Donald Hunter—the first Editor of the British Journal of Industrial Medicine

The British Medical Association made a courageous decision to launch the *British Journal of Industrial Medicine* in 1944 under the editorship of Donald Hunter, assisted by two other Donalds—Stewart and Norris. Shortages, of people with the experience and time to contribute articles, and of paper, would surely be inevitable consequences in a country gripped by war. The first number rapidly went out of print. A further allocation of paper enabled a reprint to be made, but still supply could not meet demand. In fact it turned out that there was no shortage of copy because the Journal was not confined to original papers. It was providing something for all doctors working whole- or part-time in industry. The first two volumes contained a wide range of subjects such as training the industrial nurse, eye testing, nutrition and a description of industrial medical services in other countries. No doubt these pot-boilers kept the Journal going and were valuable to the doctor who was inexperienced and untrained in occupational medicine, which most of us were at this time. This was not the right way to develop a scientific journal of international standing, which had always been Donald Hunter's ambition. He was fired even more in this direction by a visit to the United States of America in 1946. At that time, the only rival in English-speaking countries was the *American Journal of Industrial Hygiene*.

In the third year of the BJIM the assistant editors had gone. Donald Hunter took control, aided by a small editorial committee and the patronage of a General Advisory Board, which never met. They discarded the pot-boilers and began its metamorphosis into a clinical and scientific journal, publishing original papers, critical reviews and abstracts. To keep faith with the Association of Industrial Medical Officers, whose senior members had urged the British Medical Association to create the BJIM, it continued to publish the proceedings of the Association's meetings until 1951. After that time the Transactions of the AIMO were published independently. Now they thrive as the *Journal of the Society of Occupational Medicine*.

Some of the gaps left by the loss of general articles were filled by the increasing output of original papers from Donald Hunter's Department for Research in Industrial Medicine which the Medical Research Council established in 1943 at the London Hospital. Hunter and his colleagues, notably Kenneth Perry, contributed many papers on important new hazards in occupational medicine; for example bagassosis, Raynaud's phenomenon, asthma from platinum salts, polyneuritis from tri-cresyl phosphate and fluorosis. Nevertheless, the Journal lost weight and, in 1950, nearly died of starvation. One number was down to 29 pages. Donald Hunter had been ill for some time. When I visited him in hospital he had been forbidden to do any work. He was very pale but there was the usual twinkle in his eye and, concealed behind the pages of *Punch*, he was reading a medical paper! It was then that he asked me to take over the editorial work during his illness. This was a critical stage in the life of the Journal because of an acute shortage of original papers as well as the higher standards demanded by Hunter and his editorial committee. This had been reinforced with men like Frederic Bartlett, Tom Bedford, Tony Bradford Hill and Ronald Lane. They recommended discarding the rubbish and the rewriting of papers which would otherwise have been unacceptable because they did not reach the required standard. Gradually the crisis was resolved by contributions from the newly established MRC Units and University Departments of Occupational Health. In addition, Donald Hunter had started to get original papers from other countries, and these increased in number as the Journal grew in stature.

After a hesitant beginning, almost a false start in the wrong direction, it was Donald Hunter who set the BJIM along the right lines. His successors have built it up into an international journal of very high repute. They have had the invaluable help of a technical editor and other services from the British Medical Association.

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