

# HOSPITAL ENGINEERING

July 1977



## Special Issue

The Journal of the Institute of Hospital Engineering

### Northcroft Hall, Falfield

On Tuesday 21 June a very pleasant, simple ceremony was held at the Hospital Engineering Training Centre, Falfield, to mark the opening of the new Northcroft Hall, in the presence of staff, students and a number of invited guests.

The new building was opened by the man after whom it was named, Lionel Northcroft OBE BSc CEng FIMechE FIHVE CIHospE FIPlantE, a former President of the Institute. The list of qualifications in itself tells something about Mr. Northcroft's im-

pressive career — those present were given a comprehensive summary of his life in Industry and in the public service by John Bolton, Chief Works Officer of the DHSS.

In addition to the creation of his own thriving company, Spirax Sarco,

*Mr. Northcroft unveils the plaque in the entrance to Northcroft Hall.*



Mr. Northcroft has played a considerable role in the Federation of British Industries, and in promoting higher education and technical education. He is an acknowledged expert on process steam engineering, and did a great deal of work during the last war for the Ministry of Fuel and Power, serving as a member of the Steam Utilisation Panel, The Steam Research Panel, and the South Western Regional Fuel Efficiency Committee.

Among many other interests Mr. Northcroft was the second President of the Institute of Plant Engineers, and subsequently, from 1967 to 1969, was President of the Institute of Hospital Engineering during a crucial period in its development. He had a lot to do with the promotion of the Keele courses, and it is therefore most appropriate that his name has now been given to the latest lecture theatre at Falfield.

After Mr. Bolton had described his career, Mr. Northcroft spoke briefly and amusingly in reply. He paid tribute to John Bolton's leadership of engineers within the hospital service, and presented him with his own inscribed copy of Oliver Lyle's well-known textbook on steam.

Speaking of knowledge and its dissemination, Mr. Northcroft talked of the growth of hospital engineering training, from the original post-war refresher courses, conducted on a formal lecture basis, via the Institute's

own courses held at Keele University, to the present series of courses run at Falfield with such success.

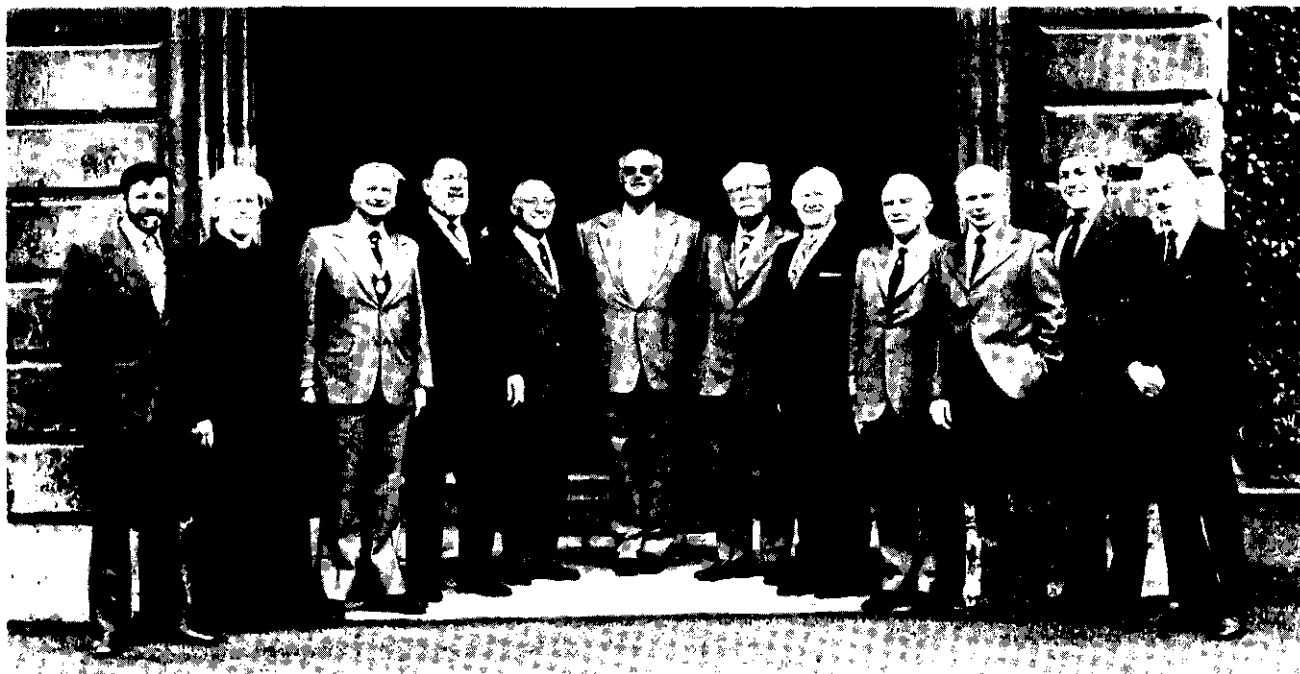
After the formal speeches, Mr. Northcroft then unveiled the plaque in the entrance to the new building, which is fixed underneath his portrait. The guests, who included every past-President and Chairman of the Institute, then returned to the main building for a buffet lunch, preceded by a brief ceremony in which Mr. Northcroft presented the silver medal which bears his name to this year's winner, Mr. R. G. Kensett. The medal is awarded each year to the author of the best technical article published in *Hospital Engineering*. Mr. Kensett's paper, *Energy Recovery Systems for Hospital Use*, was published in the July 1976 issue.



