



The Veterinary History Society

Newsletter November 2023

Welcome to the November newsletter of the Veterinary History Society. We aim to update members on developments and plans. Do feel free to pass this newsletter on to any colleagues who may be interested to know more about the society.

Committee Update

After many years as Chairman of the society, Gary Clayton-Jones has decided to stand down from that position. All, we are sure, would wish to thank Gary for his input and leadership over recent years, especially having to help guide the society through the troubled and uncertain times during the Covid pandemic.

At the Annual General Meeting, held on September 19th, Paul Watkins was elected to the role of Chairman. Full details of the committee members are available at the VHS website:

<https://www.veterinaryhistorysociety.org.uk/>

Annual General Meeting

This was held on 19th September 2023 at The George Public House, Southwark, London. Our thanks to Robin Bone for organising the event, and he has provided a brief report below:

We met at the George Inn, London's only remaining ancient galleried pub for lunch, our AGM and an interesting talk from Paul Watkins on the fascinating and varied career of George Dunkin MRCVS.

We then walked a short distance to the Victorian Operating Theatre and Herb Garrett in St Thomas's Church. The operating theatre was constructed as an extension, into the roof space of the church, from the women's ward in the adjoining St Thomas' Hospital. When the hospital was demolished in the 1870s the theatre was forgotten about and only re-discovered many years later. We had a very interesting talk from one of the curators about the surgical practice in early-mid nineteenth century, initially with no anaesthetics. We were told how the best surgeon at the time could remove a human leg in three seconds. Infection rates worsened after the introduction of anaesthesia as the surgical procedures were carried out more slowly. We then looked around the Herb Garrett full of all pharmacy and surgical equipment, a lot of which was familiar and is often to be found at the back of cupboards in many old veterinary practices. The curator was surprised that some of us could easily remember the use of ether and chloroform. A fascinating visit.

Financial Report

At the AGM our Honorary Treasurer, Robin Bone presented the accounts for the financial year 2022-23. During that year there was a slight surplus over income, leaving the society with a reserve of just over £20,000. In light of this, although obviously aware of rising costs, especially in relation to postage, the committee meeting in October decided to keep the annual membership fee unchanged for the coming year.

Future Meetings

It is planned to trial a zoom meeting for the society in early 2024. Many members may have participated in such a meeting already, and we see this very much as a trial. Different from in person meetings, we hope it may allow members to meet 'virtually' and we would encourage you to consider presenting a paper. Presentations do not have to be very long, and might just involve talking about veterinary memories, or perhaps about an artefact, old instrument or perhaps an illustration which has a historical context. We will write again in the new year to provide further details.

We wish to organise an in person meeting next year, and amongst venues we are exploring are the Museum of English Rural Life in Reading, The Garden of Medicinal Plants of the Royal College of Physicians and the recently refurbished Hunterian Museum of the Royal College of Surgeons of England.

World Association for the History of Veterinary Medicine

The Association is planning its biennial conference in September 2024 to be held in the Spanish City of León. Details will be available at the WAVHM website, or can be obtained from the President, Dr Alison Skipper by email: alisonmskipper@gmail.com.

New Books

Members may be interested in two recent additions to the literature on veterinary history. Coinciding with the bicentenary of the Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies, Alastair Macdonald and Colin Warwick have published 'The History of Veterinary Education in Edinburgh', Edinburgh University Press, 2023. Peter Lees, formerly of the Royal Veterinary College, has published a biography of James Neviile Marshall, VC, entitled 'A Hero for All Times', Pen and Sword, 2023.

The Journal

The editor, Teresa Johnston, remains keen for articles for the journal. No article is too short, and she is happy to receive any notifications about books, meetings or any related matters which have an association with veterinary history. Authors do not have to be members of the society....although we would encourage them to join. Contact Teresa at teresajanejohnston@gmail.com.

Feedback

If you have any questions or feedback, then please do not hesitate to contact us at veterinaryhistorysociety@gmail.com

And finally: Veterinary Eponyms

Snook Spay Hook

The Snook spay hook is still widely used in veterinary practice, but who was Snook?



James H Snook: An American veterinarian was born in 1879 and qualified from the Ohio Veterinary College in 1908. He was selected for the USA shooting team at the 1920 Antwerp Olympics, where he won 2 Gold medals. (30m and 50m team pistol event). Returning to Ohio, he was a member of faculty at the Veterinary College. Although married, he engaged in an affair with a medical student in 1926. In 1929 she threatened to expose their affair to his wife, unless he divorced her. Taking matters into his own hands he shot and killed his mistress. Arrested, he was found guilty of murder and was executed in 1930.