
FOREWORD

1066 was a memorable year: so was 1966, the year in which Roger Williams gave up the tranquillity of Southampton for a pioneering role at King's College Hospital. And what a pioneer he has been. During 25 years, almost every aspect of modern hepatology has been advanced by the Liver Unit at King's. It is difficult to single out the most important contributions. The management of fulminant liver failure posed many problems, but has finally resulted in the Unit accepting most of the cases of acute liver failure in the United Kingdom and many places elsewhere. With Sir Roy Calne, Roger Williams and his team pioneered liver transplantation internationally, they persevered when others gave up the struggle. Developments over the last five years have confirmed the King's-Cambridge initiative. Liver transplantation is now an accepted mode of treatment for endstage liver disease.

Immunological research has been particularly fruitful, largely because of the influence of Adrian Eddleston. The Liver Unit started just one year after Baruch Blumberg described Australia antigen, the surface antigen of the hepatitis B virion. This opened the way to virus hepatitis research and new discoveries of the role of immunological processes in the mechanism of

hepatocyte necrosis. This extended into fundamental research into drug hepatotoxicity. One could mention other subjects – ascites, portal hypertension, iron metabolism – there is hardly an aspect of liver disease that has not been investigated at King's and with fruitful results.

Whatever Roger has tackled has been a resounding success, not only for him, but for all the members of his crew. King's was a nice gentle little establishment until he arrived; it has never been the same since. He has taken it into the foreground of international hepatology, and nobody deserves greater praise. The Liver Unit has created ambassadors of hepatology who are now consultants in all continents. And King's should rejoice in this worldwide free-masonry, exemplified in this present reunion.

But this is not the end. This is the half way stage of an ambitious programme to make King's the greatest, and to guide worldwide hepatology securely into the next century. Hepatologists salute this 25th birthday, and may the programme for the future exceed even Roger's wildest dreams.

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