



# BroadSheet

The newsletter of the John Snow Society

SUMMER 2015

## 23<sup>rd</sup> Pumphandle Lecture 2015



“On Removing the Pumphandle: Innovation in Implementation”

Atul Gawande

Thursday 8th October – 5:30 pm

John Snow Lecture Theatre, London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine

Book your place for the lecture at <http://pumphandle-2015.eventbrite.co.uk>

Atul Gawande MD, MPH, is a surgeon, writer, and public health researcher. He practices general and endocrine surgery at Brigham and Women's Hospital, Boston, and is professor in both the Department of Health Policy and Management at the Harvard School of Public Health and the Department of Surgery at Harvard Medical School.

Atul is Executive Director of Ariadne Labs, a joint center for health systems innovation, and also chairman of Lifebox, a UK-based nonprofit making surgery safer globally. In addition, he has been a staff writer at The New Yorker magazine since 1998, and is the author of four bestselling books: Complications, Better, The Checklist Manifesto, and, most recently, Being Mortal. He gave the 2014 BBC Reith Lectures, under the title “The Future of Medicine”.

The lecture will be followed by the Society's Annual General Meeting, held in the John Snow Public House (at the corner of Broadwick and Lexington Streets, in Soho) to which all are invited. The lecture will be recorded and placed on the Society's website.



## Pumphandle lecture and AGM 2014

“Medicine and Public Health: divorced for too long” Professor Jeremy Farrar

Dr Jeremy Farrar, newly appointed director of the Wellcome Trust, gave the 22nd Pumphandle lecture in the John Snow lecture theatre at the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine on 11th September 2014. In it he reflected on his experience of working on emerging infectious diseases and epidemics over the past 18 years while directing the Oxford University Clinical Research Unit in Vietnam.

Dr Farrar argued that many of the public health approaches currently used to control epidemics, including the ongoing Ebola epidemic in West Africa, would have been familiar to John Snow in 1854, and that there is a need to embrace the opportunities of modern science. John Snow was a polymath, and that breadth of knowledge was and is crucial for approaching epidemic control. Drivers of epidemics in the modern world include the rapidly increasing frequency of long distance travel, expanding populations, urbanisation and changing land use. Populations are rapidly ageing with increasing rates of non-communicable

disease co-morbidity and obesity. Improving surveillance will increasingly reveal clusters of cases but it is crucial to assess the potential for epidemics to occur and to act promptly and appropriately during the window of opportunity.

He commented that responses to recent epidemics have been patchy and the communities of practice involved often do not communicate as well as they should. For example, anaesthetists working in intensive care are sometimes the first to recognise clusters of severe cases of disease, and yet they rarely interact with public health practitioners. Conducting research during fast moving epidemics is difficult amid fragmented services and stifling regulation, and we need to find a better way to learn the necessary lessons from each epidemic to respond better in future. At the global level, governance, co-ordination and leadership all need to be improved, and we all need to help and support the World Health Organization in rebuilding and reforming in order to meet these challenges.



A vote of thanks was given by Professor Peter Piot, Director of the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine. Dr Farrar removed the handle of the pump to close the meeting, and Dr Ros Stanwell-Smith, honorary secretary, invited members to the John Snow pub in Soho for the Annual General Meeting of the society.

A video of the lecture is available on our website: [www.johnsnowsociety.org](http://www.johnsnowsociety.org)

# The saga of the missing pump...



As many members are aware, and as several have explained in desperate communications to The Society - the pump monument that has stood on Broadwick Street since 1992 has been removed. It was taken away in late January 2015 by contractors because of a major construction site on the corner of Broadwick and Poland Streets. The Society has been assured that the pump replica will be replaced when the work is completed, in some 18 months time. We have asked that there be a decorative plaque on the construction-site hoarding telling the story of the pump.

We have also been at pains to point out that the monument is not on the precise site of the original pump, on the south side of Broadwick (ex- Broad) Street outside the John Snow Pub. The true location is marked by a red granite kerbstone, beloved of many of us, which is mentioned in the plaque explaining the site. We have recommended that the replica ultimately be replaced on its proper site. This will require changes to the parking bays, but there is a good chance this will happen. We are grateful to Ros Stanwell-Smith who is serving as Pump Ambassador Extraordinaire, and keeping up the pressure for the pump's safe return!



*Portion of original map in 2nd edition (1855) of Snow's On Cholera, showing the position of the replica pump placed in 1992 at intersection of Poland and Broadwick Streets. Note that this edition of the map showed the pump at the intersection of Broad (now Broadwick) and Cambridge (now Lexington) Streets, whereas it was actually some 5 meters west of the intersection, outside what was then #40 Broad Street.*

## Chapters of the Society

According to our Constitution ([www.johnsnowsociety.org/constitution.html](http://www.johnsnowsociety.org/constitution.html)) we have not given detailed guidance on Chapter formation, but two statements are particularly relevant: "Eligibility to join the Society is defined as wishing to celebrate the memory of John Snow"; and: "Members of the Society are encouraged to establish informal groups, chapters (divisions) and meetings in their own countries and localities. Local groups may levy an additional fee to finance their local activities". We are aware that about 10 chapters have been organised in various places over the years, including in Kampala Uganda, Norway, Iceland, Auckland New Zealand, Heidelberg Germany, Bethesda Maryland, San Francisco California, Texas and South Carolina USA, but we have not always been kept informed of their activities or status.

It is useful in this context to acknowledge another principle of the Society: "A John Snow Society meeting can be declared wherever and whenever at least two Members of the Society are present. A photographic record of meetings and events may be sent to the Secretary for inclusion in the Society's archives".

