3

Take away that fool's bauble, the mace.

Oliver Cromwell, dismissing the Rump Parliament, 20 April 1653

n his paper A muted mutiny, read in 1995, the then College archivist, Colin Smith, found it difficult to reconcile two statements, supposedly made on successive days in 1945 by Sir Alan Newton, who was president at the time and had been, next perhaps to Hugh Devine, the architect of the College's formative years.1 On 12 May Newton replied to a speech by Lambert Rogers2 when Rogers and his fellow naval surgeon, Gordon Gordon-Taylor, visited the College wearing both uniform caps and their English College hats - and his reply included the observation that the Australasian College had 'from the outset... a close relationship with the Royal College of Surgeons of England'. The next day, says Smith (but the letter is in fact dated 12 December 1944; in May 1945 it was an agenda document for the Council meeting), he wrote to his vicepresident Gordon Bell of Dunedin - later one of his successors in the presidency - that its original constitution was 'almost a replica of that of the American College of Surgeons'.

These apparently contradictory statements can be reconciled if it is allowed that the ideals of the English and those of the American



Lambert Rogers and Gordon Gordon-Taylor, both prominent in the English College and both holding high rank in the medical service of the Royal Navy, visited the College in 1945. They are being greeted by H.R.G. Poate PRACS while Brig. W.A. Hailes and AVM T.E.V. Hurley look on College were not mutually exclusive, but rather complementary, and that the *personae* of the two were in any case a reflection of the circumstances in which they had developed. Each had something to offer a fledgling Antipodean organisation. Indeed, the American College itself, less than a quarter of a century older than its Australasian counterpart,³ had been happy to bask in the patronage of the older English body, enduring the taunts of republican critics to do so.

Thus, in 1913 its founders were derided by the Californian State Medical Journal, whose editor wrote in the May issue:

May we suggest a few titles for this personally-conducted eruption into medical education? How would the "American Surgical Society" do? This could be used for the terminal-letter part quite nicely: "A.S.S...." Or this one has been suggested: "American Royal Surgical Emporium..." which would string out behind one's name quite nicely.

Nicely? Well, hardly that, if you examine its implications ...

But the founders persevered, even in the face of a New York Medical Journal editorial in July which prompted the New York Times headline:

CLIQUES COULD WITHHOLD THE RIGHTS F.C.S. ORGANIZATION OF NEW COLLEGE EVOKES ADVERSE CRITICISM FROM MEDICAL JOURNAL – FEARS A MONOPOLY

They persevered to some effect, moreover. Just a month later the honorary fellowship of the English College was conferred on four American surgeons: George Crile, Harvey Cushing, William Mayo and John B. Murphy. In the course of their visit to London they were able to invite Sir Rickman Godlee (Lister's nephew, and the English College president) to deliver the inaugural address at the first convocation of the new American College, in November.

Godlee, in turn, became one of the first honorary fellows of the American College and, before delivering his inaugural address, he read a message of greeting from the English College. This stated:

We desire to show that we appreciate the intention of the American College to strengthen the bonds that already unite the Medical Profession amongst the English-speaking peoples. It is a sentiment which always meets with a cordial response in this country, and it is one which this College will endeavour to support by all the means in its power.⁴

From its beginnings, the American College was in the same stable as its English exemplar.

So, indeed, was the Australasian College, and it was not long before its welcome into that stable was confirmed. On 14 June 1928 the Council of the English College saluted the new institution in an address:



Sir Rickman Godlee PRCS, who was Lord Lister's nephew, delivered an address from his College to the newly formed American College in 1913. He became the first honorary Fellow of that College.



We, the President, Vice-Presidents and Council of the Royal College of Surgeons of England, have heard with much interest of the foundation of the College of Surgeons of Australasia, which includes New Zealand.⁵ We hereby convey to it our best wishes, and express the hope that it may have a successful career, and fill a position beneficial alike to the profession and to the community.