ABOVE from left, J. W. Barnes, Mr. & Mrs. Northcroft, John Bolton.  
BELOW, Mr. Northcroft presents 'his' medal to Mr. R. G. Kensett.







Left to right, J. W. Barnes, Rev. C. J. King, R. Manser, Dr. B. G. B. Lucas, G. A. Rooley, F. H. Howorth, L. G. Northcroft, J. Bolton, H. A. Adams, D. L. Lewis, D. W. Hanson, R. S. Body.

# The Hazards of Conferencing

J. L. Richardson

Pitlochry is, by any criteria, a delightful spot and when the Hospital Engineers decided to hold their Annual Conference there your author applauded that decision; and when he was chosen to represent his Region his pride knew no bounds, despite the fact that the honour had also been conferred upon Tom, Dick and Harry.

Travel arrangements were quickly determined. He was to meet the others on the 08.10 plane from Gatwick to Edinburgh and travel from there to the Conference Centre by train. This left the little matter of finding his own way to Gatwick in time to check in. So a taxi was booked for half past six to take him to a nearby station to catch one of the frequent trains, which run to Gatwick. He even went to the trouble of checking by phone on the evening before travelling that the taxi would be available as stated.

At a quarter past the hour on that fateful day he was ready and waiting. At 6.30 the taxi had not appeared and repeated attempts to phone the booking office were of no avail. At 6.45 his own car was pressed into service and a dash was made to the RHA offices, arriving at 07.00 hours.

The second snag then arose, the car park gatekeeper was deaf and seemed unable to appreciate the urgency of the problem. He also suffered from an affliction of the arm; in fact not until his palm had been liberally greased was he able to operate the barrier. However, that single application of grease allowed the attendant to take charge of the car keys in order to arrange its return to its normal abode.

At this stage our hero, encumbered by a suitcase, camera and umbrella, set out to walk to the station. Snag number three occurred in the form of a capricious gust, which snatched the hat from his perspiring brow, tossing it in the general direction of elsewhere. He muttered a variety of epithets and vowed he would abandon the flying headgear if it became too difficult to recover, but the gods smiled and it became wedged in the railings between the dual carriageways and he felt bound to recover his property.

The rest of the journey to the station was uneventful, except that the case became heavier, the perspiration flowed freely and the ten minute walk seemed unending. He

arrived on the platform in time to see the tail end of the 07.19 train disappearing and with sixteen minutes to wait for the next one.

The next train permitted him to present himself at the check in desk at 08.00 hours only to be refused entry. The next available flight to Edinburgh was at 15.10 so he settled down with a good book in the upper departure hall to await the flight call, with occasional visits to the coffee bar for sustenance.

For the benefit of others who may be similarly cursed his purgatory was not without its lighter moments. The upper hall is adjoined by a Staff Canteen, Rest Rooms or Offices to which there is a continuous stream of air hostesses and what student of comparative anatomy could wish for a more pleasing field of study.

After the flight call he was relieved of his major burden and a bus was provided to transport him a full 150 yards to the plane, but the ten yard dash to the plane was through a downpour such as he had not seen except in the tropics. How fortunate that he had not abandoned his hat earlier in the day, even if the rain did drip down his neck.

