

The History of the Canadian Gynaecological Society

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In the spring of 1936, Dr. John Fraser, then Professor of Obstetrics and Gynaecology at McGill University, came to Toronto to address the Academy of Medicine. He brought with him one of his junior staff, Dr. Newell Philpott (Figure 1). Dr. W.A. Scott had just been appointed to the Chair in Toronto and his most junior staff member and assistant was Dr. Leslie Watt (Figure 2). Dr. Fraser was entertained at lunch by Dr. Scott, and the two younger men were left much on their own. Dr. Leslie Watt, in an interview on November 27, 1998, recalled that first meeting. “That evening, Dr. Philpott and I had dinner and we began to talk about things in our departments and we thought it would be a good thing if we got to know each other better. The junior people on the staff at McGill and Toronto were being pushed aside and the senior people were doing all the work. The surgeons had already formed a travel club and it was successful. Travel Clubs had for some time been active in Europe. That was really the idea of the travel club. We canvassed people at McGill and Toronto and decided we would meet one year at McGill and one year in Toronto. That was all we could afford and we were not even taking our wives at that time. It was a great thing because we got to know each other very well. Later we took in Queen’s University. It was initially confined to teaching hospitals and originally departmental chairmen were not included nor wanted in the membership.”

It was ironic that within a short time, membership in the group had expanded across Canada, and a number of members had become departmental chairmen in their respective universities. Dr. R.B. Meiklejohn¹ notes the minutes of the inaugural meeting of the Canadian Gynaecological Society at the Toronto General Hospital, September 26, 1936. “The meeting



Dr. Newell W. Philpott (about 1970)



Dr. G. Leslie Watt – 1973

resulted from a mutual desire on the part of the younger obstetricians and gynaecologists of Toronto and Montreal to form a gynaecological travel club for yearly visits to Canadian and American medical centres.”

After a discussion of organizational requirements, it was agreed that: (1) members must be resident in Eastern Canada and must confine their practice to obstetrics and gynaecology; (2) anyone in charge of a hospital service was excluded from membership; (3) meetings were to be held annually in a university centre and the venue was to be fixed one year in advance. An executive committee was appointed and instructed to present a tentative constitution at the next meeting. Dr. G. Leslie Watt was elected President and Dr. N.W. Philpott, Secretary. Named as Honorary Members were Professors J.R. Fraser and W.A. Scott, the latter being particularly supportive, and Associate Professors A.D. Campbell, D’Arcy Frawley and Robert Wesley. Present at this inaugural meeting and declared to be Charter Members were, from Toronto: L.T. Armstrong, D.E. Cannell, W.A. Johnston, John Mann, W.T. Noonan, F.J. O’Leary, M.C. Watson and G.L. Watt; from

Montreal: G.T. Altimus, J.S. Henry, P.J. Kearns, K.T. MacFarlane, N.W. Philpott, D.W. Sparling and C.V. Ward. A clinical programme was presented with Drs. Henderson, Johnston, Watt and Mann participating. A guest at the informal dinner held on that occasion was Mr. Charles Read, later Sir Charles and a President of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists.

The Canadian Gynaecological Society also became known as The Canadian Gynaecological Society Travel Club or Senior Travel Club and sometimes the CGS. At the third meeting in 1938 (Figure 3) in Toronto, the constitution was accepted. The guest speaker for that meeting was Professor William Boyd, well-known pathologist and author. In 1940, with some members of the Society already on active service, consideration was given to discontinuing the meetings until after the war. The decision was made to continue as long as was practical.¹

In 1941, the Society members requested that their executive approach “our Honorary Members as well as other Fellows of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada and express the regret and anxiety of this Society over the lack of representation of the speciality of Obstetrics and Gynaecology on the Council of the Royal College”.¹ In 1942, at the annual meeting held at the Royal Victoria Hospital in Montreal, there was more discussion about the less than satisfactory relationship between the speciality of obstetrics and gynaecology and the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada. When the Canadian Gynaecological Society was organized in 1936, the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada had not recognized Obstetrics and Gynaecology as a branch of Medicine. In October 1943, the Society met at the Toronto General Hospital, and it was reported that the matter of granting specialist certification in obstetrics and gynaecology was being considered by the Royal College. It was felt that some action must be taken to improve the status of obstetricians and gynaecologists in Canada by securing adequate representations; there was no body in Canada to represent those who confined their practices to obstetrics and gynaecol-



Figure 3. Meeting of the Canadian Gynaecological Society – 1938, Toronto (Charter Members)

ogy. Also there were rumours of socialized medicine in the future.¹ What should be done?

