

# PROCEEDINGS OF THE NUTRITION SOCIETY

VOL. 1, Nos. 1 and 2

1944

## FOUNDATION OF THE NUTRITION SOCIETY

In July, 1941, the following invitation was sent out:

Just before the outbreak of war a suggestion was made by several people interested in research on nutrition that a Nutrition Society should be formed. Owing to the outbreak of war the idea was abandoned. The question has, however, again been raised and there are a considerable number of research workers and others in favour of holding meetings to discuss nutritional problems. Such meetings would serve a useful purpose, especially in enabling workers studying different aspects of the same problem in agricultural and medical institutions to meet and help each other with information and constructive criticism.

If there is a sufficient number of workers who wish to hold meetings for discussion of nutritional problems, the best procedure would be to form a society on the lines of the Physiological and the Biochemical Societies although there would be no question of publishing a journal in the meantime.

In view of the difficulty of travelling, it might be convenient to form separate English and Scottish branches which could meet independently but which might maintain contact during the war by exchanging short notes on the papers and discussions at meetings.

J. BARCROFT

H. CHICK

J. C. DRUMMOND

J. HAMMOND

L. J. HARRIS

F. G. HOPKINS

H. D. KAY

C. J. MARTIN

E. MELLANBY

J. B. ORR

R. A. PETERS.

*July, 1941.*

In accordance with this invitation a meeting of workers interested in nutritional problems, convened by Sir John Orr, was held in London at the Royal Institution on July 23rd, 1941.

Among those present were representatives of the following:

Lister Institute  
Rowett Research Institute  
St. Mary's Hospital  
London Hospital  
Medical Research Council  
Food Investigation Board  
Ministry of Health

Department of Biochemistry, Oxford  
Dunn Nutritional Laboratory, Cambridge  
Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain  
School of Agriculture, Cambridge  
National Institute for Research in Dairying  
Rothamsted Experimental Station.

Sir John Orr was called to the chair. The circular letter, reproduced  
VOL. 1, 1944]

above, proposing the formation of a Nutrition Society, was read. The signatories were the heads of various well known institutes, engaged on research in nutrition in this country, namely, Sir J. Barcroft (Chairman, Food Investigation Board), Dr. H. Chick (Head of Division of Nutrition, Lister Institute), Prof. J. C. Drummond (Professor of Biochemistry, University College, London, Scientific Adviser to the Ministry of Food), Dr. J. Hammond (Physiologist, Animal Research Institute, Cambridge), Dr. L. J. Harris (Director, Dunn Nutritional Laboratory, Cambridge), Sir F. G. Hopkins (Professor of Biochemistry, Cambridge), Prof. H. D. Kay (Director, National Institute for Research in Dairying), Sir C. J. Martin (late Director, Lister Institute), Sir E. Mellanby (Secretary, Medical Research Council), Sir J. B. Orr (Director, Rowett Research Institute), and Prof. R. A. Peters (Professor of Biochemistry, Oxford).

In the discussion which followed, the following points, among others, were emphasized:

- (1) The necessity of limiting membership to those actively engaged in work relating to nutrition.
- (2) The desirability that the Committee to be formed should, therefore, have power to assess the qualifications of would be members.
- (3) The advisability of collaboration wherever possible with existing Societies having related aims.

It was felt that the main object of the new Society should be to provide a common meeting place for workers in the varied fields of nutrition, e.g., physiological, biochemical, agricultural, medical, sociological, economic and public health. The main function of the Society under present circumstances should be to hold conferences to discuss special themes, particularly those of importance during the war. The meeting agreed that it would be useful during the war to have a separate Scottish group of the Society. The following Provisional Committee was elected with authority to act in accordance with the foregoing principles, and to function in the first place for one year:

Mr. A. L. Bacharach	Professor A. St. G. Huggett
Dr. H. Chick	Dr. F. Kidd
Dr. E. M. Cruickshank	Dr. S. K. Kon
Dr. H. H. Green	Sir John Orr
Dr. J. Hammond	Dr. B. S. Platt
Dr. L. J. Harris	Dr. H. M. Sinclair.
Professor H. P. Himsworth	

At the first annual general meeting of the Society, held on February 28th, 1942, at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, the election of the following Hon. Officers was confirmed:

Sir John Orr (Chairman)  
 Dr. J. Hammond (Vice-Chairman)  
 Mr. A. L. Bacharach (Treasurer)  
 Dr. L. J. Harris (Secretary)  
 Dr. E. M. Cruickshank (Assistant-Secretary).

