

## Book Reviews

school included the Nuffield Institute of Medical Research housed in the Observatory. Initially the research was in x-ray cinematography and experimental therapeutics. There followed research into neonatal physiology but the inconvenience of a building with no lifts can be gauged by sheep having to be carried up the elliptical staircase. The Nuffield Institute moved to Headington in 1970 and various departments used the building until 1979 when Green College was founded.

The Regius Professor of Medicine, Sir Richard Doll conceived the idea of a postgraduate college mainly for medical tutors, scientists and students. Dr and Mrs Cecil Green endowed the college, which opened in 1979 with Sir Richard Doll as the first warden. The college expanded to include a wide range of disciplines in pure and applied subjects related to human health and welfare with the Observatory as its focal point.

The last chapter is a fascinating exposition of the range and the techniques used in the first part of the (expensive) conservation of the exterior of the Observatory. The book has numerous illustrations and references and is well worth reading as a series of interconnected short stories.

**E W L Fletcher,**  
Oxford

**M J van Lieburg,** *The history of the Sophia Children's Hospital in Rotterdam*, transl. Ko Hagoort, Rotterdam, Erasmus Publishing, 2004, pp. 232, illus., €27.50 (hardback 90-5235-174-0).

This celebration of a much-loved Dutch institution is old-fashioned in concept and execution. Published to celebrate the integration of the hospital with the Medical Faculty and the University of Rotterdam Hospital, it is a revision and update of the author's history of the hospital, *Het Sophia Kinderziekenhuis 1863–1975*, published over thirty years ago.

The hospital's foundation represents the familiar story of the growth of children's

hospitals from the mid-nineteenth century: rapid expansion of urban population and stubborn high infant and child mortality rates causing concern among medical and philanthropic circles and the establishment of an institution specifically aimed at the urban child from the impoverished family. The story of the meteoric growth of this mercantile and industrial city, and the health penalty paid by its most vulnerable residents has been necessarily truncated to allow the continuation of the story of the Sophia Children's Hospital from 1975.

The construction of the work follows a familiar path, in that it is chronological, and there is a strong emphasis on the organizational structure, finances and buildings of the hospital. This children's hospital, like so many in North America, Britain and mainland Europe, had a constant struggle to stave off bankruptcy, and to justify its existence in a world where larger general hospitals were increasingly opening up children's departments. The thread of the hospital's difficult relationship with the local council is particularly intriguing, especially given that the hospital board boasted so many influential local business figures from its inception. Almost in spite of the council, a large new hospital was opened in 1937 (at virtually the same time as a similar building opened at Great Ormond Street in London), to give Rotterdam's children the opportunity to experience many of the recent developments in paediatric medicine.

The construction of the work is partly dictated by the lack of archival material, and results in the patients meriting just eight pages from the hospital's foundation until the middle of the Second World War. In many respects, the story of the hospital is more interesting post 1937, when the author (speaking from personal experience, private papers, and his own recollections of conversations with long-dead colleagues) deals with the development of the single institution into a centre for paediatric research and out-patient clinic-based childcare, involving the agreement and participation of patients and their families. Disappointing is the manner in which he covers what one might have expected to

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be the traumatic effect of German occupation during the Second World War on the work of the hospital and the health of Rotterdam's children, especially given the well-documented nutritional deprivation experienced by Netherlands town dwellers during that period, and the extensive destruction by the bombing of Rotterdam in 1940. What is clear from the period in the hospital's life is that individual supporter assistance, and continued good relations with local industries, allowed the hospital to survive. The dependence of the hospital on philanthropy, even today, attests to the limitations of state-funded hospital healthcare.

The work is published in English, in the usual generous manner of the Dutch, whose linguistic skills put the English-speaking world to shame. This initiative is to be applauded, in that it will ensure that what is valuable in the work will reach

a wider audience than if it had been published in any of the Low Countries languages. The translator is named as Ko Hagoort. His prose is often charmingly idiosyncratic, but his attempts at idiomatic English do not make for an easy read. Space and financial restrictions excluded the possibility of footnotes, a proper bibliography, or an index of more than principal personalities. This is a pity, for the work could have added much to the developing historiography of the institutional provision for the sick child. Having said that, the list of doctoral theses in an appendix could prove invaluable, and the book—although a very local product—demonstrates admirably the international nature of co-operative development of what the author calls “Caritas” for the sick child.

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