We appreciate the excellent work that has been done for medical education by the Universities and Schools of Australia and New Zealand, and we are glad to know that among many distinguished physicians and surgeons, Fellows and Members of our College have had a share in contributing to the high standard of professional conduct and practice which prevails in those countries.

We trust that the foundation of your College may tend to confirm and strengthen the bonds that already unite the medical profession in this country and in the Dominions beyond the seas.

In witness whereof we have caused the Common Seal of the College to be hereunto affixed this 14th day of June, 1928.

BERKELEY MOYNIHAN, President. CUTHBERT WALLACE, F.H. STEWARD, Vice-Presidents.

The wording may have differed from that which Godlee and *his* vicepresidents (G.H. Makins and Frederic Eve) had subscribed to another

The Council of the English College, which conveyed its greetings to the young College of Surgeons of Australasia' in 1928, was virtually unchanged from that painted by Moussa Ayoub the previous year. Grey Turner is seen in profile in front of the president's table; Holburt Waring faces the artist just above and behind Turner's head. Hey Groves stands alongside Moynihan with his hand hooked into his waistcoat pocket; in front of him and a couple of places along D'Arcy Power is leaning his head on his left hand, apparently studying the recently elected Victor Bonney. Fagge is seated, leaning forward in line with the vacant chair, third from the extreme right. Wallace and Steward, the vicepresidents, sit flanking Moynihan.

young College in 1913, but the sentiments were very similar. The bonds referred to in each address have proved durable.

In that same year of 1928, the State of Victoria enacted a Companies Act, which seemed suitable enough for the College to implement its plans for incorporation, the step first advocated by Dr Todd at the 1926 meeting in Sydney. This action was taken despite the passage in the Exordium as signed by the Founders,

3. That the College of Surgeons of Australasia should be a voluntary (i.e. not incorporated under a Companies Act or under a Royal Charter) Association;

and incorporation was obtained on 24 October 1930.

Two clauses in the original constitution had proved to be open to misinterpretation in a way unforeseen by the Founders:

- to safeguard the welfare of the community by indicating that its Fellows have attained a high standard of surgical competency and are of a high character; and

- to educate the public to recognise that the practice of Surgery demands adequate and special training.

Of these the first had been interpreted by critics of the College as a licence for advertising; the second, for propaganda. The opportunity was therefore taken to omit them from the objects of the College as set out in the Memorandum of Association.

On the other hand, the power to conduct examinations of candidates for admission to Fellowship was added. The original regulations, and the system of admission they encompassed, had been made subject to review after five years, when the 'grandfather clause' that required no higher surgical qualification would lapse.

The objects of the College, then, were set out in the Memorandum in an interesting sequence, one which deserves recording and some comment:

a. to cultivate and maintain the highest principles of surgical practice and ethics; [One has to wonder how much the priority of this clause resulted from the Council's undoubted high principles, and how much from a desire to deflect the criticism to which their motives had been subjected.]

b. to promote the practice of Surgery under proper conditions by securing the improvement of hospitals and hospital methods;

c. to arrange for adequate post-graduate surgical training at Universities and Hospitals and to conduct examinations of candidates for admission to Fellowship; [The triad of high-quality hospitals, good surgical training, and examinations has since dominated the College's concerns.] d. to promote research in Surgery;

e. to bring together the surgeons of Australia and New Zealand periodically for scientific discussion and practical demonstration of surgical subjects; *[Research and scientific meetings, as the tools for securing*

high standards, gain deserved attention.]

f. to consider all questions affecting the interests of the College and to initiate and watch over and if necessary to petition Parliament or promote deputations in relation to measures affecting the College; [It is interesting to see the early concern with the political role of the College, since this role – and its proper limits – have been a subject of debate over the years.]

g. to acquire by purchase, donation or otherwise a library of scientific works and to maintain and from time to time extend and improve such library; [It is curious that this should be separated from research and meetings by the statement of the College's political role.]

h-m. These items deal with matters of property and finance, and give the College the rights that it needs to function as an organisation; then comes: n. to acquire establish print and publish books magazines periodicals newspapers leaflets or other literary or scientific works that the College may think desirable for the promotion of its objects; [It is surprising that the right to publish is placed so remote from the other academic objects – research, meetings and the library.]

