

*John Snow—Epidemiologist*

*The Medical Officer* for 27 May (p. 285), 15 July (p. 28), and 22 July (p. 46) reports the celebration of the centenary of publication by Messrs. J. & A. Churchill of the second edition of John Snow's epidemiological classic *On the mode of communication of cholera*. The observance, which had been appropriately arranged by the Section of Epidemiology and Preventive Medicine of the Royal Society of Medicine with the co-operation of the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, took place on 17 May, at which time a commemorative exhibition of Snow, arranged by two D. P. H. students, Miss Lorimer and Dr. Rochester, was on display in the Museum of the School. The two principal addresses were by Professors James M. Mackintosh and Bradford Hill, the latter this year's President of the Royal Society of Medicine Section and Acting Dean of the School. Professor Mackintosh's colorful address was read by Dr. J. H. F. Brotherston and gave a vivid picture of the social background of Victorian England and of the circumstances in which Snow was led to carry out his studies on the spread of cholera.

Professor Mackintosh pointed out that Snow himself was not exactly "a clubbable man," since he was a bachelor, a teetotaler, and a vegetarian. Some twenty-five years before the causative organism of the disease had been recognized, he had shown by close clinical observation the way in which cholera was spread. In Broadwick Street, somewhat east of Regent Street and not far from John Hunter's Great Windmill Street Medical School where Snow had studied, there was a pump which, in 1854, had spread an epidemic of cholera through sewage contamination of its water. Professor Bradford Hill in his address expressed the opinion that Snow's pump was probably less important than sometimes believed because there had been a mass evacuation of the Broad Street area before the pump handle was actually removed. In any case, the leading public health authorities of Britain, in recognition of Snow's contribution, have now dedicated beside the site of the pump a London pub which is to be known to posterity as "The John Snow." The dedication of this Broadwick pub took place on 5 July with Professor Bradford Hill once again giving the principal address. John Snow relics are to be permanently on display as an attraction to historically-minded medical students who may wish to drop in for a lager.

Although it may seem slightly surprising to have a public house dedicated to a teetotaler, one can readily agree with the Editor of *The Medical Officer* who points out that

English pub names are so redolent of the national history that this renaming of a London house in the centenary year after so worthy a medical pioneer seems to us to be entirely appropriate, and perhaps especially so if we recall the part which brewery workers played as "controls" in Snow's investigation of the Broad Street cholera. Hitherto the great names in preventive and social medicine have been mainly commemorated in teaching institutions and health centres, but whilst the latter are in such short supply we hope that Messrs. Watney, Combe and Reid's example may commend itself to the owners of other inns in places associated with famous public health workers.

I am indebted to Sir Allen Daley for drawing my attention to these articles. Although his name is not mentioned in the accounts one suspects that the original idea was his and that Professors Mackintosh and Hill, long known as students and admirers of John Snow, readily co-operated.

J. F. F.