

## Minutes of the Meeting of the Harveian Society

Held on Wednesday 10 May 2017

The President welcomed guests and reminded those present that this was a private meeting.

The Minutes of the meeting held on 12 April 2017 were read and agreed. The President signed the Minutes.

The President introduced Dr Tony Jewell who addressed the Society on the memoir

“ON CALL IN AFRICA IN WAR AND PEACE 1910 - 1932”  
by Dr Norman Jewell MD MC OBE.

The speaker began by explaining that the presentation was based on the memoirs of his grandfather, a medical doctor who had led an extraordinary life.

When he embarked from Marseilles in September 1910 to sail to the Seychelles, Dr Norman Jewell, who had qualified as a doctor only 3 years before, must have been excited by the future. Little did he know that after his fiancée joined him in the Seychelles and they had started a family that war would be declared in Europe and that this would engulf the wider world, including East Africa.

Norman was to return to Great Britain in 1919 with four years' service in the Colonial Medical Service (CMS) in the Seychelles and four years active war service as a captain leading a field ambulance team in the British Army in East Africa under his belt. He was awarded the Military Cross for gallantry for his army service and had developed a taste for surgery, returning to complete his FRCSI in Dublin. Dublin at that time was in the middle of the “Irish War of Independence” and Norman, as a British Army Officer and doctor in the British CMS became a target. His lucky escape on Bloody Sunday in 1919 led to his return to East Africa in 1919 to serve in the CMS until 1932. Both he and his wife Sydney Auchinleck had been born in Ireland and brought up in Dublin, so they felt exiled. Following their return to Britain in 1932 they settled in Pinner, Middlesex and Norman worked at Harrow on the Hill. This lecture focuses on these three phases of Norman Jewell's life between 1910 and 1932 - the Seychelles, the East Africa Campaign and colonial medicine in Kenya.

The speaker also explained that as one of Norman's grandchildren and following his retirement as CMO Wales in 2012 he decided to edit the memoir which the family had kept following Norman's death in 1973. The memoir was handwritten in an ordinary exercise book but has proved to be accurate in terms of dates and events when checked against the official war diaries in the National Archives. The family believe that Norman was able to refer to his war diaries and records of his time in the Seychelles and East Africa to write his memoir. This recently published book contains the original memoir, a transcript of the original war diaries of Norman's field ambulance team, and a short section on Sydney Auchinleck, Norman's distinguished wife. It is well referenced, has explanatory footnotes and is illustrated with 145 original photographs.

Notable events in the Seychelles were his experience of early responsibility for a group of islands with an ethnically mixed population and few medical resources to call on. He was both the doctor and the magistrate and found himself dealing with everyday medical problems as well as overseeing a road building programme. The slides of his photographs of island scenery and life confirm what modern tourists can attest - that is a beautiful place. so his early married life was pleasant. Three of his children were born in the Seychelles - the youngest while he was away serving in East Africa.

As a captain in the British army, Norman led the East Africa Field Ambulance team. He was thrown in at the deep end and had to adapt to military life and the new environment of East Africa with new “tropical diseases” which had not been so manifest in the Seychelles. His public health training, which was expected of applicants for colonial service, served him well when confronted with Jigger fleas, malaria, smallpox, cholera, typhoid, yaws, sleeping sickness and schistosomiasis! With massed troops in the African bush he had contend with

obtaining potable water supplies, competing with wild animals as well as army mules, horses and oxen and oversee proper sanitation, feeding and camp clean ups. His photographs of the campaign trail give a vivid insight into the challenges alongside the daily diary detail.

The campaign in East Africa covered huge distances. German East Africa was three times the size of Germany and Lake Victoria the size of Ireland! These distances and the terrain itself, water supplies and wild animals made logistics for supplies and evacuation of the sick and injured a challenge. The ratio of deaths from disease or war injuries for troops and porters was 12:1. The major causes of death were malaria, dysentery and pneumonia. The East Africa campaign had a higher death rate from disease and injury than the Western Front. For example 792 Seychellese labourers despatched to help in the docks in East Africa suffered huge losses from nutritional and infectious disease. Norman returned with them on a ship to the Seychelles for his one period of convalescent leave in 1917 and noted their poor state of health. Overall these volunteers had a 42% mortality rate. The Pike report of 1918 highlights some of the problems experienced in this theatre of war which led to court-martials of individual doctors and criticism of the senior medical leadership. However, Norman's field ambulance team was visited by Pike and Balfour and commended.

When Norman returned to East Africa in peacetime he worked in Mombasa then Nairobi and oversaw the the management of epidemic diseases such as smallpox and the successful treatment of yaws. Effective therapy of yaws helped build a positive reputation for the application of modern scientific medicine. Norman was an early advocate of using pathological investigations and published case studies of the cultivation of Brucella which caused a case of "abortus" fever and case studies of schistosomiasis. He also published his surgical audit for 1931 when he was SMO in Nairobi in the Journal of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene. With his colleague DrWilliam Kaunze he published the Handbook of Tropical Fevers in London in 1932. He was awarded the OBE in 1929 for his work in the Colonial Medical Service.

The book "On Call in Africa - in War and Peace 1910-1932" is available through bookshops, Amazon and on the website [www.oncallinafrica.com](http://www.oncallinafrica.com)

A vote of thanks was proposed by Dr Robin Knill-Jones  
50 members and guests attended.

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Dr A Twigley  
President

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Dr Colin Yates  
Honorary Secretary