NEWS

SOCIAL HISTORY OF MEDICINE

All those associated with the journal would like to apologise for the late circulation of the last issue of SSHM (Vol 5/2). This delay was due to the theft of computer equipment from our printers. Unfortunately it was not possible to give subscribers any advance warning of the delay, or to carry an apology in the journal or accompanying Gazette.

You will also have noted in the subscription renewal invoice that you have received recently, that SSHM membership (with the journal) in 1993 will be £21.00 in the UK and Europe and $37.00 in the rest of the world. This increase was explained by the Chair in the last issue of the Gazette and should be seen in the context of an artificial rate of $16 in 1992, when OUP failed to implement an agreed rise to £18. Also, we hope members will appreciate that the subscription rate had increased relatively little since the inception of SSHM in 1988 and that even the new rate is low compared to other journals in the history of medicine. Where else can you buy 550 pages of academic material for such a price?

This Gazette accompanies the last issue of the journal to be edited by Richard Smith. Richard was a founder editor and over the last five years has been the key figure in the establishment and maintenance of the journal's high academic standards and reputation. On behalf of the Society and the

All correspondence about the content and circulation of the Gazette should be sent to the editor, Michael Worboys, History, Sheffield Hallam University, Psalter Lane, Sheffield, S11 8QZ, Great Britain. Tel. 0742 532686/5 FAX 0742 532603.

DISCLAIMER It is stressed that any views expressed in this Gazette are those of the Editor or the named contributor; they are not necessarily those of the Executive Committee or general membership. While every care is taken to provide accurate and helpful information in this Gazette, the Society for the Social History of Medicine, the Chair of its Executive Committee and the Editor of the Gazette accept no responsibility for omissions or errors or their subsequent effects. Readers are expected to check all essential information appropriate to specific circumstances.
readership of SHM, may I offer our appreciation and thanks for his work, especially in recent months when he has borne the editorship single-handed. We are also losing Richard from the Executive Committee, where he has been a very active member.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE ELECTIONS

Seven nominations have been received for the five vacancies on the Executive Committee, so for the first time in three years a ballot is to held. The ballot paper and brief biographical details of the candidates are enclosed as a centrefold in this issue. Voting papers have to be returned to the Hon. Secretary by 30 January 1993.

Florence Nightingale Museum

This Museum, which opened in 1989, has recently started a Newsletter which contains details of their lunch-time lecture series and other activities. The Museum illustrates the history of Florence Nightingale and her enormous impact on health care. Opening times are 10.00-16.00, Tuesday to Sunday and Bank Holidays. Admission: £2.50 adults and £1.50 children, OAPs and students. The Museum is located at St Thomas’s Hospital, near Westminster Bridge. Further details of the Museum and Newsletter can be obtained from: Kate Finsley, Curator, Florence Nightingale Museum, 2 Lambeth Palace Road, London, SE1 7EW.

European Association for the History of Medicine and Health

The European Association for the History of Medicine and Health (EAHMH), formed just over one year ago, is flourishing and already has over one hundred and thirty members. The planning of the first Congress, to be held in early September 1993 in Gottingen, is well in hand. The general theme is 'Coping with Sickness: Science, Culture, Professions and the State'. Of particular interest is the invitation to younger researchers to submit a 'poster' (i.e. a presentation in the form of a résumé which can be displayed) on any of the four sub-themes. Abstracts of 'posters', no longer than two-double A4 pages, should be sent to the Secretary of EAHMH, no later than 15 January 1993. The final selection of poster contributions will be made by the members of the Scientific Board and successful contributors will be invited to the first Congress. The researcher with the best poster will be awarded a certificate and a prize of 500FF for the purchase of books.

The second major area of activity for the Scientific Board has been the support for a number of proposed networks: 1) public health (convener: Prof. Jan Sundin, Linköping), 2) malaria (convener: Prof. Bernardino Fantini, Geneva), 3) international sanitary cooperation (convener: Prof. Bernardino Fantini, Geneva), 4) homoeopathy (convener: Prof. Robert Jütte, Stuttgart) and 5) physiology (convener: Prof. Claude Denru, Strasbourg). The aim of the networks is to develop research and promote cooperation. Information about all of these activities can be obtained from: Dr John Woodward, Chair, Scientific Board, EAHMH, Department of History, University of Sheffield, Sheffield, S10 2TN, or Prof. Claude Debru, Secretary, EAHMH, Centre Européen d’Histoire de la Médecine, Université Louis Pasteur, Faculté de Médecine, 4 rue Kirschleger, F-60785 Strasbourg Cedex, France.

FOR THE SOCIAL HISTORY OF MEDICINE

The information given below is accurate as far as we know. However, we accept no responsibility for errors. Please contact the organiser to confirm details. Notices of conferences and other events for inclusion in this section should be sent to the Editor. We reserve the right to edit and select items for inclusion.

