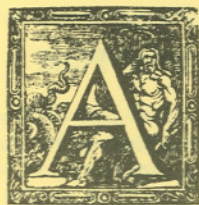


OSLER LIBRARY NEWSLETTER

McGILL UNIVERSITY, MONTREAL, CANADA

No. 42 — February 1983

THE OPEN ARMS REVISITED AND RENEWED



LITTLE MORE than a century ago there was completed at 13 Norham Gardens, in Oxford, a house so fashionable that its architect, William Wilkinson, featured it in his book on English country houses. In 1906 it was to become, after a year of modifications, the home of

William Osler, Regius Professor of Medicine, and his wife, Grace Revere Osler.

From 1906 to 1919 hospitality was dispensed by the Oslers on a scale unknown before or since in Oxford. Trans-Atlantic visitors, in particular, were entertained and 13 Norham Gardens soon became known as The Open Arms. After Sir William's death in December 1919, the stream of visitors abated, but for almost ten years more the warmth of Lady Osler's friendship with Oxford students and other visitors persisted. She left this great brick mansion to Christ Church College. My old teacher, Professor A.D. Gardner, as Regius Professor of Medicine, did not occupy The Open Arms. He lived for many years on Boar's Hill, at which time I studied bacteriology with him and his assistant, Roy Vollum, an early Rhodes Scholar. In the meantime the house had deteriorated and when, in 1950, that perceptive pathologist and Oslerian, A.H.T. Robb-Smith, saw a tree growing out of the roof, all agreed that the time had come to act. Accordingly Gardner, supported by Robb-Smith, persuaded Christ Church to give the house to Oxford University in the hope that his successors as Regius Professor might live in it, thus ensuring its restoration and proper maintenance.

The house had suffered occupancy by an Institute of Mathematics and by the pre-St. Anne's College group known as the Society of Home Students. On Sir George Pickering's election to the Regius Professorship in 1956 he made a suitable home in The Open Arms, embracing the delightful rooms on the main floor and on the first floor, while areas not thus needed were subdivided off as future small apartments. On Sir George Pickering's retirement, he was succeeded by Sir Richard Doll, who also lived in The Open Arms (*Osler Library Newsletter*, February 1974).

Upon the retirement of Sir Richard Doll from the Regius Professorship four years ago, when he became Warden of the new Green College, a new Regius Professor, Henry Harris, was appointed, but he, like Gardner, already owned a house in Oxford and did not wish to take on anything of the size of 13 Norham Gardens.

I had hoped that the excellent Wellcome Unit in the History of Medicine might inherit The Open Arms, but Oxford City's town council ruled against any further institutional use of the large

The initial letter on this page is reproduced from Anthony Wood, *Athenae Oxonienses: An exact history of all the writers and bishops who have had their education in the most ancient and famous University of Oxford from . . . 1500, to . . . 1695 . . .* Second edition, volume 2, London, 1721. The two volumes of this work were originally the property of Dr. Thomas Archibald Malloch. His son, Professor Archibald E. Malloch, has recently presented them to the Osler Library.

The author of the leading article in this issue is Dr. William C. Gibson, Chairman of the Universities Council of British Columbia. Believing that readers of the *Newsletter* would welcome news of the present status of The Open Arms, the Editorial Committee invited Dr. Gibson to contribute this report.

Dr. Gibson has long been an ardent and loyal Oslerian. He was introduced to Sir William soon after he entered McGill University as a medical student in the 1930s. He lost no time in acquainting himself with Dr. Francis and the Osler Library. His interest in Osler was promptly noted by Dr. Maude Abbott who enlisted his services as an assistant in the preparation of her revised bibliography of Osler's writings. So his participation in Oslerian work has spanned almost fifty years.

In recent years Dr. Gibson, as a President of the American Osler Society, has been active and very effective in stimulating interest in the future of The Open Arms.

homes in the Norham Gardens area because they felt that the housing stock within the city was being eroded. By the same token a computer facility of the university was ruled out as a potential occupant.

Then Sir Richard and Lady Doll conceived of a plan to save 13 Norham Gardens as a residential property by attaching it to Green College on a lease basis for 21 years. Green College, a tutorial and postgraduate medical college, was founded in 1979 by the Manchester-born electrical engineer, Cecil Green. This college is situated on the three acres immediately north of the Radcliffe Infirmary. It consists today of beautiful quadrangular residential, administrative, and educational units surrounding the massive Radcliffe Observatory (1774). Thus, Green College is but a very short walk from Norham Gardens.

The Open Arms now enters a new life, with its structure mostly renovated, but with a few basic problems remaining. For example, the severity of the winter of 1979-80 was disastrous for some of the slates and the brick work. Oslerians around the world have still an opportunity to contribute to another of those productive "lost causes" for which Oxford is allegedly famous.

Oslerians will be interested in the ingenious scheme which the ever-patient and hard-working Dolls have devised to keep 13 Norham Gardens a viable entity. The main floor will contain two fine rooms for the display of Osleriana which is being contributed by Osler's followers around the world. The remainder of the floor, including the kitchen and drawing room, will be used by the Newcomers Club — a voluntary organization which has been in existence for many years. It receives a small grant from the university for its work in welcoming the wives and families of new members of the professoriate as well as short-term visitors such as those on sabbatical leave.

The catalytic role of the Newcomers Club in helping new arrivals to get the best out of their time in Oxford is really a continuation of the very practical hospitality and counsel dispensed by the Oslers in their time. The City of Oxford authorities were keen on this aspect of the renewed life of 13 Norham Gardens.

Next floor up, one finds an excellent large "flat" for the use of future Regius Professors of Medicine, should they wish to use it. As the present Regius does not require it, this extensive area has been leased for a period to an immunologist who has returned to Oxford in a research capacity. Typically, the Dolls have placed in it, to get things started, much of the furniture from their London flat.

