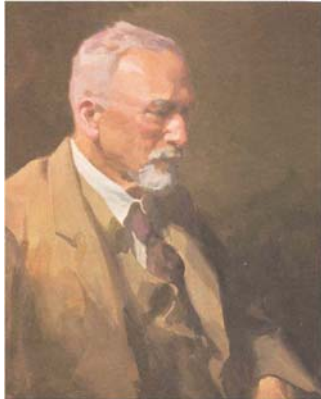


## THE ARCHIBALD WATSON MEMORIAL LECTURE



Archibald Watson is one of the most colourful characters in Australasian medical history. The legends surrounding his life may tend to overshadow his achievements as a surgeon and anatomist, but his legacy as a teacher and mentor to generations of Australian surgeons cannot be overestimated. Wood Jones considered him “without doubt the finest topographical anatomist of his time”. Surgeons of the calibre of Newland, Devine and Dunhill sought his advice when faced with difficult cases.

He was born at Tarcutta on 27 July 1849, the eldest of the four sons of Sydney Grandison Watson, pioneer pastoralist of the Upper Murray, who settled at Walwa in 1846, and held leases on more than 100,000 acres along the southern bank of the Murray. His three younger brothers Sydney, Harry and McGregor became pioneers in Queensland, occupying, at the ages of sixteen to eighteen years, the vast station at Gregory Downs in the Gulf country in 1870.

As the eldest, Archibald was sent to Melbourne to be educated at Scotch College. On leaving school his restless spirit called him in search of adventure in the South Seas, and he took passage in the brig *Carl*, an ill-fated voyage which was to haunt him for the rest of his life. Arrested on suspicion of kidnapping and murder, he skipped bail and returned in secret to the Upper Murray, while his father arranged for him to flee the country. His experiences aboard the *Carl* determined him on a career in medicine.

He travelled *via* America to England, then to the Continent, taking up his studies at Göttingen, where in 1878 he received his Doctorate *cum laude* with a thesis entitled *Über das Fibradenom der Mamma*. He then proceeded to Paris, gaining a second Doctorate in 1880 with his thesis *Étude sur le traitement des hernies étranglées et crurales vulgaires*.

In 1884 Watson gained his FRCS, and returned to Australia to take up the Elder Chair in Anatomy in Adelaide. Here he built his unrivalled reputation as a teacher and consultant.

He later became Lecturer in Operative Surgery, and Pathologist, and finally Surgeon to the Adelaide Hospital.

In 1900 he obtained leave from Adelaide to attend the Boer War, and afterwards, to the chagrin of the University, travelled to England to catch up with old friends. He returned to the Elder Chair in 1902, but not without some dispute.

In 1914, at the age of sixty-five years, Watson enlisted in the AIF, and was sent as Chief Pathologist to Gallipoli, Lemnos and Egypt. At the end of the War, he returned to Adelaide, retired from his positions, and was succeeded

## THE ARCHIBALD WATSON MEMORIAL LECTURE (Cont.)

by Frederic Wood Jones. He went to live in Darwin, where he did much to improve the standards of surgical care in the tropics.

Thereafter he withdrew from active practice, spending summer in Melbourne and Adelaide, the winter months on Thursday Island, and visiting his brothers on Gregory Downs. From 1936 he made Thursday Island his permanent home. Feeling that the advance of age was impairing his mobility, at the age of eighty-six years he took delivery of a new motor bike.

Archibald Watson died in his sleep on 30 July 1940, and was buried on Thursday Island. As J. "Orm" Smith noted, "He left little behind him in the shape of original discoveries or classical surgical or anatomical writings. His great contributions were contemporary...". Some forty of his surgical notebooks are now in the possession of the College.

### Conditions of the Lectureship

The lecture is arranged jointly between the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons and the Royal Australasian College of Physicians.

1. The Archibald Watson Memorial Lecture shall be delivered every second year.
2. The lecture shall be given in succession in the six Australian states, beginning with South Australia.  
[By convention, it is now delivered at the Annual Scientific Congress.]
3. Subject to the approval of the Presidents of the Royal Australasian College of Physicians and the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons, the lecture shall be on some subject of anatomical, surgical or medical interest.
4. The award takes the form of a bronze medal.

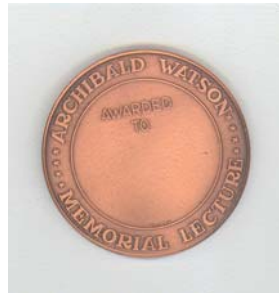
### Archibald Watson Lecturers

- 1947 Sir Henry Newland *Professor Watson and his Influence on Australian Surgery*
- 1949 J.B. Cleland *The Naturalist in Medicine*
- 1951 W.E.L. Crowther *The Background of Medical Practice and Training of Surgical Apprentices in Van Diemen's Land*
- 1953 H.J. Wilkinson *The Edwin Smith Papyrus and its Significance*
- 1955 Air Vice-Marshal Sir Victor Hurley *The Making of a Surgeon*
- 1957 C. Craig *Some Doctors in famous Novels and a famous Play*
- 1963 D.C. Sinclair *Skin Sensation*
- 1966 J.O. Smith *Sydney Grandison Watson and his Sons, especially Archibald*
- 1967 W.E. Hackett *Biological Views of Disease*
- 1970 E.H. Goulston *Sphere of Influence - The Surgeon in a Developing Country*
- 1973 J. Birrell *The Drug Scene - Perspective 1973*
- 1980 R.G. Elmslie *Our honoured Anatomists*
- 1980 B.McC. O'Brien *The Future of Microsurgery*
- 1984 C. Wood *Ethics and Science of In Vitro Fertilisation*

## THE ARCHIBALD WATSON MEMORIAL LECTURE (Cont.)

- 1985 C.E. Sullivan *Sleep Disorders and Clinical Medicine*  
1987 E.L.L. Schneider *The Impact of Aging on the Aged*  
1988 J. Pettigrew *Flying Cats and flying Primates: the Brain eliminates Evolution and vice versa*  
1988 H.K. Ibbertson *Paget's Disease*  
1989 C. Organ *Impact of the New Technologies*  
1992 D. Melnick *Can Old Dogs learn New Tricks?*  
1994 A.J. Woodward *Doctoring the Planet: Health Effects of Global Change*  
1997 D. Simpson *Watson's World*  
2002 J.G. Temple PRCSEd *497 years of the RCSEd*  
2004 D. Gotley *Advances in Surgery in Carcinoma of the Oesophagus*  
2006 Professor Kingsley Faulkner (Perth) *Flanders, Flodden, Florey and Fallujah: an anatomy of affliction and the pathology of power 1900-2006*  
2008 Professor Jiefu Huang *Surgical education in China*

Archibald Watson Medal, obverse:



Archibald Watson Medal, reverse:

