

The Lancaster and Morecambe Medical Book Club Today

Andrew Gallagher, President, Treasurer and Membership Secretary

INTRODUCTION

I have been Treasurer and Membership Secretary of The Lancaster and Morecambe Medical Book Club (L&MMBC) since 2000 and have the honour of being the President for 2022-23. During my tenure as Treasurer there has been an ebb and flow of member involvement. Membership currently stands at around 200 and membership is open to any doctor permanently living or working within Lancaster, Morecambe, Carnforth, and Garstang. We have a small number of non-medical members such as George Howson, previously coroner to the Lancaster District, who was awarded life membership in recognition of his contribution to the local medical community. Doctors who have recently moved to the area should be routinely invited to join the club. We are also keen to include training grade doctors on an honorary basis.

Whilst the original remit of the club was to share books and learning, nowadays we are more concerned with promoting fellowship through various social and sporting events. Some of the social events are educational, but these are usually in subjects other than medicine.

SOCIAL EVENTS

The social calendar includes an annual dinner, spring ball and 2-3 evening meetings throughout the year. The annual dinner is held in October, close to St Luke's day on the 16th. This has been held at various hotels or golf clubs in the area. It is a semi formal black-tie event and consists of a three-course dinner followed by an awards ceremony for the various sporting trophies, and an after-dinner speech. This year, the speech was given by Dr Philip Batty who told us about his life and career as one of the country's leading sports and exercise physicians. Attendance at the annual dinner can be anything between 40 and 80 guests. The Spring Ball is usually themed and in recent years this has included Bollywood, Twenties and St Patrick's Day, according to the President's choice. The other meetings have a variety of formats but generally consist of a meal followed by a talk by a local expert. Most recently, Dr Rebecca Shepherd told us about her work with mammoth ivory and the development of a rapid non-invasive test for differentiating this from elephant ivory. Other recent meetings have included gin and wine tasting and talks on subjects as diverse as cheese making and global warming. These are held at a variety of venues including golf clubs, village halls, restaurants and The Storey Institute and are attended by between 30 and 60 people.

SPORTING EVENTS

A number of sporting competitions are run under the auspices of the club.

Golf Day

This is the longest standing competition within the club and usually takes place in early summer. It rotates between Lancaster, Morecambe and another local golf club. Recently, this has included Kirkby Lonsdale, Heysham, and Bentham. In the morning we play a three club competition over nine

holes for the John Wilkie Quaich. In the afternoon, we have an eighteen-hole competition for The George Cup. The Phil Allen Plate for the best performing lady, and the Freund's Siller for the best score by a non-medical are also contested. We use Stableford scoring with full handicap provision to give everybody a sporting chance. The George Cup is a magnificent trophy, donated to the Book Club by William George in 1948. It does tend to circulate between a handful of the better golfers but it's great when we get a new name on the trophy. We have previously had long-standing golf secretaries but have recently adopted a 'Eurovision' model so that this year's winner organises next year's competition.

Sailing Competition

The Longovicum Sailing Trophy represents a yacht in full sail and was donated by Robert Howat and first awarded in 1971. This is awarded to the winner of a day's sailing, usually held on Coniston or Ullswater. Sailing as a pastime among doctors seems to have waned somewhat and this hasn't been contested since 2014. We are hoping it will take place this year.

The Brian Highton Trophy

This is awarded to the winner of a cricket match between the GPs and Consultants and is named after Dr Brian Highton. Brian was a long-standing Book Club Treasurer, keen cricketer, and partner at Dalton Square Surgery. This was last contested in 2019. This is invariably a tightly fought contest but hasn't been won by the GPs since 2011.

Badminton Competition

The Badminton competition is organised by Dr Kamlesh Sidhu and takes place on a Sunday in February, usually at The University of Cumbria. Several competitions are contested including men's, ladies, and a team competition for GPs versus consultants. The Team Trophy is dedicated in memory of Simon Connell who was a partner at Queen Square Surgery.

THE COMMITTEE

The committee consists of the President, Secretary, Treasurer/Membership Secretary and Archivist. Presidents and secretaries tend to be involved for the year before and the year after their tenure. Presidents and secretaries alternate between primary and secondary care with one from each in any given year. We also have a number of non-executive officers whose input is invaluable in guiding the club. We meet 3-4 times a year to coordinate the various events and have an Annual General Meeting in early July to present the accounts and annual reports from the officers and plan the activities for the coming year.

THE FUTURE

The popularity of the book club tends to ebb and flow. Many people regard it as a retirement club. We do in fact have a retirement club, at least for the GP's, and the age profile for



Figure 1: The Presidential Medallion

Photos courtesy of Bryan Rhodes



Figure 2: Dr. Gallagher wearing the Presidential Medallion

this is significantly older! However, we are very aware that the committee members aren't getting any younger and we need some of our younger colleagues to get involved, both in running and attending book club events. Although most of us who have grown up with the book club consider being president as an honour, we can even have trouble recruiting to this post. Having recently had the opportunity to review book club correspondence from over sixty years ago, this is nothing new. We are looking at having the president and secretary from either primary or secondary care at the same time, to make joint working easier. We also endeavour to have an ambassador in each speciality or practice to promote the society to their colleagues. With the loss of hospital accommodation and the 'doctors mess' the drive for doctors to socialise with their colleagues seems much less than it did, say, thirty years ago. Life feels a lot busier. There have been significant changes in post-graduate education and there are fewer opportunities for colleagues from primary and secondary care to meet. This makes it even more important to have a forum where we can do this. Working together is much easier, more rewarding, and ultimately, better for patient care, if we also play together. If you haven't been to an event before, please come along. Membership of the book club costs only £10 a year. If you are not a member, come along anyway and try it out. Bring some friends/colleagues. You are bound to have a good time. While we are here, these are the dates for some events in 2023:

March 3: Jonathan Calvert, Editor of the Sunday Times Insight Team is talking about the government's response to the pandemic. Morecambe Golf Club.

May 20: Spring Ball. Lancaster Golf Club.

July 9: Golf Day at Morecambe Golf Club.

November 11: Bicentennial 'David Campbell' lecture, Professor Gareth Williams on Edward Jenner at The Storey Institute and unveiling of Heritage Plaque at the site of the very first meeting in Market Square.

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