Finally, o. and p. allow delegation of the College's powers to its Council, and the performance of 'acts and things... incidental or subsidiary' to what has gone before.



The acquisition of a library may have been mentioned late in the Memorandum of Association, but the library of today includes certain notable early works. Of these the earliest is the 1479 *Canon* of Avicenna.

THE MANTLE OF SURGERY



Devine's visit to England in 1930 enabled him to enlist the active support of Lord Moynihan, who was then approaching the end of a five-year term as president of the English College, the first 'provincial' surgeon to hold the office. It was he who had taken the American College's mace to the USA, and he hoped to do the same for the Australasian College. Hard on the heels of this company status came a further distinction. On 18 September 1930, while in the closing stages of securing its incorporation, the Council applied for the prefix 'Royal' to be attached to the name of the College. The application necessarily travelled through two vice-regal channels, and on 23 December the College received a most welcome Christmas present. Through the respective governors-general (The Rt Hon. Viscount Bledisloe in New Zealand, and in Australia probably Lord Somers, governor of Victoria, during the inter-regnum between Lord Stonehaven and Sir Isaac Isaacs) the Council was notified that His Majesty the King had been graciously pleased to approve of the application.⁶

Welcome though it was, the news did put the cat among the pigeons, because two more distinctions – both then 'in the pipeline' – were affected by the change of name. At about the same time as the decision on incorporation, the Council asked E. Wilson Dobbs, a local antiquarian, about a design for a coat of arms,⁷ and by April 1930 he had produced a draft design 'and collected several mottoes'.

Hugh Devine visited England in 1930,⁸ and Lord Moynihan (his peerage had come in 1929), the English College president, entertained him at dinner.⁹ He recorded the event in a letter to Alan Newton:

I then attended a private dinner which Moynihan gave at the Garrick Club to the members of the Council of the English College in order, as he said in his invitation, that they should hear at first hand about the Australasian College... The result of this dinner is that Moynihan has unofficially promised to go out to Australia and the Council has unofficially promised to give us a mace... Fagge and others, and I might add myself, also think that if we are ever going to get a coat of arms we ought to get it at once so that it can be put on the mace.



Moynihan dined Devine at the Garrick Club (where the bust of Shakespeare overlooks the entrance stairs). Sir Neville Howse was also present, and impressed Devine with his oratory.

Devine recruited three advisers in London: a clergyman named Dawling 'who from the artistic side is the greatest authority in England', Sir D'Arcy Power, the medical historian, and Omar Ramsden who was commissioned to fashion the mace. They were shown a design produced by Dobbs - and sent by air mail, which was then a modern miracle of communication - in which the shield portion closely resembled that finally granted, but with a Sagittarius and Hermes as supporters; the crest was a female sphinx. D'Arcy Power demurred at the Sagittarius and Hermes, the former because the shooting of an arrow could not be depicted in heraldry, the latter because he was 'a cunning thief' ('?appropriate for surgeons', wrote Devine). The two therefore became Chiron the centaur, holding a bow but not shooting with it, and Apollo. The choice was apt beyond the imagining of those who made it, for Chiron taught Asklepios after Apollo sired him in a shabby liaison with the daughter of the king of the Lapiths. It was a happy choice, too, because Chiron and Apollo supported opposite sides at the siege of Troy, where the sons of Asklepios (Machaon and Podalirios) provided medical cover for the Greeks - and those two are themselves the supporters of the arms of the English College.

Rouge Croix Pursuivant, the officer of the College of Arms who came to handle the petition, one E.N. Geijer, felt it necessary that the female sphinx should be differentiated in some way (and in the event the winged sphinx with a spiky sunburst behind her was depicted full-face and thus skew to the helmet she adorns, which is debatable heraldic practice). For that matter, Dobbs did not think much of Rouge Croix' judgment in the whole business of the sphinx; in papers on College heraldry I have likened the result to Elizabeth Taylor playing Cleopatra.

