

BroadSheet

The newsletter of the John Snow Society

The Royal Institute
of Public Health

PATRON - HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN



SUMMER 2007

Pumphandle Lecture 2007

"Polio Eradication – Myths and Realities"

Donald ("DA") Henderson

Tuesday 11th September – 5:15 pm
JZ Young Lecture Theatre (Anatomy Building,
University College London, Gower Street)



Donald ("DA") Henderson

DA Henderson is well known for his role as Director of WHO's Smallpox Eradication Programme (1966 – 1977), after which he became Dean of the Johns Hopkins (now add Bloomberg) School of Public Health (1977 – 1990), and held subsequent senior roles in the Executive Branch of the US Government and as Founding Director of the Johns Hopkins (now University of Pittsburgh) Center for Civilian Biodefense Strategies.

He is currently Professor of Medicine and Public Health, University of Pittsburgh; Johns Hopkins University Distinguished Service Professor; and Distinguished Scholar, Center for Biosecurity, Baltimore, Maryland.

The concept of eradication has had a special appeal to many working on infectious disease, but it is often used without an appreciation for its full implications. Few in the world are better experienced and informed to discuss these issues than this year's Pumphandle Lecturer.

The lecture will be held in the JZ Young Theatre, on the east side of Gower Street, less than five minutes walk from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (googling "JZ Young Theatre" brings up a map). The Lecture will be followed by the Society's Annual General Meeting, to be held at the John Snow Public House, to which all are invited...

The lecture will be recorded and placed on the Society's website alongside the PowerPoint presentation.

Membership, Chapters and Communication

As of 1st July 2007, the Society had enlisted 1466 members, over 16 years, with addresses in more than 100 countries. We have been informed of only 11 deaths, indicating a combination of extraordinary vitality, a failure to include notification of the Society in last instructions.... or a desire to continue active participation in an afterlife.

We have, however, lost contact with some members, for whom we lack email addresses or whose emails are no longer valid. We have recently been able to trace several individuals (who will be receiving this newsletter after several years out of contact), but more than 200 members have not yet been traced. We urge all members to keep the Society informed of email address changes, forever! Should you know of anyone who has lost touch with the society, please encourage them to re-establish contact with us.

Just as, according to our constitution, any meeting of two or more members, anywhere, may be considered a formal meeting of the Society, we encourage members to establish local Chapters around the world. We have heard in recent months from Chapters in Scandinavia, Iceland and San Francisco,

but have lost contact with the chapters established in Entebbe and Bethesda. If you send us Chapter news we will endeavour to place it on the Society's website.

There has been some discussion on whether the society should communicate more regularly with members, by advertising meetings, lectures and courses. The committee's current view is that we should not bombard members with emails, but that we will make exception of events which relate specifically to John Snow.

We have been asked from time to time for the full membership list, but our policy has been not to release it. On the other hand, if someone wishes to contact a particular member for whom we have an email address, we will forward that message.

Visiting the Pub

Many visitors to the Pub have enjoyed perusing the guestbooks – and will be pleased to learn that a cabinet is to be installed in the upstairs Bar, which will carry both the current guestbook, and facsimile copies of previous John Snow Pub guestbooks. The cabinet should be installed in time for the AGM on 11th September. Please ask whoever is behind the bar for the key. In this context, the Society would like to recover the two first guest-books, which covered the period 1960 until 1990. These disappeared at the time the Pub was transferred from Watney's to Samuel Smiths, in 1990. Should anyone know of the whereabouts of these books – the first was signed on "opening night" by Richard Doll, Austin Bradford Hill and Sydney Chave – please let us know.

Good news for public health – the pub became smoke free on the first of July!

John Snow Committee

According to our constitution, the society's policies are set by a steering committee, and proposals are placed before the Annual General Meeting, which takes place at the Pub, following the annual Pumphandle Lecture.

Current Committee members are: Prof Paul Fine (Hon President), Dr Ros Stanwell Smith (Hon Secretary), Prof Sandy Cairncross, Dr Mary O'Mahony, Prof Jimmy Whitworth,

Dr Dilys Morgan, Dr John Watson, and Ms Janice Constable (RIPH).

Members are appointed for three years. In order that Committee membership terms shall be staggered, at least two current members step down each year (DM and RSS in 2007). Members standing down may put themselves forward for re-election.

Nominations are invited for membership on the Committee. Only Society members in good

standing (with an intact mug*) are eligible. A valid nomination will consist of a statement of no more than 54 words by the nominee, indicating eagerness to serve and vision for the Society. Nominations received by the Society's secretariat (cbooth@riph.org.uk) by 8 September will be eligible for vote at the AGM.