Dr. N.W. Philpott from Montreal moved, "that our Society go on record as being in favour of the formation of a Canadian Society, which will represent those specializing in obstetrics and gynaecology." The motion was seconded by Dr. R.T. Weaver of Hamilton and carried unanimously. The deliberations of the Canadian Gynaecological Society received full support from the chairmen of departments of obstetrics and gynaecology in Canada, and a seven-member council for the new society was formed. Three members of the Canadian Gynaecological Society, Drs. Nelson Henderson, James Goodwin and A. Nash, were elected to council, and all other members of the CGS were made charter members of the new Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada.¹ In remembering these events, Dr. Leslie Watt said that "Dr. Newell Philpott was the best medical politician I ever knew. He guided us along during the time that we became more widespread in our interests, more academic. We wanted the group to be small so that we could go into the operating rooms."

At the eighth meeting, in 1943 at the Toronto General Hospital, papers were presented on the comprehensive treatment of cervical cancer, ovarian malignancy and caudal anaesthesia. Dr. Phillip Greey, Department of Bacteriology, presented a paper on a new drug called penicillin, "the most efficacious agent at that time discovered for the treatment of grave infections." Because of limited quantities, its use had to be limited to cases that did not respond to sulphonamides.¹

Dr. Watt was President of the Society in 1936 when it met for its inaugural meeting at the Toronto General Hospital, its President for the second meeting in 1937 at the Royal Victoria Hospital, Montreal, and again for the twenty-fifth meeting in Toronto where he stated, "that it has been successful in many ways has been evident to all. It has had a great influence on the professional lives of all members and has broadened their interest in many ways. Nearly all the outstanding American universities have been



Figure 4. Dr. Louis Quinn and Dr. Constant Nucci, Vancouver Meeting – 1980

visited and wherever we have gone, we have met the utmost cordiality and I think it is fair to say that the members have been looked on with favour wherever they have gone. Perhaps even more important is the influence this Society has been able to exert on our specialty during the formative years of specialization."¹

Members frequently recall the experiences of the thirtieth meeting in 1965 in London, Glasgow and Stockholm. Dr. Louis Quinn (Figure 4) from Montreal had chartered an Air Canada DC8 for the trip. The programme included visits to the Queen Charlotte's Research Centre with Professor Andrew Clayton, later Sir Andrew, and the Chelsea Hospital for Women where they spent an afternoon in the operating theatre with Sir Arthur Bell and his staff. The members were guests of the Chelsea Clinical Society at the building of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists. From Chelsea, the Travel Club went to Glasgow for the opening of the British Congress of Obstetrics and Gynaecology and from there to Stockholm, with a visit to the Radiumhemmet and Dr. Kottmeir.¹

The forty-sixth meeting was held in Washington, DC, in 1981, and accommodation was provided by the Watergate Hotel, overlooking the Potomac River and Arlington. It was here that Angela Pace was disturbed to find lead pellets on the floor in the hotel room occupied by herself and husband Murray. She was reassured that they were only escaped weights from the window draperies. Dr. Allen Weingold



Figure 5. Dr. Kenneth MacFarlane (about 1985) "Master of the black keys leading a sing-song."

and staff of the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, George Washington Medical Centre, presented an excellent programme which included papers on Herpetic Infection in Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Maternal and Fetal Cardiovascular Effects of Epidural Morphine, the Management of the Growth Retarded Fetus and the Woman at Risk for Developing Ovarian Carcinoma. The Travel Club visited the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology where the Director, Colonel W.R. Cowan, gave a talk on the history and evolution of the Institute. There were visits to the White House and the National Gallery of Art.¹ At this and many other meetings, the evenings ended with entertainment by the "doctor's doctor, teacher's teacher and Pied Piper of the black keys", Dr. Kenneth MacFarlane (Figure 5).

