FOURTH ANNUAL REPORT OF THE EMPIRE RHEUMATISM COUNCIL

November, 1939, to November, 1940

MY LORDS, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

This year, again, I shall not have the pleasure of addressing you personally, as it has been considered inadvisable to call members of the Council together in London for the Annual Meeting. I submit to you the Annual Report to October 31, 1940, repeating the assurance given last year that if any member wishes to bring up a matter arising out of the Report prompt attention will be given to it by the War Emergency Committee.

During twelve months of resistance to the Nazi attempt to plunge the world again into a Dark Age, the full brunt of which has fallen on these islands, the decision of 1939 that our Council should carry on its work has been justified. Difficulties and even dangers have been encountered, but with one exception the research tasks undertaken were continued until almost the close of the year.

Substantial progress has been made with plans for a national scheme of treatment, and this is now almost ready for publication. We may claim, too, the moral advantage of carrying on a campaign such as ours during this mortal struggle. This fact indicates the sober confidence of the British peoples that our humane civilisation is not doomed to perish and that they will come out of this ordeal strong enough, and wise enough, to give a lead in building up a better world. In that task medical research has a great part to play in bringing under control those secular enemies of mankind, the agencies of disease. It is fitting that its workers should keep to their tasks, following the high example of doctor and nurse who stand by their patients in the shattered hospitals. The healing institutions seem to be the favoured objectives of a malignant barbarism.

WORK FOR THE DEFENCE FORCES

Throughout the year our Council has taken every opportunity that offered of service to the Defence Forces.

Our Naval Research Foundation has continued its work,
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with headquarters at the emergency station of the Royal Naval Medical School. Its Director, Dr. C. A. Green, has volunteered his assistance to the Navy in any pathological tasks arising out of the war, over and above his investigations into Rheumatic Disease.

We had a welcome invitation from the Royal Air Force Medical Service to help in their plans for treatment of Rheumatic Disease; and promptly responded.

In respect of the Army, the Empire Rheumatism Council has sought, for reasons of the well-being of the troops and of economising in national expenditure, the establishment of specialised rheumatism hospitals. A high incidence of Rheumatic Disease among the soldiers is probable; apart from other conditions of service, the intensive development of mechanised warfare will make them subject to conditions known to be specially productive of Rheumatic Disease in industrial life—frequent small bruising and tearing injuries, working in cramped conditions, frequent alternations of heat and cold. Since it is only recently that the medical profession has given specialised attention to the problems of rheumatism, and the number of medical practitioners with wide experience of its diagnosis and treatment is limited, it would be wise to concentrate their expert knowledge in specialised hospitals.

A plan has been submitted and the offer made of the fullest measure of help from our Council. There is an administrative problem presented here: that the physical treatments which are necessary in the treatment of Rheumatic Disease are also frequently called for in the rehabilitation of joints, muscles and nerves injured by wounds. It would be advisable, therefore, not to duplicate the medical and auxiliary personnel or the technical equipment of hospitals for the treatment of such conditions, whether arising from wounds or from Rheumatic Disease.

We may confidently trust that a solution of the problem will be found; that it will not be forgotten that a very large proportion of the cases to be treated will be rheumatic, and that rheumatism is primarily the care of the physician, though in many cases valuable help can be given by the orthopedic surgeon.

Whilst with the B.E.F. in France our hon. medical secretary, Lieut.-Colonel W. S. C. Copeman, was permitted to establish a special rheumatism ward at one of the Base Hospitals, and it was intended that a special Rheumatism Hospital would be set up in the course of time. The withdrawal of the Army from
France stopped this development. Lieut.-Colonel Copeman’s paper ("Notes on Treatment of Rheumatic Diseases in the B.E.F.", Journal of the R.A.M.C., May, 1940), with its notes on the contrivance of physical treatment apparatus from improvised material available in the field from Army stores, put into practical effect the contention of our Council that grappling with rheumatism on a national scale will not prove a vastly expensive undertaking if there are applied commonsense methods guided by scientific principles.