** Members are reminded that broken mugs (and hence membership standing), and lost membership cards, may be replaced at a cost of £5 and £2, respectively.*



Pumphandle Lecture 2006

Drinking Water: Where Science Meets Policy: building on Snow's legacy of evidence-based intervention.

The Pumphandle lectures for the John Snow Society have covered a wide range of topics on the prevention or understanding of disease, but few have been so pertinent to the pumphandle theme as that chosen

by Dr Jamie Bartram, Coordinator of Public Health and Environment at the World Health Organization's headquarters in Geneva. Dr Bartram started his career in water science in England and has now worked on the development and application of evidence-based policy and good practice to water sanitation and hygiene in 30 developing and developed countries around the world.



In this, the 14th lecture in the Pumphandle Series, Dr Bartram discussed the evidence used to inform policy in international water and sanitation initiatives. He argued that water health is an essential starting point for successful economic development. Inadequate or unsafe water supplies cause poverty via disease burdens, health care costs and the time and effort required to fetch water. In poor countries with comparable levels of per capita income, those with improved water supply and sanitation have a GDP (Gross Domestic Product) growth of 3.7%, compared to 0.1% in those without these facilities. Unsafe water causes high levels of diarrhoeal diseases, killing 1.8 million people each year and costing an estimated \$7 billion annually to health agencies. Of the top 10 environmental contributors to disease burden, diarrhoea secondary to infection has the highest level of preventability. Other water related contributors, such as drowning and malaria, also score high on the preventable scale. Research has demonstrated that schistosomiasis (snail fever), infecting 200 million world-wide, could be reduced by 77% by improvement in basic sanitation. Possibly the lack of high quality epidemiological studies explains why other conditions or diseases still receive relatively more funding and investment. In the era of evidence-based policy, it has become more urgent to provide accurate estimates of the impact on health and poverty. Useful evidence includes the data on water outbreaks in developed countries such as the USA, household surveys and estimates of the impact of targeting urban slums as well as rural areas. Research is needed into real capital and maintenance costs for interventions before international funders can be persuaded to put in more interventions.

Water related diseases are costly in many ways, but today, 152 years after John Snow showed that cholera can be waterborne, they are preventable. This lecture demonstrated that the nexus of water, sanitation, hygiene and health is not a problem of the past, but central to a growing current dilemma; and that there is still shameful ignorance about the need to 'take the handle off the pump'.

Ros Stanwell-Smith, Hon. Secretary to the John Snow Society.

New mugs — Having exhausted the fourth edition, The

Society has recently taken delivery of 500 new mugs, the distinctive fifth edition design, pictured right. These are available to members for £5 (plus £2.50 packing and postage). The Society also offers silver lapel pins (£16), with the pump motif. Please contact cbooth@riph.org.uk



John Snow Society of Scandinavia

The Scandinavian branch of the JSS held its annual meeting on June 5th 2007 as part of the Norwegian national Drinking Water Conference arranged in the Olympic city Lillehammer. Since establishing the Scandinavian branch in 1998, drinking water has been the main foundation for the Nordic activities of the JSS.

There are now 128 members from all the Nordic countries, including Greenland and Iceland. Focus has been on drinking water quality and safety, naturally including information about the 1854 events of our great Hero.

Every year the annual meeting includes the Pumphandle Award Ceremony. In earlier years the pumphandle trophy has been handed out to individuals as an acknowledgement of their efforts and results in promoting drinking water safety.

The award for 2007 chose another angle: recruitment of engineers and other professionals for water supply jobs is in a critical phase. Too few students choose water supply as their major course at the Norwegian and Nordic universities. We also lack other professionals within many of the theoretical and practical professions needed to secure safe drinking water.

The John Snow Society therefore awarded the Pumphandle Award for 2007 to The Nordic Water Engineering Students as stimulation for future students. The award was presented to the students from the Technical University in Trondheim, Norway, represented by senior student Najoua Soual.

Drinking water safety is highly focused in Norway and by JSS after the Giardia epidemic in the city of Bergen in 2004. About 6000 of the 28,000 people served by the Svartediket water treatment plant were affected by the epidemic. 1300 were registered ill, and more than 100 are still diagnosed as having long term ME effects. From the first moments of the epidemic the city water authority issued daily internet maps showing updated location data for all sick people, together with information about the different water supply zones, similar to the death maps from Soho in 1854. In June 2007 a new and advanced water treatment plant was put in operation, securing double hygienic safety barriers, including UV disinfection.

Christen Raestad, President JSS Scandinavia



Senior student Najoua Soual receiving the John Snow Society Pumphandle Award 2007 on behalf of all water supply students at the Nordic Universities. The jury is (from the left): Ivar Kalland (Bergen City Water Works), Toril Hofshagen (Norwegian Water and Waste Water Association - NORVAR), Truls Krogh (Norwegian Institute for Public Health) and Christen Raestad (Chairman of the jury)

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