cajole, discipline, preen and facilitate guest speakers from the four corners of the globe. He must place distinguished guests at dinner with all the diplomatic skill of an ambassadress who has just tipped the Ferrero Rocher down her cleavage. He must account to Council for catastrophic losses with charm, wit and a merry excuse; equally, he must deliver massive profits to Council with insouciance and style, implying that success is merely a piece of cake if you know the right chap. He must cheerfully consume huge plates of food and flagons of wine purely as a serious professional duty. The Meetings Secretary traditionally does not receive a knighthood.

Bryan has been a huge success as Scientific Meetings Secretary. Spring Meetings and NSMs have been carried off in the teeth of adversity and in partnership with other societies from time to time. His methods can appear to the naïve to be unconventional but this belies deep personal efficiency often shown by events turning out alright on the night. Crises and apparent difficulties have always turned out to be strengths and Bryan has delivered complex and difficult problems with great style. Large numbers of members have enjoyed meetings arranged by Bryan and the scale of his achievement is huge.

Bryan always knows the right person. If we want to hold an ACP Japanese sea slug dinner, then Bryan will identify the best restaurant in the UK to hold it and the best importer of the finest sea slugs world-wide. (It's his brother-in-law's mate.) Bryan would then have a 98% chance of bringing the diners and the slugs together at the restaurant. On those awkward 2% occasions, Bryan would cheer us with a brilliant excuse portfolio including the CIA, slug future markets, mad slug disease and global warming. He would then provide a feast of slugs from Bali which would be even better and at half the price provided we like the Champagne which was on offer at the Avignon branch of Wineways... Bryan much dislikes dining and prefers, himself, a lettuce leaf and a thin slice of cucumber with perhaps a glass of mineral water. Well done Bryan: we raise our glasses of mineral water to you!

Welcome to the new boys and girls

Russell Young has been elected Chairman of Council and thus leaves his existing office of Secretary. Dr A Telfer Brunton has been elected Honorary Secretary in his place. Five new members of Council have been elected: see 'New and Used Faces' in the middle pages. Dr DA Winfield has been installed as President

and some bloke called Ken Scott has been elected President-Elect. Dr Sanjiv Manek becomes Meetings Secretary after a hard apprenticeship before the mast eating maggoty ship's biscuit and water from the bilges. Full GI endoscopy – both ends and meeting in the middle – and biopsy of relevant exocrine glands has shown that he has the iron digestive constitution required for the post.

Welcome to all our new council members and officers and good fortune in their terms of office. It is well that such high-quality people are willing to serve in the ACP. All ACP offices are unpaid – and the Editorship is more unpaid than the others – requiring the expenditure of much effort and time.

The NHS quality agenda and pathology

Pathologists will have received, as we go to press, their copy of *A Commitment to Quality, a Quest for Excellence*. This is a 'white paper' from the Department of Health billed as, 'A statement on behalf of the Government, the medical profession and the NHS.' Signed by the Secretary of State, the CMO and various medical panjandrums, the document sets out the new approach to quality management in the NHS, gives a 'vision' of an integrated programme of quality and pledges a 'shared commitment' between HMG, the NHS and the profession. In his accompanying letter, the CMO, Professor Donaldson, states: '*...I know that many doctors have felt that the medical profession as a whole has been unfairly and unreasonably held to account for the actions of a small number of doctors whose conduct was unacceptable. Nor has there been a real appreciation of the extent to which when things go wrong that the true cause lies in weaknesses within the system rather than culpable actions of an individual...*'

'This document,' he says, '*...attempts to redress the balance.*' He concludes, '*I would like to thank every doctor for the work they do to deliver care to patients and their families. This care and dedication is recognised and valued greatly.*'

I am delighted that Professor Donaldson has responded to our invitation to address – in the pages of *acp News* – the concerns of pathologists, many of whom have felt that the political and media treatment and aftermath of the Alder Hey affair have been detrimental not only to pathologists as professionals, but more importantly to the long-term interests of the NHS and our patients. In his leading article (p.8), Prof Donaldson extends his views on the reform of the 'quality agenda' in the NHS with particular application to pathology.

The media reaction to the 'Bristol Royal Infirmary' report on paediatric cardiac surgery was notably muted compared to the past ravages of the Alder Hey Report coverage.