Spring Conference 1993

History of Nutrition in Twentieth Century Britain

University of Glasgow, Glasgow, Friday and Saturday, 2-3 April 1993. Please note the dates given in the last issue were wrong.

Speakers include: Margaret Barnett, Mark Weatherall, Sally Harrocks, Nancy Blakstad, Robert Bud, David Smith, Tim Boon, Susan Williams, Francis McKe, George Daven-Smith, Charles Webster, Tim Lang, Roger Whitbread.

A flyer for this meeting is included with this mailing of the journal. If you return the slip or ring the number given, you will receive full details and an application form.

Further information from: Dr David Smith, Wellcome Unit for the History of Medicine, 5 University Gardens, University of Glasgow, Glasgow G12 8QX.

Annual Summer Conference 1993

Computers and the Social History of Medicine

9-11 July 1993, University of Southampton, Southampton. Offers of papers, and workshop sessions welcome.

Contact: Dr Bernard Harris, Department of Sociology and Social Policy, University of Southampton, Highfield, Southampton, SO17 1BJ.
Advance Notices

Spring Conference 1994
The Body and Beyond
April 1994, London.
Further details from: Dr Dorothy Porter, History, Birkbeck College, University of London, 46 Gordon Square, WC1H 0PH.

Summer Conference 1994
Family and Medicine
July 1994
Further details from: Dr Jonathan Barry, History, Queen's University, Exeter, EX4 4QH.

Other Meetings

Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine
Symposia on the History of Medicine, 1993
15 January 1993 Medicine and Architecture
19 February 1993 Medical Radicals
3 March 1993 The Health of Prisoners
25-26 March 1993 Medicine and Empire
20-22 May 1993 Contagion: Perspectives from Pre-Modern Societies
Details from: The Secretary, Academic Unit, Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine, 183 Buxton Road, London, NW1 2BB

Nottingham School of Public Health
Postgraduate Centre, City Hospital, Nottingham, 29 January 1993.
Speakers include: Charles Webster, Dorothy Porter, David Armstrong, Ben Mepham, Anne McClelland, Helen Meller
Details from: Anne Marie Rafferty, Queen's Medical Centre, Nottingham, NG7 2UH

American Association for the History of Medicine
Annual Meeting
Louisville, Kentucky, 11-16 May 1993.
Further details from: Professor Nancy J. Tomes, Dept. of History, State University of New York at Stony Brook, Stony Brook, NY 11794-4348, USA.

Imperial War Museum
Wartime Food Films
Speakers include: Kay Gladstone, David Smith, Ina Zweinger-Bargelos and Tim Boon.
Details from: Kay Gladstone, Imperial War Museum, London, SE1 or telephone 071 416 5289.
SOCIETY FOR THE SOCIAL HISTORY OF MEDICINE

POSTAL BALLOT

Seven nominations have been received for the five places on the Executive Committee.

Your may vote for not more than 5 candidates. Please put a cross in appropriate boxes on the voting slip below. Voting papers should be posted to the Hon. Secretary in a sealed envelope, to arrive not later than January 30th 1993. Please sign the back of envelope and print your name.

The results will be published in the Spring issue of the Gazette.

Send voting papers to: Lara Marks
Geography Department,
Queen Mary and Westfield College,
Mile End Road,
London, E1 4NS

Brief biographies of the candidates are given overleaf.

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<td>David Wright</td>
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Anne-Marie Raftery graduated from Edinburgh University with an integrated degree (BSc in Nursing Studies in 1992). While working as a staff nurse on vascular and gastrointestinal surgical wards at the Victoria Infirmary and Royal Infirmary, she completed an MSc in the Queen's Medical Centre, University of Nottingham on 'The Problem of Mental Disability: An Historical Perspective'. In 1995, she completed an MPhil on 'The Politics of Nurse Education at the Wellcome Trust'. Since 1991, she has been a full-time lecturer in the Department of Health and Social Policy at the University of Oxford.

**Nursing, women's history and the politics of welfare**
Further details from Sarah Smith, Conference Secretary, Department of Nursing and Midwifery Studies, University of Nottingham, Medical School, Queen's Medical Centre, Nottingham NG7 2UH.

European Association for the History of Psychiatry Triennial Meeting
Details from: Roy Porter, Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine, 193 Euston Road, London NW1 2BE.

**University of Amsterdam**
Healing, magic and belief in Europe, 15th-20th Centuries: New Perspectives
University of Amsterdam, 21-25 September 1994
Call for papers and details from Marijke Gijswijt-Hofstra, Department of History, University of Amsterdam, Spuistraat 134, 1012 VB Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

**CONFERENCE REPORTS**

SSHM Autumn Conference
"From 'idiocy' to 'Mental Deficiency': Historical Perspectives on People with Learning Disabilities" 17 October 1992, Institute of Historical Research, London.

