

# News, Notes, and Queries

## Medical Archive and Manuscript News

The year started with a letter to the *BMJ* expressing concern about the premature destruction of medical records which was “at least in part . . . attributable to the pressures of space in the NHS” (M M Hawkins and A W Craft, *BMJ*, 1995, **310**: 258). This concern was fuelled by the proposed guidelines from the Department of Health, the BMA, and the European Commission about safeguarding confidentiality. A revision of this document, the present (Oct. 1995) Draft Bill Governing Collection Use and Disclosure of Personal Health Information, takes this concern on board and allows for research use where the individuals’ names are protected. The worries of the historian about the need for preservation of primary data from asylums (David Marjot, *TLS*, 15 Sept. 1995) led to a response from the County Archivist of Surrey (David Robinson, 29 Sept. 1995), who cogently outlined the attempts being made by local authority record offices to save hospital records, and the problems involved in saving, sorting, and preserving the patient records, many of which are stored in appalling conditions.

**Claybury Asylum** is a case in point, an important institution where, amongst others, Frederick Mott (1853–1926) worked and made the link between general paralysis of the insane and syphilis. Very few stray archives appear to have survived and only 3 volumes of patient records (currently at Ilford Library). Yet what riches were used only recently in the writing of its centenary history, *Claybury: a century of caring 1893–1993* by Eric H Pryor. While it is disheartening that vast quantities of such hospital archives are being destroyed, the National Register of Archives’ (NRA) digest of records that have found their way into repositories in 1994 helps to redress this picture. Of the 134 accessions of medical archives and manuscripts reported to the NRA, 48 related to hospitals, including mental hospitals, and a not inconsiderable number

were deposits of long series of records. **Shewrings Hospital**, Worcester, for example, where accounts from c. 1700 have been placed in Worcester Record Office; accounts of **Firby Hospital**, 1717–1828, at the North Yorkshire Record Office; the records of the **Royal Buckinghamshire Hospital** from 1876 to 1938, and admission and discharge registers of the **Buckinghamshire Lunatic Asylum** from 1853 to c. 1930 at the Buckinghamshire Record Office; **Queen Charlotte’s Hospital** at the Greater London Record Office; **Burghill Asylum** records from 1871 to 1956, at Hereford Record Office; **Lord Mayor Treloar Hospital**, Alton, records from 1860s to 1990s at the splendid new purpose built Hampshire Record Office; and the **Lady Chichester Hospital**, Hove, records from 1905 to 1973 at the East Sussex Record Office.

In some cases shorter runs of records survive, covering special fields of medicine. The records from 1920s to 1990s at the **Hollymoor Mental Hospital**, Northfield (Birmingham City Archives), include some relating to its use as an emergency hospital in World War II and to the “Northfield Experiments” in group psychotherapy. Records of the **West of England Eye Infirmary** are at the Devon Record Office, and records from 1939 to the 1980s of **Botleys Park Hospital for the Mentally Handicapped**, Chertsey, are at Surrey Record Office. Tuberculosis material deposited in 1994 includes information and programmes of the **Fairlight TB Sanatorium**, Ore (East Sussex Record Office), **Rotherham County Borough Council’s Tuberculosis Care Committee** minute book 1929–31 (Rotherham Central Library), and **Stobhill Hospital’s** respiratory unit records relating to the working party on TB 1979–89 (Greater Glasgow Health Board Archive).

The earliest manuscript item acquired by a record office in 1994 appears to be an anonymous **alchemical notebook** of the late 16th- early 17th-century (Western Manuscripts,

Wellcome Institute), which is probably the work of a practising doctor, and a significant part of it gives practical instructions for the manufacture of the elixir known as potable gold. This department also purchased an 1810 manuscript manual on pregnancy and childbirth by the well-known cookery writer, **Maria Eliza Rundell** (1745–1828). Rundell was the wife of Thomas Rundell, a surgeon of Bath; her advice was for a married daughter and is full of practical experience. The British Library purchased important **John Evelyn Papers** (1620–1706) in 1995 and, although not yet fully catalogued, they contain, amongst other material, records from when Evelyn was Commissioner for Sick and Wounded Seamen in the 1660s and 1670s. Letters from the indomitable correspondent **Florence Nightingale** (1820–1910) to William Rathbone MP have been acquired by both the University of Wales at Bangor and Liverpool City Record Office.

Given the general conception of archives as ancient documents only, it is enlightening to note how many of 1994's accessions are of very recent origin. Hospital records, such as those mentioned above, frequently date up to the late 1980s. The papers of **Professor Margaret Stacey** covering her term of office as a lay member of the General Medical Council between 1976 and 1984 and subsequent research resulting in *Regulating British Medicine, the GMC* (1992) (at Warwick University Modern Records Centre) and, not surprisingly, a number of the accessions reported by the Contemporary Medical Archives Centre (CMAC) at the Wellcome Institute, cover dates up to the 1980s and 1990s.