The fiftieth meeting was in Montreal where Dr. Brian Little and his staff presented a noteworthy scientific programme. At the anniversary banquet, Dr. Watt, honorary President, spoke on his memories of the Society over the

**Table 1. ANNUAL HISTORICAL LECTURE
THE CANADIAN GYNAECOLOGICAL
SOCIETY**

1989	Thomas Cullen and the Umbilical Black Eye – T.F. Baskett, Halifax.
1990	The Chamberlen Family: Scientists or Entrepreneurs? – J.K. Milne, London.
1991	Scottish Man-Midwives in London – J.J. Boyd, Edmonton.
1992	The Death of Napoleon: Climate, Hypochondriasis or Bourbon? H.J. Pendleton, Vancouver.
1993	Historical Aspects of the Rotunda Hospital, Dublin – G. Henry, Past Master of the Rotunda.
1994	Penis Captivus – A.O. Daicar, Kingston.
1995	Back to the Future: Maternal Mortality in Montreal – M.E. Boyd, Montreal.
1996	The Big Birth – A.M. Pace, North Bay.
1997	Munro Kerr – C.R. Whitfield, Professor Emeritus of Ob/Gyn, University of Glasgow.
1998	William Osler: A Biography – M. Bliss, Professor of History, University of Toronto.
1999	The True "Intrepid" – Sir William Stephenson and the Unknown Agents – W. Macdonald, Winnipeg.
2000	Dr. John Roe: Explorer without honour – A. Skelton, Calgary. Virginia Apgar: A Medical Pioneer – D. Nelson, Calgary.
2001	Bermuda, a place in the insurance world: Dr. The Hon. Grant Gibbons, Opposition Leader, Government of Bermuda.

Table 2. MEETINGS OF THE SOCIETY SINCE ITS ORGANIZATION – 1936

Year	Place	President	Secretary
1936	Toronto, Ontario	G.L. Watt	N.W. Philpott
1937	Montreal, Quebec	G.L. Watt	N.W. Philpott
1938	Toronto, Ontario	N.W. Philpott	M.C. Watson
1939	Montreal, Quebec	M.C. Watson	C.V. Ward
1940	Kingston, Ontario	C.V. Ward	P.A. McLeod
1941	Toronto, Ontario	P.A. McLeod	D.N. Henderson
1942	Montreal, Quebec	D.N. Henderson	J.S. Henry
1943	Toronto, Ontario	J.S. Henry	J.C. Goodwin
1944	Montreal, Quebec	J.C. Goodwin	K.T. MacFarlane
1945	Boston, Massachusetts	K.T. MacFarlane	J.F. Puddicombe
1946	Philadelphia, Pennsylvania	J.F. Puddicombe	J.C. Whyte
1947	New York City	R.T. Weaver	J.C. Whyte
1948	Ann Arbor, Michigan	A.B. Nash	J.C. Whyte
1949	Vancouver & Victoria	A.B. Nash	F.D. Johnston
1950	Chicago, Illinois	J.C. Whyte	F.D. Johnston
1951	Montebello, Quebec	D.E. Cannell	F.D. Johnston
1952	Baltimore, Maryland	J.L. McArthur	R.B. Meiklejohn
1953	Rochester, Minnesota	F.D. Johnston	R.B. Meiklejohn
1954	Montreal, Quebec	R.B. Meiklejohn	D.W. Sparling
1955	San Francisco	A.M. Agnew	D.W. Sparling
1956	Murray Bay, Quebec	C.V. Ward	D.W. Sparling
1957	New Orleans	C.V. Ward	D.W. Sparling
1958	Winnipeg, Manitoba	D.W. Sparling	L.J. Quinn
1959	Durham, NC	G.B. Maughan	L.J. Quinn
1960	Toronto, Ontario	G.L. Watt	L.J. Quinn
1961	Montreal, Quebec	W.R. Foote	L.J. Quinn
1962	Hamilton & London	L.J. Quinn	R.M. Parsons
1963	St. Louis	A.D.T. Purdy	R.M. Parsons
1964	Halifax, NS	D.L. Adamson	R.M. Parsons
1965	Stockholm	A.E. Mowry	R.M. Parsons
1966	Portland, Oregon	G.A. Simpson	G.R. Girvan
1967	Ottawa, Ontario	R.M. Parsons	G.R. Girvan
1968	Cleveland, Ohio	F.L. Johnston	G.R. Girvan
1969	Augusta, Georgia	B.D. Best	G.R. Girvan
1970	Houston, Texas	J.L. MacArthur	C.C. Lindsay
1971	Dublin, Ireland	G.R. Girvan	C.C. Lindsay
1972	Murray Bay, and Quebec City, Quebec	L.E. Cowan	C.C. Lindsay
1973	Edmonton, Alberta	A.M. Pain	C.C. Lindsay
1974	Chapel Hill, NC	W.D. Marshall	A.S. Majury

