



Edited transcript of an after-dinner address given at the  
50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Meeting of the Bone and Tooth Society,  
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I have been asked to tell you something of the early history of the **Bone and Tooth Society**, and not to go on too long, so I will do my best to comply on both accounts.

50 years ago, a small group of scientists and clinicians at the Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital in Great Portland Street, London, used to meet from time to time to discuss a common interest in bones and teeth. It was at one of these meetings, on March 24<sup>th</sup> 1950, that, over a glass of sherry, the idea of a Bone and Tooth Society was born. The Professor of Orthopaedics, RJ Seddon, was in the Chair at that meeting. Enquiries on the grapevine had suggested that there were about 50 potential members.

So, a committee of six for the new Society, representing different areas of the subject, was elected there and then: JJ Pritchard (Anatomy), CH Lack (Clinical Studies), HA Sissons (Histology), HJ Rogers (Biochemistry), I Kramer (Dental Studies) and TF Dixon (Secretary).

Some *ad hoc* rules for the Society were drawn up, which are still in effect today. Membership was to include all those who had a genuine interest in fundamental studies on bones and teeth; members of the Society could be from any country in the world, and the interests of the Society were to be directed mainly to those on the laboratory side. It was decided that meetings should be held every quarter, mainly in London, though, hopefully, sometimes in the provinces.

The first scientific meeting was held on 6 June 1950 at the Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital, Great Portland Street. Even at the outset there appeared to be a slight question mark over the name chosen for the Society by its founders. Professor Newcomb was in the Chair. He started by saying: 'In spite of its name, this Society has sprung from a serious desire of those Interested in fundamental studies on bones and teeth to have a meeting ground for discussions on their problems'.

The prime speaker on this first occasion was Honor Bridget Fell, whose incomparable work on tissue culture of bone was done here in Cambridge. There were four other speakers on various subjects: HA Sissons on 'Bone Histopathology', JJ Pritchard on 'The Osteoblast', TF Dixon on 'Inorganic Salts of Bone' and HJ Rogers on 'Organic Substances of Bone'. The meeting lasted for two hours, 5pm to 7pm, and was followed by the inevitable sherry.

In the 1950s and early '60s, many of the meetings were held in London, the attendance ranging from about 30 to 60. The presentations covered a wide range of subjects, most of which are still a challenge to our understanding. To mention only a few: 'Skeletogenesis Studied in Culture (1950), Hormones and Bone (1951 and '52), Enamel and Tooth Germ Structure (1953), Vitamin C and Bone (1953), Chondrodystrophy, Genetics and Bone Disease (1954), Rickets (1954), Renal Osteodystrophy (1959), Calcification (1959), Bone Tumours (1959), Radioactive Materials and the Skeleton (held at the Royal College of Surgeons in 1960), Osteoporosis (1962), Thyrocalcitonin (1966) and because it is a subject in which I was greatly interested, I remember a talk on 'The use of tritiated thymidine in the study of bone' by Norman Kember, describing the very first application of these techniques in the study of bone.

By 1960 there were 177 members of the Society and by 1966 this had increased to nearly 300. 1966, I note, was a vintage year for new members; among those who joined in that year were Olav Bijvoet, Gideon Rodan and Jack Martin. Meetings of the Society began to be held outside London from the late 1950s; for example, at The National Institute for Research on Dairying, in Reading (1957), at the Nuffield Orthopaedic Centre in Oxford (1960), at the Dunn School, Cambridge (1964), at Leeds (1965), and in Liverpool (1966).

Also, at this time, a number of distinguished visitors from overseas addressed the Bone and Tooth Society; usually they were in London, or passing through for some purpose, because we could certainly not afford to bring them. One forgets that in those days there was very little travel across the Atlantic, and I remember well what a thrill it was, when in April 1961, the great bone physiologist Franklin C MacLean from Chicago gave a talk on 'Parathyroids and Vitamin D in Calcium Homeostasis'. Other highlights in that era were Paul Goldhaber from Harvard, a presentation by David A Cameron from Australia in 1965 on 'Electron Microscopy of Bone' (a very new subject then), and by CA Bassett from New York in 1966, on 'Electrical Factors Regulating Bone Structure'. Of course there were many, many distinguished speakers from this country - and from Europe, we had Lacroix, Gaillard, Milhaud, Fleisch - and too many others to mention here.

The Society first got a Constitution after 10 years, at the AGM in 1961, where it was decided that there would be a Chairman (now known as President). The Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer were to hold office for 5 years, and four Committee members would each serve for 3 years. Minor amendments have been made to this format in later years.

Professor HA Sissons was elected Chairman or President in 1961 and held this post until 1966. Dame Janet Vaughan was President from 1966 until 1971, and since then, we have continued with a long line of distinguished Presidents, Secretaries, Treasurers and Committee members who have given great service to the society. I wish I could acknowledge all of them by name but there are too many; you wouldn't want me to read out such a long list, I think.

There were two matters much discussed at Committee meetings in the 1960s. The first was a desire to have closer contact with European colleagues, many of whom attended our meetings. Thus, the possibility of having a European Bone and Tooth Symposium was raised, at the Bone and Tooth Society Committee Meeting in March 1962, and the outcome of this was The first European Bone and Tooth Symposium, organised by, and held under the auspices of our

Society (*ie* BATS), in Oxford in April 1963. It was extremely successful and led to the suggestion that regular meetings be held in other European cities; these meetings became the series known as the European Symposia on Calcified Tissues, the 27<sup>th</sup> of which took place in Tampere, Finland earlier this year.

The second matter, much talked about at Committee meetings, and by other members of the Society was that of the possibility of establishing a journal for publication of relevant papers from workers in the field. So, in January 1966, a 'Publications Meeting' comprising eleven members of the Bone and Tooth Society took place to discuss this matter. They were Blackwood, Nordin, Pautard, Sissons and Vaughan (who was in the chair) from the UK, Bassett and Irving from the USA, and Fleisch, Milhaud, Gaillard and Richelle from Switzerland, France, Netherlands and Belgium, respectively.

Preliminary enquiries amongst members of the Bone and Tooth Society and European and American colleagues suggested that there was a considerable amount of support for establishment of a Journal for the field. After some discussion, and I quote: 'The meeting was then informed by Dr Nordin and Dr Pautard of a proposed Journal, *Calcified Tissue Research*, to be published, on an international basis by Springer-Verlag, and that publication of the first issue would be in the following January, 1967. Official support, either from any societies or particular groups was not sought by the proponents of the new journal; nor did the other members of the 'Publications Meeting' who were present think it appropriate that such support should be offered'. When the new journal appeared in 1967, many members of the Bone and Tooth Society were disappointed (and some I knew were even rather livid) that the journal had not been sponsored by the Society. In 1979, *Calcified Tissue Research* was renamed *Calcified Tissue International*, and from January 1999, it has acquired the additional title of 'The Official Journal of the European Calcified Tissue Society', which seems to me a somewhat satisfactory ending to this little saga, since the Bone and Tooth Society had been instrumental in establishing the European Calcified Tissue Society, 30 years previously.

It has been a great privilege to belong to Bone and Tooth over all these years. I salute the scientists who first had the brilliant idea of forming the Society. Thank you.