The flight was completely uneventful if one excepts the jogged elbow and the spilled gin and tonic, but the hostess apologised most profusely and it was a bagatelle when one thinks of what could have happened. On arrival at Edinburgh airport he made enquiries of the best way to get to Pitlochry and one of those beautiful

lasses who must answer all sorts of enquiries from harried travellers told him he had two choices. Either a bus to Waverly Station and thence a train, or alternatively a taxi. Since the distance to be travelled was about 80 miles, in the interests of economy, he chose to take the bus and train.

At Waverly Station he was told at half past five that the next train to Pitlochry was not until late that night and would not arrive at its destination until after two o'clock the following morning. However, a 17.39 train to Perth would be of some assistance so he took that.

Arrival at Perth was followed by further enquiries which showed that there were no trains that day, but that a bus might run and the bus-station was out there on the right. Out there he went and turned right encumbered by his suitcase, camera and umbrella. That suitcase by now weighed at least three hundredweights, his umbrella had developed a mind of its own and was intent on tripping him, whilst the camera shoulder strap with its non-slip pad was continually sliding down

his arm in sympathy with the sweat running so freely down his back.

He could not see the bus station and in his efforts to locate it he stepped on a pebble, twisted his ankle and measured his length on the pavement. The pain from his skinned knee was as nothing compared with the bliss of the enforced prone position. He could feel his arm, relieved of its load, retracting to its normal length and only the remark overheard from a passing car prevented him taking full advantage of the rest, 'Look at that drunken sot, and its only half past seven'. Further enquiry showed the bus-station to be in another street.

The bus depot was commodious with one dilapidated 32 seater standing in the yard, the driver and conductor being seated on the steps smoking. They directed him to the waiting room in which were three or four other lost souls, an enquiry desk and a left luggage office. He asked the lady at the enquiry desk for a bus to Pitlochry and such was the traffic through the station with myriads of services to all points that she had to consult the

time-table to tell him that the only one was in 65 minutes time and it arrived at 10 pm. This was more like it and he calculated that the late arrival would be satisfactory, if he could find a meal in the waiting period. He told the enquiry lady of his intentions and asked if he could leave his suitcase while he ate. Her reply was forestalled by the gruff interjection from the left luggage office 'No ye cana, we close in ten minutes'.

A lesser mortal would have been completely downcast at this stage, but he was not going to be beaten by a set of circumstances which seemed to have been designed to prevent him reaching his goal, so he went forth and took a taxi for the last 26 miles, arriving at the Conference Centre ten minutes before the diningroom closed.

This story has a happy ending, it was a successful Conference, the weather was kind, the accommodation was comfortable and well found and Pitlochry is a delightful spot, but don't let anybody try to tell you that Conferencing is not a hazardous business. I have the scars to prove it.

## Letter to the Editor

Dear Sir,

Through the columns of your journal, I would like to thank all the organisers and speakers who contributed to the success of the I.H.E. five branch meeting, held at John Astor House (Middlesex Hospital) on Saturday, 21st May.

I would also like to comment upon the behaviour of certain members of the audience. Two people who sat at the back of the room talked quite loudly between themselves for most of the duration of Mr. Pryer's (B.O.C. Medishield) lecture on the removal of anaesthetic gases from operating theatres. I found this most distracting. As soon as Mr. Pryer had finished his talk, one of the above-mentioned persons took the opportunity to promote another system of exhaust gas extraction, in which he obviously had a commercial interest. As if this was not bad enough, during the question time that followed, Mr. Pryer was then subjected to what can only be described as an aggressive cross-examination by another member of the audience (whom I believe also has a commercial interest in an alternative system to that described by Mr. Pryer).

If commercial enterprises, such as B.O.C. Medishield Ltd., are invited to present technical papers to the Institute, I feel strongly that they are entitled to a courteous reception, and interested and objective questioning during question time. I do not think that an Institute Technical Meeting should be used as a forum by rival manufacturers of hospital equipment to promote their wares.

I hope that you will publish this letter, and give any other people present at the meeting the opportunity to express their views on this matter.

Yours faithfully,  
G. Brookbanks,  
Committee Member,  
Institute of Hospital Engineering,  
Southern Branch.

## Public Health Engineering for Health Buildings Symposium

Brunel University,  
Uxbridge, Middlesex  
8 - 9 September 1977

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