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Year	Place	President	Secretary
1975	Kingston, Ontario	F.D. Wanamaker	A.S. Majury
1976	Winnipeg, Manitoba	C.C. Lindsay	A.S. Majury
1977	Edinburgh, Scotland	W.D. Frew	A.S. Majury
1978	Toronto, Ontario	J.M. Corston	P.F. Beirne
1979	Halifax, NS	A.S. Majury	P.F. Beirne
1980	Vancouver, BC	W.R.C. Tupper	P.F. Beirne
1981	Washington, DC	T.B. Robson	P.F. Beirne
1982	London, Ontario	M.P. Wearing	C. Nucci
1983	Calgary, Alberta	P.F. Beirne	A.S. Majury
1984	St. John's, NF	J.W. Millson	P.G. Puddicombe
1985	Montreal, Quebec	A.O. Daicar	P.G. Puddicombe
1986	Denver, Colorado	P.G. Harding	P.G. Puddicombe
1987	Hamilton, Ontario	J.C. McCawley	P.G. Puddicombe
1988	Saskatoon, Saskatchewan	J.O. Swales	P.G. Puddicombe
1989	Ottawa, Ontario	F.R. Papsin	J.K. Milne
1990	Boston, Massachusetts	D.C. Robinson	J.K. Milne
1991	Quebec City, Quebec	P.G. Puddicombe	J.K. Milne
1992	Edmonton, Alberta	C. Nucci	H.J. Pendleton
1993	Dublin, Ireland	J.K. Milne	H.J. Pendleton
1994	Kingston, Ontario	T.F. Baskett	H.J. Pendleton
1995	Halifax, Nova Scotia	D.R. Popkin	R.D. Nicholson
1996	Vancouver, BC	L.A. Belch	R.D. Nicholson
1997	Glasgow, Scotland	H.J. Pendleton	R.D. Nicholson
1998	Toronto, Ontario	R.J. Seymour	R.D. Nicholson
1999	Winnipeg, Manitoba	R.D. Nicholson	J.J. Boyd
2000	Calgary, Alberta	R.A. Livingstone	J.J. Boyd
2001	Bermuda	P.W. Watts	J.J. Boyd

previous 50 years and recalled the earlier years and the pleasure of meeting the leaders in the field and seeing them perform in the operating room or delivery room. At the fifty-first meeting in 1986 in Denver, Colorado, Dr. R.B. Meiklejohn produced the book "1936-1985: The First Fifty Years, The Canadian Gynaecological Society".¹ Dr. Ed Makowski, Dr. Tommy Evans and staff at Denver hosted an outstanding scientific event.² Dr. Arthur Purdy, respected for his wisdom and admired for his wit, was as entertaining as usual but it was apparent that his health was declining. It was Dr. Purdy's last meeting. The Society had recently lost a number

of faithful members, including Louis Quinn who never missed a meeting during 28 years of membership and Arthur Majury who graciously but sternly welcomed new members, advising them of their responsibilities.

At the Denver meeting, the President, Paul Harding, asked each member to record what the Society meant to them.² This was in reality a request to consider our future direction. Thus, the first fifty years were brought to closure, the second fifty were under way. Over the next few years, the educational, social and spousal objectives of the "Travel Club" were reviewed. Recruitment of members with consideration of

gender and regional representation, attendance requirements, places of meetings (in hospitals or hotels), the degree of participation by Society members in the programme, spousal integration and costs, would all require consideration.