Quite separate from the above features there are four apartments for married students in the field of medicine. Three of these flats contain one bedroom and one sitting room, kitchen and bath, while one has two bedrooms. All are situated high enough in the mansion to provide good views over The Parks or North Oxford. Under Lady Doll's constant supervision the builders produced these very comfortable quarters.

Green College contributed £25,000 towards the renovations and this was matched by the University. Thereafter a requirement of £30,000 remained to be found. Many individuals, led by John P. McGovern of Houston, Texas, have contributed. A small number of foundations have helped as well. There remain some basic requirements — such as a renewed heating system and repairs to the outside of the building — so that well-wishers around the world can still help. Contributions to Oxford University for this designated purpose qualify for income tax deductibility in Canada and the United States. Members of the Osler Club of London and of the American Osler Society were generous contributors even when it was not certain what the future held for this historic home. Now, however, a multi-purpose role has been successfully negotiated by the Warden of Green College and all that remains is for devotees of the Oslerian tradition to support this imaginative new venture in old and hallowed surroundings.

Perhaps, in conclusion, I might add a few words about Oxford Medicine. The association with Oxford of earlier scientists, such as Harvey, Wren, Willis, and Boyle, has been extended more recently by Sherrington, his three Nobel Laureate students — Florey, Eccles, and Granit — the lesser known Nobel Laureate Rodney Porter, the potent Enzyme Group, and Sir Rex Richards (of nuclear magnetic resonance fame). And note must be taken too of Sir Richard Doll's contributions to the relation between smoking and cancer of the lung.

The fact is that 100 students in each year of Oxford's six-year medical degree course are the most fortunate students in the world. The accomplished teachers and the enquiring minds to which these students are exposed have made Oxford a medical mecca. The extension into the clinical years of Oxford's unique tutorial system has been one of the goals of Green College. Another has been the bringing together in its refectories and common rooms of medical scientists with engineering and social scientists. The neighbouring Wellcome Unit in the History of Medicine would have pleased Osler, whose last speech at Oxford in 1919 dwelt so cogently on "The Old Humanities and the New Science."

Let Oslerians everywhere be assured, therefore, that The Open Arms is back in service, with several new roles, but basically in its old one of felicitous hospitality in the tradition established three-quarters of a century ago by William and Grace Osler. Thus does history repeat and renew itself.

William C. Gibson

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Hugh Ernest MacDermot (1888-1983)

As this *Newsletter* goes to press, we have learned of the death on January 31st of Dr. H.E. MacDermot, a member of the Osler Library's Board of Curators since 1954 and a good friend to W.W. Francis and all connected with the Library. Many will recall that he was an editor of the volume of tributes to Francis published in 1956 by the Osler Society of McGill University, a Society which Dr. MacDermot faithfully and actively supported in its earlier years.

The Friends Endowment Fund

The Board of Curators of the Osler Library at its 1979 meeting authorized the establishment of a Friends Endowment Fund, the income from which is to go towards the expenses of the *Newsletter*, thus freeing the yearly dues of the Friends for various special projects, such as the restoration and purchase of books (*Osler Library Newsletter*, no. 32). A year later, Dr. H. Rocke Robertson, President of the Friends, reported on the progress of the Fund, stating that the preliminary goal had been met (*Osler Library Newsletter*, no. 35). Since then we have continued our efforts to increase the capital of the Endowment Fund beyond the preliminary goal. We are happy to acknowledge that within the past few months generous contributions to this Fund have been made by Dr. and Mrs. Harold N. Segall, Dr. John P. McGovern, Dr. Donald R. Wilson, and The Gladys and Merrill Muttart Foundation. We are most grateful for this much needed support.

Medical and History of Medicine Libraries

The Watermark, published by the Association of Librarians in the History of the Health Sciences, has recently published an article entitled, "Medical Libraries and History of Medicine Libraries" written by the Osler Librarian. Although written for other librarians, it might interest those who use or are concerned with history of medicine libraries. Consequently, we have obtained a small supply of reprints and would be glad to send them to individuals interested in this subject. Write to Mrs. Lorraine Hicks, Osler Library, 3655 Drummond Street, Montreal, PQ, H3G 1Y6.

Redpath Museum Exhibit in the Osler Library

The Redpath Museum of McGill University is celebrating its centenary. As part of this celebration, the Osler Library will host an exhibit presented by the Redpath Museum. It is to be entitled "Minerals and Medicine" and will display minerals used as therapeutic agents as well as those related to disease syndromes. The exhibit will be mounted in March and remain in place until the middle of May.

Osler Day — 1983

Osler Day this year falls on Wednesday, April 20th. The Osler Lecturer is to be Michael Bliss, Professor of History at the University of Toronto and author of the recently published book *The Discovery of Insulin* and other works. He is currently writing a biography of Sir Frederick Banting. The title of his lecture will be "The Place of the Discovery of Insulin in the History of Canadian Medical Research".

Other events of Osler Day are the annual meeting of the Board of Curators of the Osler Library in the morning and the Osler Banquet in the evening. Professor Bliss will be the honoured guest at

the Banquet and will respond to questions from the floor about his Osler Lecture delivered that afternoon.

1982-83 Contributors to the Friends of the Osler Library

The Library gratefully acknowledges the support it has received from Friends, both old and new, who have responded to the appeal for funds for the 1982-83 academic year. To date 256 Friends have given a total of approximately \$9,500. Most of the contributions have come from Friends in Canada and the United States of America. However, very welcome contributions have come also from Australia, Chile, Denmark, England, Holland, India, Switzerland, and West Germany.

The names of Friends whose contributions are received after January 31, 1983 will be listed in the June issue of the *Newsletter*.

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