## INAUGURAL MEETING OF THE ENGLISH GROUP

(Physiological Laboratory, Cambridge, October 18th, 1941)

Sir Charles Martin, who occupied the chair at the morning session in the absence of Sir John Orr in America, gave a brief history of the formation of the Society. Its object was to bring into close association the workers in the fields of human and animal nutrition, for exchange of views and information. The science of nutrition had expanded so much of recent years that it warranted the foundation of a special society; this branch of physiology could no longer be adequately covered by existing societies. In calling on Sir F. G. Hopkins to give his introductory address, the chairman paid tribute to his outstanding work in nutritional research. He had done more than anyone else to destroy the widespread complacency of the first years of the 20th century, when it was believed that nitrogen and calories were the sole requirements for an adequate diet.

Sir Frederick Hopkins: I would like first to thank your Chairman for his extremely kind words concerning myself. In an early notice of the agenda for today, though not, I think, in a later one, I was down to deliver an opening address. I think, however, you should be glad to know that I am to be less ambitious and will only take advantage of the privilege allowed me by saying a few informal words to you.

First, I feel that the time for your discussion today is very valuable, and second, I am well aware of my present limitations. Old age and its consequences involve many such, and to a large extent I am "on the shelf"; now a shelf is not a convenient place from which to deliver an inspiring address.

It is just half a century since I delivered some lectures to students at Guy's Hospital which were in part concerned with the subject of nutrition, and I am realizing acutely with this large audience before me how greatly the subject has grown in importance and interest since those days. The teaching of Carl Voit was then still to the front, and we all tended to respect the figures of his dietary for a man doing an average amount of physical work, the 118g. of protein with 500g. of carbohydrate and 56g. of fat. Voit believed that the adequacy of a diet was to be measured in terms of these three constituents consumed in right proportions. His view was based essentially on chemical considerations. At the time of which I am speaking, however, the star of Rubner was rising, and indeed had risen. For him, as you will know, the chemical make up of a diet was of relatively small importance. In the earlier days of his teaching he almost ignored it. The true criterion of adequacy was for Rubner the energy content of a diet. He believed that this standpoint was the more philosophical, involving thought on a higher plane than that of the chemist. It is, by the way, noteworthy that energy considerations had entered but little into biological thought up to that time.

The only other writer to whom we had to give attention in our teaching at the time was Pflüger. He was chiefly concerned to emphasize the outstanding importance of protein as a foodstuff which alone could serve *all* nutritional purposes. His attitude was unreal, and his views did not help progress. Such were the materials on which we had to base our

teaching half a century ago. We strove to combine and balance them so as to present some consistent doctrine concerning the needs of nutrition, not knowing how ignorant we were of essential details. How much more we have to teach our students today!

Studies of nutrition were, of course, continuing at that time. They were largely concerned with the quantitative needs for protein and evoked controversies which have not wholly ceased today.

I have ventured to remind you of these old days and old views because remembering them gives emphasis to the great progress involved in the attainment of our present knowledge. A good many years had to elapse before that revolution came which involved the realization that the factors necessary for ideal nutrition are numerous and so highly specific. Like most revolutions it was resisted by some. Thinking of the conception of vitamins in particular, I recall how at a meeting of the British Association three stalwart Scotsmen united in pouring scorn on such fanciful ideas, though one of the three is now among the most influential of diet reformers on the new lines.

Sure it is that the study of nutrition has now reached a stage which abundantly justifies the founding of this Society.

Current studies and their practical application call for mutual aid among individuals with diverse qualifications, and it is a high merit of the Society as constituted that it will bring such together. I am thinking in particular of laboratory workers and clinicians, each of whom will learn much from such contacts, often, to say the truth, from mutual criticism. Practical dieticians who have seldom themselves been investigators will profit from hearing new additions to knowledge described at first hand, and sometimes perhaps by hearing enlightened criticism of accepted views. The existence of a Society such as this, promoting discussions to which all these and others can contribute, cannot fail to hasten progress, and our gratitude is due to those whose enterprise has led to its foundation. This large attendance at its first meeting seems to assure its future success. In the circumstances I shall not, I think, be thought impertinent if I offer it my blessing!