After the Denver meeting, nine of the following twelve meetings were held in Canadian universities, and it was a warming experience to meet, see and listen to the people involved in the research and teaching and to observe the high standard of work in our medical schools. The nine visits to Canadian centres also provided cultural opportunities, including: visits to the Royal Botanical Gardens in Hamilton; Batoche, site of the Louis Riel Rebellion; the National Gallery of Canada; Quebec City and its historical ambience; historic Fort Edmonton, the Thousand Islands and Fort Henry in Kingston; the galleries and harbour of Halifax; from Vancouver to Whistler/Blackcomb and Howe Sound; and a city and harbour tour showing the vibrancy of Toronto.

The Boston, Dublin and Glasgow experiences of 1990, 1993 and 1997, respectively, were unforgettable occasions. In Dublin, there were visits and lectures at the National Maternal Hospital, the Coombe Lying-in Hospital and the Dublin Rotunda Hospital. Professor G. Henry, Past Master of the Rotunda, presented the annual historical lecture on "Historical Aspects of the Rotunda Hospital". It is the famous maternity hospital started by Bartholomew Mosse in 1745, known as the Dublin Lying-in Hospital until 1767, at which time the Rotunda was built on the present site.³ During a 1993 dinner at the National Maternity Hospital, Angela Pace recalls Professor Darling, then the current Master of the Rotunda, talking about Chopin, Dickens and Oscar Wilde and their fund-raising activities.⁴ Even then, entertainment by artists was a method of raising money for a hospital. The visits to various historical sites in Dublin, Trinity College Library and the Book of Kells are remembered, as is the warm reception of our Irish hosts. Angela Pace enthusiastically cites the joy of exploring the cultural and geographical highlights of various centres and



Figure 6. "The Tie"

attending the Annual Historical Lectures.⁴

In 1989, Dr. Tom Baskett presented the first Annual Historical Lecture, "Thomas Cullen and the Umbilical Black Eye" (Table 1). While this was the first annual historical lecture, it was not the first historical lecture. In 1941, Dr. Gerald Cosbie M.C., a well-known and respected Canadian gynaecologist, presented a paper on "The Life and Times of Ambroise Paré: an appropriate topic for a distinguished veteran of the first World War who had been wounded and decorated".¹

At the 1989 meeting in Ottawa, Dr. John Boyd from Edmonton noted that the Society did not have a distinguishing logo, and he enthusiastically recommended that one be selected, placed on a tie and for those not wanting a tie, perhaps a Society table cloth, scarf or other adornment. In spite of less than enthusiastic support from colleagues, John pushed on with annual reports on the progress of "The



Figure 7. Breakfast at the Westbury – Dublin 1993

Tie”. The polar bear was proposed as an appropriate logo but members were unable to grasp the relevance or bearing between the polar animal and the gynaecologist. “The Tie” (Figure 6), unveiled at the meeting in Vancouver in 1996, was a success. The logo featured a representation of the world (suggested travel) with the Fallopian tubes arranged about it. It was the insignia designed by Dr. Meiklejohn 11 years previously for the cover of the commemorative book, “The First Fifty Years”.

In a recent interview, Dr. G. Leslie Watt discussed his vision for the future of the Society. “The business of obstetrics has changed so much,” he said. “For the Society, the best purpose is to have a small well-knit group. I would like to see the Society go on and prosper as it has in the past. It can do a lot of good.” Concerning the changing “business of obstetrics”, a 1997 committee led by Dr. Ron Livingstone made recommendations to update further the traditional role of the Society. Significant changes adopted were emphasis on recruitment with attention to appropriate regional and gender representation, a non gender-specific spousal programme, and an exemption from dues for probationary new members. It was suggested that Society members might participate in educational programmes to create a two-way dialogue between the Society and the host faculty (minutes, 1997).

Dr. R.B Meiklejohn summarized the feelings of many members when he said, “it is the best organization I ever belonged to, there is no doubt about that.” He also said that, “unlike the large formal meeting, the travel-club with its small membership

provides opportunity for informal discussion with the presenter, often on a one-to-one basis.” This becomes even more valuable when technical procedures are being demonstrated. Finally, with the passing years, the regular get-togethers (Figure 7) lead to “strong and rewarding friendships and the opportunity to meet extraordinary people in different places” (Table 2). The CGS continues to strengthen the professional lives of its members.^{5,6}

Note concerning the founders of the Society:

Dr. Watt died on March 25, 2000 at the age of 97.
Dr. Philpott died in Montreal on December 30, 1999 at the age of 97.

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