The Society held its annual autumn day conference at the Institute of Historical Research (IHR) on Saturday, 17th of October. The conference sought to explore a wide range of issues relating to the history of 'idiocy' (in contradistinction to the history of 'madness'). Thus it was especially helpful to have Peter Rushton begin the day by examining the medieval and early modern distinction between those who were fools or idiots and those who lost their reason and became non compos mentis (lunatics).

Using petitions to quarter sessions by poor families who were seeking aid in handling or caring for 'idiot' children or relatives, Rushton emphasized the extra-ordinary uniformity in the process of the identification of 'idiocy' (which involved questions of economic sufficiency, age, and limits of knowledge), the continuity of labels (the innocent child and idiot child) and the responses by communities to the problem of mental disability in the early modern period.

Familial concerns over deficits of speech, social skills and economic self-sufficiency of relatives were also prevalent in the labelling and classification of 'idiocy' in Victorian England. This is revealed in David Wright's paper. But unlucky in the early modern period, the labelling of idiocy through certification in the Victorian period was...
Inextricably linked with the rising medical profession, and later, with norms of academic achievement which were not dominant in the pre- and early-industrial societies.

In contrast to the previous two papers, which dealt with, respectively, petitions under the poor law and families of the lower middle class, Hilary Dickinson discussed the social identification of 'idiocy' with reference to a boy of the local aristocracy - that of Augustus Lamb, the son of the second Viscount Melbourne. Through private letters and doctors notes, Dickinson presented a rare insight into the familial ties of parent and child in the context of an early nineteenth-century aristocratic family, including failed attempts at tutoring and a variety of medical treatments. Rather than an outcast member of the family hidden away in the confines of a large estate, Dickinson stressed in the strong family ties and the attempts to keep 'Augustus' a part of his local estate.

David Gladstone commenced the afternoon session with a paper on the Western Counties Asylum for Idiots, Starcross, and, in doing so, bridged the Victorian and inter-war periods. His paper reminded us of the importance of voluntary (charitable) hospitals in the recognition, identification and changing attitudes towards those labelled as 'idiot' and 'imbecile' and he underlined the changes the asylum underwent as it evolved from a philanthropic asylum to one which, because of financial reasons, took increasing numbers of rate-paying patients. Lastly, Gladstone emphasized the important role of the local community in the founding, staffing and applications to the charitable institution.

Matthew Thomson finished the day's papers with a discussion on mental deficiency in the inter-war period. Detailing the importance of the Mental Deficiency Act of 1913, he argued that the history of mental deficiency in the twentieth century has tended to ebb and flow with the wider historical debate over the eugenics movement and the debate over voluntary sterilization in the 1930s. Consequently, we know very little about the specifics of the Act and its impact. Thomson argued that the Act, if seen within the wider context of the 'specialisation' of the burgeoning welfare system and the interrelation of medical, educational and social security sectors, cannot be said to be a categorical failure. Rather, if seen in terms of the number of 'mental defectives' under local control it was a modest success. Ironically, whilst the Board of Control, with its eugenic-inspired origins, has had a bad press, Thomson made a persuasive argument that, with all its faults, the Board of Control (and the parallel voluntary bodies) were at least a distinct voice for the cause of mental deficiency, while, under the National Health Service, the separate cause of mental deficiency was lost in the wider concerns of universal medicare.

Anne Digby chaired the final 'round-table' discussion and managed to channel disparate themes into a spirited interchange of ideas between the floor and speakers on a few key issues - namely, the importance of gender in the construction of mental deficiency, the origins and consequences of labelling, and the current policy of de-institutionalisation. Of these, the participants seemed most interested in the role of lay and professional bodies in negotiating the meaning of disability. Indeed, one participant questioned the ability of writing a 'history of idiocy' at all, due to the problematic nature of the 'condition' and the changing nomenclature which seems, rather than settled, to have become increasingly fragmented and complex.

While the number of topics capable of being discussed in a day conference was necessarily limited, all participants and the audience seemed genuinely enthusiastic about the discussion and about the prospect of continued, informal correspondence. There also seemed wide support for some sort of publication deriving from the day's proceedings. Many thanks to Anne Digby for her help in organizing the conference, Lara Marks, Margaret Pelling and Richard Smith for chairing the sections, David Smith for manning the reception desk, Vanessa King and Bridget Taylor of the IHR for a wonderful catering job, and the other members of the SSSH Executive for their support in the day's proceedings.

David Wright, Linacre College, Oxford

Membership of the Society for the Social History of Medicine includes a subscription to the journal and is paid through: Journals Marketing Department, Oxford University Press, Pilkington House, Southfield Road, Eynsham, Oxford, OX8 1JU.
The subscription in 1992 is £16 (UK and Europe) and $28 elsewhere. In 1993 it will be £19 and $44 elsewhere. Details of membership and of the Society's activities are available from the Hon. Secretary.

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