#### *Messages of Welcome*

The Hon. Secretary read messages welcoming the foundation of the Society, and wishing it success, from the following workers in America:

- Prof. H. M. Evans, University of California, Berkeley, Calif., U.S.A.
- Col. P. E. Howe, Office of Surgeon General, Washington, D.C., U.S.A.
- Prof. J. Murray Luck, Stanford University, California, U.S.A.
- Prof. H. H. Mitchell, University of Illinois, Urbana, Ill., U.S.A.
- Dr. W. H. Sebrell, National Institute of Health, U.S. Public Health Service, Bethesda, Md., U.S.A.
- Prof. H. C. Sherman, Columbia University, New York, U.S.A.
- Dr. A. G. Hogan, University of Missouri, Columbia, Mo., U.S.A. (on behalf of the American Institute of Nutrition)

and from the officials of the following British Societies:

- The Biochemical Society
- The Physiological Society
- The Royal Society of Medicine.

# INAUGURAL MEETING OF THE SCOTTISH GROUP

(Department of Physiology, University College, Dundee,  
January 17th, 1942)

Sir John Orr, Chairman of the Society, presided, and explained the origin of the Society, its inauguration in England, and the proposal for the formation of a Scottish group to meet separately, for the convenience of members during the war.

Professor R. C. Garry, at the request of the Chairman, further described in general outline the constitution, procedure, categories of members, qualifications for membership, the keeping of records of meetings and subjects for discussion at the first two scientific meetings in England.

Sir John Orr spoke of the committees and suggested that an Executive Committee for Scotland would meet the present needs.

In reply to questions about the standing of the members of such a Scottish Committee in relation to the English Committee, Sir John Orr expressed the opinion that a Scottish Executive to deal with arrangements for membership and meetings in Scotland would, in the meantime, be sufficient.

On the motion of Dr. G. Dunlop it was agreed that a Provisional Executive Committee should be elected forthwith and should function until the second Scientific Meeting, after which a general business meeting should be held for revision of the position and election of a new committee.

The composition of the Provisional Committee was then discussed and it was agreed to appoint eight members, representing each of the four main centres in Scotland, the Committee to appoint its own Chairman. The necessity for a Secretary with facilities for clerical work was agreed. The following Provisional Committee was elected by the meeting:

Professor E. W. H. Cruickshank	Professor R. C. Garry
Dr. D. P. Cuthbertson	Dr. I. Leitch
Professor H. Dryerre	Professor D. M. Lyon
Dr. Ferguson (or substitute to be proposed by him)	Dr. G. A. Reay
	Mr. J. S. Thomson.

Several questions regarding categories and qualifications for membership were discussed. It was agreed that the problem of commercial members would probably not be of major importance in Scotland and the position was left, in the first instance, to the Committee. It was suggested that a separate category for dental surgeons might be formed since they were not necessarily included in any existing category.

The members present were asked to submit names of additional persons who ought to be invited to become original members.

The question of a suitable subject for the first scientific meeting was then discussed and it was suggested that a discussion on the same lines as that arranged for the second scientific meeting in England might be considered.

## PUBLICATION OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE NUTRITION SOCIETY

The Nutrition Society had not been founded long when it became apparent that the value of its proceedings would be enhanced by their reaching a wider audience than that which actually participated in its meetings. An account of the first meeting of the English Group had been printed as *Proceedings of The Nutrition Society*, No. 1 (1942), and circulated to the Society's own members only. Soon after, the question arose of publication with the object of placing the *Proceedings* at the disposal of an audience outside the membership of the Society.

At this point the Royal College of Physicians, impressed with the advantage which the medical profession might reap from gaining *immediate* access to the records of the Society's meetings, made an offer which enabled the financial and other difficulties standing in the way of publication during war time to be overcome.

The account of the first meeting of the English group, after being re-edited, is accordingly included and reprinted in the new publication.