

## 1960-1970: Three Editors

The first meeting of the British Society of (then) Gastroenterologists was held at the Royal Society of Medicine, London, on 19 and 20 November, 1937, with Sir Arthur Hurst in the Chair, and meetings have been held since then every year except for those of 1940 (war) and 1944, the year of Sir Arthur's death.

From 1947 until 1960 the Proceedings of the Society were published each year in *Gastroenterologia* (Messrs Karger), and the Society owes an immense debt of gratitude to Mr Harold Edwards, CBE, who carried out this difficult and laborious task with outstanding success. In 1948 a proposal to establish a British journal of gastroenterology was considered by a small committee but was decisively defeated on a vote at the Annual General Meeting of the Society. It was not brought forward again until 10 years later. This decision was probably right at that time, for it is doubtful if there were sufficient really good papers on gastroenterology which could not then have been better published in general medical journals. So Harold Edwards carried on as Editor of the Proceedings throughout this long period, and in 1956 acted as Editor for the international congress held in London at which the British Society was host and at which there were over 800 visitors. The Proceedings of this Congress were published within a few months of the meeting, and are both a notable tribute to the brilliant skill of its Editor, and an important addition to gastroenterological literature.

When the time was ripe for the Society to publish its own journal (1960) it was immediately proposed that Harold Edwards should be its first Editor, and the Society was supremely fortunate to have a man of such exceptional experience willing to take on this responsibility. Edwards created an organization with an Editor as Chairman, an Editorial Secretary undertaking much of the day-to-day work, and a small, carefully chosen Editorial Committee representing the main branches of gastroenterology. Dr F. Avery Jones was appointed Editorial Secretary and with Harold Edwards at once reached agreement with Dr Hugh Clegg, then Editor of the *British Medical Journal*, and the Journal Committee of the British Medical Association for the BMA to act as our publishers.

Spirited discussions took place in the Society as to the best title for the new publication, and it is almost entirely due to Harold Edwards' persuasive enthusiasm that we owe our name of *Gut* in preference to the more mundane and less inspiring one of the 'British Journal of Gastroenterology' which had many supporters.

Dr Avery Jones has thus been in large measure responsible for the triumphant success of *Gut* right from its initiation, though for the first four years we have very much indeed for which we thank our first Editor, Harold Edwards, who retired from this post in 1964. During the 10 years of its life *Gut* has advanced at a remarkable speed. It has set a standard for its contributions of the highest order, and its reputation throughout the world has steadily increased. It has become a monthly instead of a quarterly journal and has seemed able to keep ahead in all the many developing fields of gastroenterology, whilst sales have risen from 960 at the end of 1960 to 3,519 at the end of 1969.

An editor should be able in some degree to assess future trends, to weigh up the important from the trivial, to recognize the transient from the more lasting, to balance the practical with the theoretical, and to judge the requirements of his subject as well as the wishes of his readers. These qualities demand expert knowledge of gastroenterology, wise judgment, and an acute perception of where to go for judicious advice. They demand much hard work, and firmness in controlling prolixity, and they are greatly helped by a reputation for fairness and by genuine popular affection. To his work as Editor, Dr Avery Jones has brought all these advantages and the continuing and most well deserved success of *Gut* bears testimony to his fine personal achievement.

All those connected with *Gut* offer him their sincerest thanks—and the British Society of Gastroenterology and the many readers of *Gut* join in their tribute to the splendid work he has done.

After six years as Editor, Dr Avery Jones is now succeeded by Professor Sheila Sherlock who has served on the committee of *Gut* for eight years. The future of *Gut*, after its first 10 years and its two first Editors, can surely be left with confidence in her most capable hands. Her world-wide reputation and her many notable literary achievements ensure a decisive and far-seeing attitude to the Editorship and further advances in the development of *Gut*. The important balance between clinical and experimental papers and the right emphasis as between content and style will certainly be maintained under her guidance, and its continuing high standing amongst medical publications is ensured.

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