Lieut.-Colonel W. S. C. Copeman, who is now commanding the medical division of one of the military hospitals in the Southern Region, has been informed by the War Office that funds have been made available for the establishment of an Occupational Therapy unit in this hospital. It is to be for the treatment of sufferers from rheumatism and from the after-results of war injuries.

Our Council has offered help to the Australian Army medical authorities in dealing with the incidence of Rheumatic Disease in the Australian Forces. Lieut.-Colonel Anderson, A.D.G.M.S., expressed his appreciation of the offer and, at his request, a triplicate set of documents embodying the Council’s views on war treatment of rheumatism has been sent to him for transmission to Australia, to the Australian Expeditionary Force, and to the Australian contingent in Great Britain.

Perhaps the heading of this section of our Report implies a distinction which really has ceased to exist in this war. “Defence Forces” now comprise the whole community, excluding only the totally infirm and the children. Otherwise every man and woman is in the front line of battle, subject to almost equal dangers and hardships as the serving men, facing them generally with an equal degree of heroism and “doing their bit” with cheerfulness and resourcefulness. Thus work to safeguard civilians from the scourge of rheumatism (and of other diseases) and from its aggravation by war conditions is in a true sense Defence work.

It is my privilege to have been invited by the Government to accept the chairmanship of the Medical Advisory Committee of the Ministry of Labour and National Service, and of the Committee of Inquiry regarding health conditions in air-raid shelters. Both these Committees hold key positions in relation to the War on Rheumatism, and it will be my duty to keep them in close touch with the Empire Rheumatism Council.
As already noted, the work of the Naval Research Foundation (Dr. C. A. Green, Director) has continued at the temporary centre of the Royal Naval Medical School; and a section at the West London Hospital (Professor Ernst Freund, Director). Progress reports are encouraging.

The work of the Sir Alexander Maclean Laboratory at the St. John Clinic (Dr. H. J. Taylor, Director) was continued with good progress.

The work of the other Sir Alexander Maclean Laboratory at the Hospital of St. John and St. Elizabeth (Dr. C. B. Dyson, Director) is still suspended.

Sir Alexander Maclean, in a spirit of confidence which is deeply appreciated, has intimated his willingness that funds from his generous gift can be diverted, as and when necessary, from the original objectives to any work for the Defence Services undertaken by us.

The work of Dr. E. G. L. Bywaters (in conjunction with a Beit Fellowship) at the British Post-Graduate Medical School, University of London, was interrupted in September. Dr. Bywaters' research work on rheumatism was changed over to investigation of "Shock", for which there was an urgent call.

Dr. Cecilia Lutwak-Mann during the year continued her work at the University of Cambridge School of Biochemistry with encouraging results.

Dr. Francis J. Bach has carried out, on behalf of our Council, an investigation of a system of treatment advocated by Dr. G. Laughton Scott. A preliminary report has been presented and a final report is expected at an early date.

The initiative of the Empire Rheumatism Council in establishing (1939), with a grant from the Giff-Edmonds Trust, at the Hospital of St. John and St. Elizabeth, a department for clinical research into Occupational Therapy in the treatment of arthritis has proved of significant value. Though the work there was interrupted by war conditions it proved to be a successful pioneer effort to draw attention to the value of this means of rehabilitating disabled joints and muscles. Occupational Therapy promises to become established as a standard method in rheumatism treatment centres. Already, as noted before, the War Office have sanctioned it for the Army.
An interesting note in the field of clinical research has come from the Rheumatism Department of the West London Hospital (which in the absence of Lieut.-Colonel Copeman was carried on by Dr. Hugh Burt and, later, by Dr. O. Savage, assisted by Dr. Elkin). The latest report on its work states: "The results obtained at the West London Hospital suggest that, in a number of cases of arthritis, treatment as an out-patient is more beneficial than as an in-patient . . . The latter makes some patients too reliant on bed and therefore has a weakening effect."

