

Rekindling Anglo-Danish memories

THE Veterinary History Society was founded in the UK by a few enthusiasts in the 1960s. At the inaugural meeting held in October 1962, 26 people attended and there were 18 others who sent apologies.

Sherwin Hall, as the first secretary for the society, served for the next 32 years and recently was elected as life president. A duplicated newsheet was produced at first and now a substantial journal, edited by John Clewlow, devoted to veterinary history topics, is published twice a year; sent out to members and to many overseas university libraries. A group of history enthusiasts and collectors have attended the meetings, usually held in London, and the exchange of research ideas and new finds is encouraged.

Under the chairmanship of Bruce Jones, the society has been reinvigorated and already four meetings have been arranged for 2008. An innovation this year was to hold a meeting in Europe, as an invitation was extended by the Danish Veterinary History Society to hold a joint meeting in April at the Copenhagen Veterinary College.

This resulted from the Danish visit to England two years ago when the James Herriott museum in Yorkshire was their society's target. The Danish society was founded in 1934 and will celebrate its 75th anniversary next year, regular discussion meetings are held, a yearbook is produced and the European journal *Historia Medicinæ Veterinariae* has Professor I. Katic as one of the joint editors.

Ahead of London

The Royal Veterinary and Agricultural University in Copenhagen was founded in 1773 as The Royal Veterinary School nearly 20 years before the first college was opened in the UK. Professor P. C. Abildgaard's Veterinary School dealt with diseases of horses, cattle, sheep and swine and he had published as early as 1770 his book suggesting "inexpensive

treatments" for many conditions.

The teaching areas of the school expanded, with food safety in 1938, landscape and architecture in 1960, human nutrition in 1987, biotechnology in 2002 and most recently gastronomy and health when the school was renamed as the Faculty of Life Sciences in 2007. The original equine logo has been retained.

From one professor and 20 students in 1771, the College this year has 1,800 staff in science, technology and admin

with a 3,500 student body; 400 individuals participate in three-year Danish/English research programmes (PhD). The undergraduate intake recently has been increased to 160 and as expected consists of 90% females.

The main lecture theatre used for the conference has a historic feel but was actually a reconstruction of the original 1858 building which had been blown up after a basement gas explosion in the 1970s. There was later concealed amusement when Bang's disease was mentioned in a lecture!

Memories were rekindled when archive films were shown: a film of Hobday operating on a horse at the London College in the late 1920s was followed by a Danish film of a stallion castration in 1900 when Abildgaard's casting harness was used to put the horse down. The anaesthetic was administered by the veterinary assistant wearing his bowler hat as he was dripping on the chloroform, by open mask.

The light anaesthesia was evidently shared between the patient and the man kneeling on the horse's neck. Professor Molsen working at a free Animal Protection Polyklinik also appeared in this film.

The audience was amused by the "No smoking" sign displayed there many years ago since even today this rule seems not so strictly enforced in Copenhagen.

The Danish Professor Viborg's visit to London in 1790 (before the London College had opened) was described by Professor Katic and then a visit to the new Veterinary Library and the older Veterinary History Museum entertained the British visitors.

In the museum, war diaries from veterinary surgeons from the 1864

Prussian-Danish War were displayed. In this war, Christian IX had to surrender after the earlier 1848 three-year war had weakened resistance to the invaders. At this time of conflict, Rinderpest raged through Europe. London's Professor Spooner attended the international veterinary conference in Vienna in 1865, meeting amongst many others his Danish colleagues.

Contributions by the English visitors included an account of the British Veterinary History Society and my description of the recent discovery by Norman Comben of an 1863 London veterinary student's diary.

A social programme included the traditional Dansk smørrebrød with accompanying alcohol and other refreshments. The guests were asked to entertain: "Ilkley Moor Ba Taat", "The Foggy Foggy Dew" and a poem read by Robert Collins seemed to satisfy the hosts and a few impromptu accounts of veterinary life rounded off the evening.

Spit-roasted lamb in the Tivoli Gardens with a gypsy orchestra accompanying was a highlight of the opening event for this most enjoyable meeting, spread over three days in wonderful warm and sunny weather.

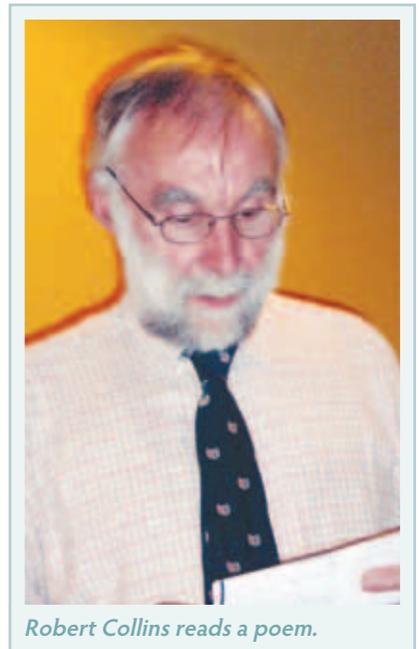
Optional tours were available for sightseeing between lecture times. The Museum of Danish Resistance was popular with the visitors from England. During the last 18 months of the war, the German Gestapo came down hard on the Resistance.

Veterinary surgeons in Copenhagen, who were then schoolboys, recalled their memories such as the day when one saw the Mosquito bombers flying over Copenhagen after they came from Britain to destroy the German headquarters. Unfortunately, one Mosquito was shot down and then crashed on a school, killing many children.

Bomb splinter on show

Another elderly vet remembered sitting at a pavement café when all the cadets in white uniforms poured out of the naval academy opposite, rejoicing that they would not have to fight as the war was now over. A bomb splinter recovered from an injured horse is one of the objects in the museum at the College.

The Carlsberg brewery was another attraction. An excellent museum display was followed by a walk through



Robert Collins reads a poem.

the stables of the strong Jutland draught horses. The brewery bar offered a choice of products but their one brown ale did not compare with Newcastle Brown of Great Britain.

With the globalisation of brewing, some traditional ales (Nukey Brown and the Tadcaster-brewed John Smiths) may give way to the designs of the new European owners of Britain's last major brewer. One delegate, a member of CAMRA, refused the lager on offer at the table as being disloyal to the British real ale cause!

The Copenhagen Glyptotek gallery funded by the Carlsberg profits had a very good display including Egyptian remains brought back from a pre-1939 archaeology dig funded by the Carlsberg foundation. Also of interest was Nationalmuseet; in the Folk museum section, a skeleton of a fox hung up in a cow shed was displayed – it prevented cows calving early?

Bang's disease (discovered 1896) established brucellosis as an infection cause rather than "Bad smells besides producing excitement and causing a cow to run wildly about as they arise from putrefaction of animal remains, convey to the maternal blood microscopical organisms" (Armitage, 1893). This was of particular interest to the writer who had a proud claim to have had the Brucella highest titre in Warwickshire in the 1960s.



Model of a Jutland horse in the Carlsberg Brewery.



Bruce Jones of the VHS addresses the gathering.

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