As part of the 50th birthday celebration, we are arranging to reprint 12 papers, *the Editor's Choice*, which have appeared in previous issues of the *Journal*. They have been chosen partly to illustrate the range and scope of the *Journal* over the years and partly because they are or were important in their day. More significantly, they have been chosen because they exemplify some of the best in scientific writing and can all be read with great pleasure and all who wish to communicate their observations, their ideas, or their enthusiasms would do well to study them and learn from them.

We will publish one paper each month through the year and they will appear in the order in which they were originally published.

Editor's Choice

Mortality from lung cancer in asbestos workers

by Richard Doll

(*British Journal of Industrial Medicine* 1955;12:81-6)

It will come as a surprise to many of those reading the *Journal* today to realise that the link between exposure to asbestos and lung cancer had not been settled by the mid-1950s. In the introduction to this paper, Doll notes that only 61 cases of lung cancer had been reported since 1935 in persons with asbestosis and there were still those who were sceptical about the association.

Doll first collected necropsy data on persons who had been employed at "a large asbestos factory" and found that of the 105 cases examined, 18 had died of lung cancer, 15 in association with asbestosis. He then followed up a group of 113 men who had worked for at least 20 years in areas of the factor scheduled under the 1931 Asbestos Industry

Regulations as being "dusty". Among this small group there had been 11 deaths from lung cancer (all with a mention of asbestosis) compared with an expected number of 0.8. Doll was also able to show that the incidence of both asbestosis and lung cancer had declined after the better control of exposure consequent upon the introduction of the 1931 Regulations. He went on to state that the question of "whether the specific industrial risk of lung cancer had yet been completely eliminated cannot be determined with certainty." It still cannot.

Doll is, of course, best known for the work on smoking and lung cancer carried out in association with Bradford Hill. This elegant paper is a good example of his many forays into occupational epidemiology to which he has made many important contributions.