### Heidelberg (Sabine Gabrysch)

Member Anna Goodmann went to study how Heidelberg natives avoided exposure to cholera in the 18th century, guided by the indigenous John Snow Society member Sabine Gabrysch. Instead of seeking to purify their water, affiliates of the Heidelberg court took the visionary step of seeking to avoid water altogether and instead drank only wine. The wine was collected in tax from local farmers in the castle's 228,000 litre barrel, where a spontaneous Society meeting was held. A historical natural experiment that tested the effectiveness of this approach was embodied in the dwarf Perkeo. An Italian migrant to the Heidelberg court, he was famous for always saying „Perché no?“ (Why not?) when asked if he wanted more wine. He was reported to have died after having drunk, on the advice of his doctor, his first ever glass of water.



▲ The barrel



► The dwarf Perkeo



*Toasting Texans*

### Texas (Betty Bowles)

Marty Gibson and Betty Bowles, from the Texas Chapter of the John Snow Society, taught a Public Health course in London through the International Studies consortium at Midwestern State University, with emphasis on John Snow's contributions to public health in London. The class of 13 students took a "John Snow's London" tour guided by Blue Badge Guide Guy Pickford, which covered Snow's contributions to anaesthesia, surgery, and epidemiology. The students toasted John Snow with water at the site of the Broad Street pump outside the John Snow Pub.

### Scandinavia (Asle Aasen)

A meeting was held in Trondheim in June, with a presentation by Asle Assen on the history of cholera both globally and within Scandinavia, and the relevance of John Snow's work. The biennial pumphandle award ceremony will be held next year (2016) in Reykjavik, Iceland.

### New Zealand (Ross Lawrenson)

Epidemiology is alive and well in rural New Zealand with four John Snow members actively involved in public health in the region. Ross Lawrenson (Professor of Primary Care at the Waikato Clinical Campus) and Dr Veronique Gibbons (Research Fellow) are working on a large New Zealand Health Research Grant looking at the epidemiology of breast cancer. Dr Anita Bell, Medical Officer of Health for the Waikato Health Board, has been researching the problem of rheumatic fever which is still of concern particularly in the local Māori community. She has also been working with our Midland Regional Trauma Service looking at the geographical distribution of major trauma. Meanwhile Dr Jim Miller, Medical Officer of Health in the Bay of Plenty, has been dealing with the risk of toxic shellfish poisoning. In the tradition of John Snow, public health doctors in rural New Zealand have to turn their skills to a multitude of challenges.



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## John Snow Steering Committee

The John Snow Society Steering Committee ("J3SC") met on June 26 2015, continuing its work to make the Society sustainable into the future. The current committee comprises David Heymann (Chair), Mary O'Mahoney (Vice-Chair) Paul Fine (Secretary), John Watson (Treasurer), Ros Stanwell-Smith (Historian), Dilys Morgan, Jimmy Whitworth, Sandy Cairncross, Sabine Gabrysch, Oliver Cumming, Juliet Drummond and Stephen Jeffreys (Anaesthesia rep). Some members plan to step down this year, making openings in the committee for 3-year terms. The nomination procedure is as set in our constitution (<http://www.johnsnowsociety.org/constitution.html>); and thus 54 word statements must be received by 1st October (extended because the Pumphandle Lecture is later than usual) for ratification at the AGM following the Pumphandle Lecture.

## Other News

York Illumination: As members will be aware, John Snow was born in York – and thus it was entirely appropriate for the City of York to have featured him in its award-winning 2014 Festival of Light – see pages 4 and 11 of Brochure (<http://illuminatingyork.org.uk/>)

Pumphandle Bar (and Cider): The London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine Bar has been formally named “the Pumphandle”, reflecting interests and enthusiasm on the part staff and students. We are of course aware that John Snow was himself a teetotaler. Among beverages on offer is a particularly interesting cider called “Pumphandle”, prepared in Wales by Dilys Morgan, Jimmy Whitworth and Juliette Drummond of Pontymeddy Cider.

King’s College Archives: King’s College London apparently holds some historical documents relating to John Snow, which were shown at a recent exhibition entitled “The great leveller: humanity’s struggle against infectious disease”. The Society has contacted the Curator to ask if some of these documents might be made available at the time of the Pumphandle Lecture.

Jimmy Whitworth has sent us this photo of the famous John Snow rose, which flourishes in his garden.



## Updated Website

The new updated John Snow website is due to be launched in August 2015. It will be accessible at the same address as the current site. Once up and running, prospective new members will be able to join on line (the option of joining using a paper form will continue), and members will be able to update their personal details and purchase mugs and other items through the site. Please have a look and let us know what you think.

## Exclusive to Members

The supply of 9th edition mugs is almost exhausted, but the 10th edition has been ordered and will soon be available. The mug is free to new members. Additional mugs can be purchased if you wish to add to your collection or as insurance policy against breakage (which, according to our constitution, deactivates your membership). Members can purchase up to three additional mugs. The elegant pump design silk ties and the illustrated book by Dr Spence Galbraith (John Snow: His Early Years) are also available for purchase. See website for details.



## Reminder to Members

Our cumulative membership total, to whom we will send notice of this Broadsheet, is now more than 3,200. Unfortunately, more than 20 % of emails bounce. We suspect that a few members may have crossed the great divide.... but we also suspect that some have changed their email addresses. Or some email addresses may have been illegible or otherwise in error from the start.... So – if you are/have been a member, but do not receive one email a year from us – please let us know your appropriate (personal generally better than job-related) email.

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