Records created by medical clubs and societies can be invaluable for tracing the growth of special interest groups, the networks within the profession, and the ways in which groups sought to influence their colleagues and the government. West Devon Area Record Office has acquired the records of the **Plymouth Medical Society**, 1794–c.1980; the neighbouring North Devon Record Office the minutes of the **Barnstaple and North Devon Medical Book Club**, 1839–1875, and the CMAC holds minutes, proposal and attendance books of the **Medical Research Club**, 1891–

1984. This latter was founded by London based pathologists including Sir Almoth Wright and John Bland Sutton for social and medical reasons, but ostensibly to meet and discuss original work in general and pathological science. Larger professional bodies such as the **Mental Aftercare Association**, which, with predecessor bodies dates back to 1879, are also at the CMAC.

The archives of the **Medical Research Council** have been the subject of some discussion over the years, and 1994 finally saw the move of the bulk of the MRC's files, 1905–78, to the Public Record Office. Selection from the grant files is still under discussion. **Sir Harold Himsworth** (1905–93) was Secretary of the MRC between 1949 and 1968 and his papers are now located at the CMAC as are a small amount of papers of the eminent malariologist, **Sir Rickard Christophers** (1873–1978).

Whilst manuscripts and archives continue to find their way into repositories and libraries, a great deal remains in institutions or is privately held and its existence unknown. Hospital records have already been mentioned, but records of the **hospice movement** are also coming under the scrutiny of the University of Sheffield, which has started a special project and appointed an archivist to survey and list local hospices and identify material held by major national charities such as the Sue Ryder Foundation. Survey work undoubtedly brings to light much of potential interest to the medical historian, and the continued surveys undertaken by staff in the Wellcome Institute for its **Medical Archives and Manuscripts Survey** (covering 1660–1945) reveal unexpected holdings by local authority, national and specialist repositories. This year approximately 25 new surveys have been completed, including ones for the **British Psychoanalytic Society**, the **Imperial War Museum**, and most of the London Boroughs. London entries are virtually completed and these are currently available in the Wellcome Institute Library although it is hoped that publication in 1997 will enable a wider audience to have access to this useful data.

**Julia Sheppard**

**Francis Clark Wood Institute for the History of Medicine  
of the College of Physicians of Philadelphia**

**Resident Research Fellowships**

Short-term grants of up to \$1,000 will be awarded to scholars engaged in projects requiring personal use of the historical collections of the Library and/or Mütter Museum during the spring/summer/fall of 1996. Letters of application outlining the proposed

project (no more than 5 pages), length of residence, historical materials to be used, and a budget with specific information on travel, lodging, and research expenses should be submitted along with a curriculum vitae and two letters of recommendation, by 31 January 1996.

**Scholar-in-Residence Program**

One grant of up to \$30,000 will be offered to a scholar who will spend the 1996–1997 academic year in residence at the College conducting research in the library and/or Museum. Candidates must have a PhD or equivalent record of professional experience and scholarly publication. A letter outlining the applicant's relevant qualifications, research project, and materials to be used at the College

of Physicians should be submitted, along with a curriculum vitae and three letters of recommendation, by 15 January 1996.

Individuals interested in either program should send pertinent materials to: Monique Bourque, PhD, Assistant Director for Programs, F.C. Wood Institute, College of Physicians of Philadelphia, 19 South 22nd St., Philadelphia, PA 19103, USA. Tel: (215) 563 3737.

**American Institute of the History of Pharmacy**

**Fischelis History of Pharmacy Grants**

Applications for the Fischelis Grants for research in the History of Pharmacy are being accepted up to 1 March 1996. Projects by established scholars devoted significantly to historical understanding of the modern practice

of pharmacy in the USA will be considered for all or part of the \$5,000 to be awarded yearly. Fischelis Grants are not available to graduate or undergraduate students.

**Grants-in-Aid to Graduate Students**

The Institute offers grants-in-aid totalling \$5,000 annually to graduate students (master's or PhD level) to encourage historical investigation of some aspect of pharmacy, and to pay research expenses not normally met by the university granting the degree. Applications

will be accepted until 1 February 1996. Requests for guidelines for applications for both grants should be sent to: American Institute for the History of Pharmacy, Pharmacy Building, 425 N. Charter Street, Madison, WI 53706-1508, USA; tel.: (608) 262 5378.

**Island of Kos, Greece**

**31 August to 8 September 1996**

The International Hippocratic Foundation of Kos (IHFK), is organizing the 1st International Medical Olympiad 1996, to be held from 31 August to 2 September 1996, and the 35th International Congress on the History of Medicine to be held from 2 to 8 September 1996, both on

the island of Kos, Greece. For enquiries and applications to submit abstracts please contact: The Secretariat, ITCO (International Travel and Congress Organisers Ltd), 33 Nikis Street, Athens 105 57, Greece. Tel. (301) 3310037/8, 3312864/5; Fax: (301) 3227608.