Members of the Council will note that our Annual Reports do not reprint the lengthy progress records of the numerous research investigations which are being carried on by workers of our Council. The reason is economy in printing. The chief of these records are printed in our official journal, *Annals of the Rheumatic Diseases*, of which five numbers have been published and a sixth will be issued shortly. (Back numbers of this journal are available. Those who are interested can obtain them from the publishers, H. K. Lewis and Co., London, or from the office of the Empire Rheumatism Council.) Other records have been published in the Medical Press.

**TREATMENT**

The reopening of the British Red Cross Clinic for Rheumatism (Dr. H. Gordon Thompson, Administrator), Peto Place, in February, 1940, was a most welcome restoration of treatment facilities in the London area. The Clinic quickly had a full list of patients and evening sessions had to be arranged.

The treatment work at the Clinic of the Order of St. John (Sir Leonard Hill, Administrator) was carried on.

The West London Hospital Rheumatism Clinic reopened April, 1940, and has continued its work since.

**ADMINISTRATION**

The War Emergency Committee has held meetings whenever necessary, and in the intervals the officials of the Council have kept in constant touch with its members. The Committee has been strengthened by the co-option of Colonel the Rt. Hon. John Gretton, P.C., M.P., Dr. C. W. Buckley, F.R.C.P., and Colonel F. D. Howitt, C.V.O., F.R.C.P.
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The office of the Council has been maintained. As it is in a somewhat dangerous area the more important financial documents of the Council have been deposited with our Bank, and the chief files moved to an auxiliary office at 87, Grosvenor Avenue, Cshalton. This has not involved any extra expense to the Council, the necessary accommodation having been given by the assistant secretary.

I know that the Council will wish me to place on record again the devoted zeal which members of your War Emergency Committee have shown throughout the year. Members of the Committee are: Sir William Willcox, K.C.I.E., F.R.C.P.; A. G. Timbrell Fisher, F.R.C.S., M.C.; Mervyn H. Gordon, C.M.G., F.R.S., D.M.; Sir Walter Kinnear, K.B.E.; T. W. Robinson, A.C.A.; Colonel the Rt. Hon. John Gretton, P.C., M.P.; Lieut.-Colonel W. S. C. Copeman, F.R.C.P.; C. W. Buckley, M.D., F.R.C.P.; Colonel F. D. Howitt, C.V.O., F.R.C.P.

Whilst reasonable prudence is being observed, "alert" signals have never interrupted work. It has been the experience, I think, of most members of the Committee to have been engaged on the Council's affairs during raid warnings. To the two officials of the Council, Sir Frank Fox and Miss V. C. Small, we owe our very best thanks. No task has been neglected by them, or seriously delayed, in spite of temporary difficulties of travel and of other means of communication.

I leave to the Finance members of the War Emergency Committee to report in some detail on our financial position and will only congratulate them on the fact that we have passed through a troubled year and may expect to pass through the coming year—if it should unhappily prove to be also a war year—without difficulty. Careful financial policy in the past made this possible.

Considering the circumstances, there has been a fair harvest of publicity during the year for the work of the Council, in the lay as well as in the medical press. Undoubtedly public interest in rheumatism has been awakened effectively during the past few years. With Western Europe, where humane civilisation is for the time being in a prison house, there have been no communications since the spring, but correspondence with the United States, the Dominions and Colonies (and, to a lesser extent, with South America) has been considerable. Indicative of the extent to which knowledge of the work of the Council has spread
is the arrival from time to time of letters asking for advice from lonely corners of the earth, such as Central Mexico.

No general appeal has been attempted during the year, but every opportunity has been taken to bring our good cause to the attention of likely sympathisers, especially the Approved Societies; in this matter Sir Walter Kinnear has given great help.

THE FUTURE

We can, I feel, look back on the work of the past four years—work tragically hindered by war and preparations for war—with some satisfaction. Research into causative factors has progressed. Clinical research into methods of treatment has made notable advances. We are far better equipped than we were in 1936 to advise the community as to how the ravages of Rheumatic Disease can be checked at once, and have made distinct advance towards the objective of effective control. Such effective control, when it comes to be realised, will remove from humanity one of its greatest afflictions, bringing us nearer to understanding the vision of Isaiah: "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mounta.n: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.”

(Signed) HORDER.