An officially sanctioned drawing was passed to Ramsden on 10 October, two weeks before the incorporation of the College made it technically worthy to receive a grant of arms; a copy of this overtook Devine aboard the *Otranto* in Toulon on his homeward journey.



Sir D'Arcy Power was recruited by Devine to advise in the matter of a grant of arms. He was then the doyen of medical historians, but in 1925 was guilty of giving credence to the story that John Hunter was syphilitic.



Devine returned home in the Orient liner Otranto. At Toulon he was overtaken by the first official drawing of the College's arms.

THE MANTLE OF SURGERY

The arms granted in 1931 to 'The College of Surgeons of Australasia', show a family resemblance to the English College's arms in the display of a shield quartered gold and silver by a red cross.



Finally, on 11 February 1931, Rouge Croix wrote to report the dispatch of the box containing the Letters Patent. (Their completion, says Peter Jones, had been further delayed by a vacancy in the office of Norroy and Ulster [*sic*; in fact simply Norroy before 1937], one of the three Kings of Arms who were required to sign and seal the document.) This document, when it did arrive, proved to have been drafted before the acquisition of the prefix 'Royal'; the Letters Patent thus grant arms to the 'College of Surgeons of Australasia'.

In the manner of English grants, the blazon does not specify the College motto, which is merely displayed in the illustration of the grant: it is one of those gathered by Dobbs at the beginning of the process. The Latin, *Fax mentis incendium gloriae*, is identified by Jones as being also the motto of Forbes, Earls of Granard, a Scots-Irish family ennobled by James II of Scotland in 1448. It was translated by Dobbs as 'The flame of glory is the torch of the mind', but other renderings have been proposed. Indeed, Jones quotes, from Elvin's *Handbook of mottoes* of 1860, the variant 'The torch of glory inflames the mind' with its delightful Victorian overtones.

There is an amusing sequel to all this business: when I joined the Council in 1975 I was interested to find that, among the treasures on display at the College, there was no sign of these Letters Patent. Nor did a thorough search of the building bring them to light, and it had to be assumed that they had been lost when the College building was vacated in favour of the Australian Red Cross during the Second World War.

It was therefore decided to seek a replacement document. Because the three Kings of Arms who had signed the original were no longer in office (probably no longer alive; Kings of Arms are seldom young

men), the replacement had to be a certified copy over the seal of the College of Arms itself. Before that College would agree to provide such a copy it had to be satisfied that this 'Royal Australasian College of Surgeons' was the same organisation as the 'College of Surgeons of Australasia' to which the original arms had been granted. One advantage of incorporation under the Victorian Companies Act was that there had needed to be public notification of the name change at the end of 1930. I was able to locate this notice in old newspaper files in the State Library, and this formed part of our proof of identity.

The replacement Letters Patent duly arrived and were framed (in a deep frame to accommodate the seal of the College of Arms) and put on display alongside the door of the Council room. The herald painter of the 1970s had done a better job than the original 1930 version; in particular, Apollo now looked less effeminate and more like a surfie.

Some years later, a bank in Melbourne rang to enquire if a box found during a clean-up in its vaults, and labelled 'Surgeons', might have something to do with the College. In the box was, of course, the original document. It is now framed, in the manner that had been developed for the replacement copy, and the latter now graces the entrance hall of the New Zealand headquarters in Wellington.¹⁰



Once the original Letters Patent were rediscovered, the replacement document was transferred to New Zealand. Here the president, J.K. Clarebrough, and the chairman of the New Zealand committee, J.R.M. Davidson, stand on either side of their charge.

The matter of the mace also became somewhat convoluted. Devine's account of his dinner at the Garrick Club and its far-reaching, if informal, outcome was followed by a cable in August 1930:¹¹



The Mace was fashioned by Omar Ramsden just before the College's change of name; he was only able to incorporate the prefix 'Royal'.