It seems clear that we have turned a corner: both with government and at last the media. The 'doctor-



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Dr Kerr, Assistant Editor

bashing' era seems to be over. There is commitment at the top to working with the profession to meet the challenges of improving quality against scarce resources. Let's join in and see what happens.

Puff: the Magic Dragon

In an obscure office block in a town near you there is a well-equipped cave. Inside the cave lies a newly appointed dragon and a hoard of treasure. The new dragon is busy counting its gold, reading the handbook to the new flame thrower and sharpening its teeth. It is a keen and eager dragon, with a new job to do.

At the strategic level, the dragon has the most important of the three things the Government must do to deliver a successful NHS in the next four years. The first two things are a heap of new money and a pile of new buildings and facilities. These are the easy bits and the usual gnomes and elves are quite sufficient for the task.

The third thing is very difficult indeed and needs very large and fierce reptiles to deal with it properly. This task is 'manpower'. The dragon must provide, in three to four years, enough people in all the professions needed to run the new NHS and meet all its targets and plans. It might even create new professions or re-design the workforce if it needs to. The dragon controls all funding for post-graduate education in all the caring professions: medical profession, nursing profession, professions-supplementary to medicine, car parking profession: the lot. When this dragon huffs, post-graduate deans tremble; when this dragon puffs, university vice-chancellors quake in their boots.

These dragons are called *workforce development confederations*. They have all the money for workforce development in the NHS. They have responsibility for providing all the people needed for the new NHS, its targets and plans. And one has just moved into a cave in a town near you.

Professional re-design

There might be a profession which has a serious shortfall of manpower against demand. It might have an associated profession with a shortfall of recruits against demand. There might be calls for enhancement of roles from one profession into the other. Such a hypothetical pair of professions might be just the sort of professions that workforce development confederations might be worried about and might want to look at closely. It could be that innovation and re-design of the workforce would be needed to solve their otherwise insoluble problems. Learning infrastructure organisations might be interested in this.

But that's maybe land.

Pathological Democracy

ACP is not a party-political organisation and indeed is precluded from party politics by its status as a registered charity. The Association does not engage in

formal politics. It is therefore very interesting when we have a genuine political campaign to report. *ACP News* can report and discuss the recent general election now that it is over; being careful at all times not to offer any support to the actual content of any candidate's campaign.

Congratulations then to Dr Craig Platt for having had the *chutzpah* to stand as a parliamentary candidate in Darlington, the constituency of the Rt Hon Alan Milburn MP, then and now Secretary of State for Health. Craig came a respectable 5th in the six-horse race and gained hundreds of votes but was not in fact elected.

Craig's campaign reminds us that this is a country governed by parliamentary democracy and that anyone over the age of 21 years and not actually a felon can stand for parliament. One other independent candidate – a retired doctor – was indeed famously elected to Parliament on a campaign based on local health issues. The electorate's views will be making a particular mark on health policy in the forthcoming years.

Craig's own point of view as a former parliamentary candidate is presented in his leading article on p. 19. We are very grateful for his account of his experiences and motives in standing on the hustings. We wonder if he will return at the next general election?

Missing doctors

Pathology is always looking for new recruits. Dr Lisa Barker – herself a doctor seeking to rejoin medicine after a break raising her family – shows (in her leading article on p. 17) that the 'returning doctors' may be a fertile ground for recruitment in pathology. If only there were enough training posts.

La Bella Genova

Three months ago, your Editor and his family visited *Genova*, the scene of the recent 'G8 Summit' conference and the associated fatal riots. It was a charming and



interesting Italian city with an unusual location between high mountains and its own bay of the Ligurian Sea. Green mountains with picturesque buildings tumble down to the deep blue sea. The finest aquarium in Europe displays and explains sea life to all ages.

From Genova, Cristoforo Colombo set out on his voyage of discovery. During the Second World War, partisans and resistance dived with fascists and Nazis in the warren of narrow alleys which pass between the town and the port.

Now, paving slabs have been torn up, cash machines ripped out, buildings and vehicles trashed and burnt. Over two hundred people are injured and one man was shot dead. Many parts of the town are damaged and the citizens are outraged.

The citizens of Genova had their airport, port and railway stations closed for two weeks and almost all shops and businesses closed for the duration. Now their city is ruined.

All this was arranged so that eight powerful old blokes could have a vegetarian dinner with carefully chosen wines. Peaceful protest was hijacked by anarchists who turned nasty and were met with force from the police.

The separation between the governed and their governors does not bode well. We have seen inklings of this in dissatisfaction between patients and their doctors. This systematic trend could be the dominant feature of the 21st Century.

Genova has been designated 'European City of Culture' for 2004. Let's hope it's a success and that some culture remains in Europe to be celebrated.

Letters to the Editor?

For two issues we have received no letters for publication and so we have had none to publish. We do not publish our numerous – well, one or two – letters of praise. The absence of a 'Letters' section may lead readers to think that there is no such section.

The absence of letters has, we think, four possible explanations. Firstly, perhaps all pathologists are completely happy with everything and so have nothing to write in about. Secondly, readers may feel that *acp News* has so peculiar a point of view and that its Editor is such a tyrannical madman that their letter

would not be accepted for publication. Thirdly, despite our efforts to find the finest controversialists and active issues in pathology that no money can buy, we have not lately provoked any reaction and do not deserve any responses. Lastly, readers are too busy and exhausted to find time and strength to open their *News*, read it and write that letter, however boiling their indignation.

For the last three years and longer, we have in fact published all letters received for publication: so there is no selection bias. There do seem to be issues causing concern in pathology these days. So perhaps we are all too tired to play. We shall be pleased to hear from 'mere indignant exhausted pathologist'.

What do the readers think?

Editorial Team

Your Editor has just two more issues after this one and succession planning has been filling London public houses for night after night. This is only right for the top job in the ACP. Dr Kerr, our existing Assistant Editor, declined the offer of the editorship but wishes to continue in his role. Dangerous undercover work by our spies – sitting in the pub with thirsty Honorary Officers – leads us to believe that the next editor has been chosen, and subject to confirmation by Council, will be announced in the next issue.

The editorial team has been further augmented by the appointment by Council of two additional assistant editors: Dr Julian Burton of Sheffield and Dr Mark Heatley of Liverpool. Having all these assistant editors will, we hope, provide over the years a pool of experienced pathological journalists to contribute to and improve *acp News* and perhaps one day become the Editor. Welcome to Julian and Mark and get writing!

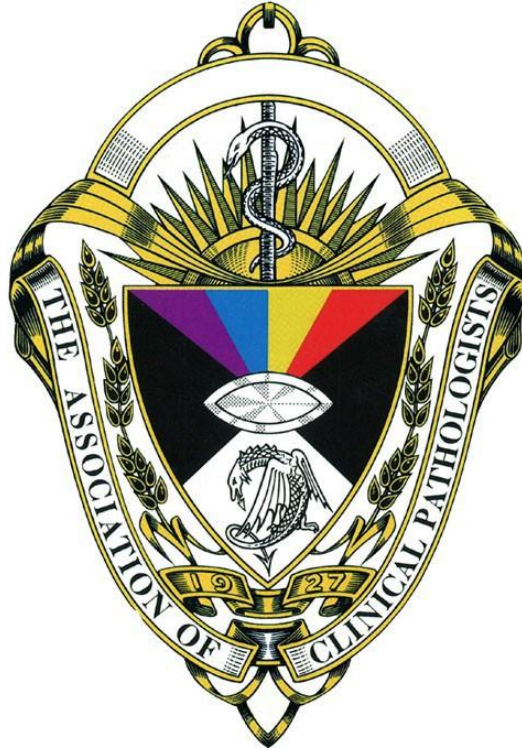
In this issue...

After a necessarily long issue last time – owing to the extended treatment of the Alder Hey aftermath – this season's issue returns to more usual proportions. It has been a fraught issue with some superb brinkmanship by our excellent contributors and a hideous virus-induced 'disaster recovery'. Ten days ago, some of these pieces existed merely as noughts and ones in cerebral neuronal networks. We are pleased with the contents and hope that our readers will find something

A DATE FOR YOUR DIARY.....

THE MEETING OF LIAISON OFFICERS' AND
BRANCH REPRESENTATIVES
WILL BE HELD IN THE KOHN CENTRE
OF THE ROYAL SOCIETY, LONDON
ON TUESDAY 12 MARCH 2002

Programme details will be despatched in the New year



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