Moynihan presenting mace giving Syme Oration March 1932. Acknowledge Moynihan. Have registered revised Arms with motto. All contingent incorporation. Try G-G for Royal for mace.

Orm Smith describes it as 'somewhat enigmatic'. It is certainly economical, but it gives a crisp progress report on the various interlacing projects. What Devine describes as 'have registered revised Arms', for instance, will doubtless be his action in signing, on behalf of the College, the petition which triggers the formal process towards a grant; and he stresses the urgency of achieving corporate status as a precursor to its award. But even his admonition 'try G-G for Royal' was a little late, so far as the mace was concerned.

For the mace project had acquired a momentum of its own: in February 1931 the Council learned, through Sir D'Arcy Power, of the receipt of the royal authority for the use of the crown and orb in the design of the mace. (This was conveyed by the King's private secretary, Lord Stamfordham, in what must have been one of his last royal duties, for he died that year.) In the following month, the Council decided to mark its newly acquired Royal prefix by changing the name of the College to the 'Royal Australasian College of Surgeons'.

But by then the fashioning of the mace had proceeded far enough that Omar Ramsden, though he managed to include 'Royal', could make no further alterations. So the College mace identifies us as 'The Royal College of Surgeons of Australasia'.

While the mace was, as it were, not quite catching up with the College's evolution, the proposed Moynihan visit was receding. He had written what Orm Smith calls 'a charming letter of acceptance' when invited to deliver the Syme Oration while presenting the mace and to accept the honorary fellowship; but then Lady Moynihan fell ill. In March 1931 the Council received Moynihan's cable :

Regret possibly prevented coming. Would you accept substitute August this year or next.

Three months later he was obliged to withdraw totally, as his wife's health had not improved. In his place he arranged for his former vice-president, C.H. Fagge, who had been involved in the discussions throughout, to undertake the presentation.

The Federal trade and customs minister agreed to waive customs duty on the mace (though it still attracted 10 per cent primage duty – whatever that may be!). The Orient line, having brought Devine home as a paying passenger in 1930, brought the mace out freightfree a year later, and on 17 February 1932 Fagge formally handed it over, delivered the first Syme oration – and was duly admitted as an honorary fellow.

The mace is a beautiful piece of work: silver gilt, almost 1.2 metres

in length. The head is formed by a crown surmounted by the orb and cross, its arches enclosing the royal arms of George V. At the base of the arches is a 'coronet' of national symbols: English roses, wattle and the seven-pointed star for Australia, fern leaves for New Zealand. A narrow wavy band of 'waters' suggests the 'separating seas', then comes the anachronistic title: THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF SURGEONS OF AUSTRALASIA. Below this again, on the drum-like head of the mace, are four panels which display the arms of the Commonwealth of Australia and the 1911 version of the New Zealand arms, along with the arms of the English and Australasian Colleges. A further band of 'waters' leads the viewer towards the shaft of the mace, its neck buttressed by sculpted lions; and round the shaft a ribbon bears the names of the donors, the 24 Council members of the English College whose dedication reads: 'The gift of the President and Council of the Royal College of Surgeons of England, as from brothers to brothers, MCMXXXII.'

Like so many College tales, this one has a small postscript. Orm Smith's College history, in its booklet form, includes a facsimile illustration of a letter he received in 1934. It runs:

LORD MOYNIHAN.	
25A PARK SQUARE	11, PORTLAND PLACE
LEEDS.	LONDON, W.1.
TEL. 22082.	TEL. LANGHAM 2030.

11th.July 1934.

Dear Mr.Julian Smith,

May I send you a quite private letter? As you know the British Medical Association is meeting in Melbourne in September 1935. I am contemplating coming out with the other members. In your letter of October 9th., 1933, you mention the Honorary Fellowship of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons. For certain reasons I am anxious to hold this diploma, you will perhaps guess what they are. If I come out then would the diploma be conferred?

Please regard this letter as private.

Believe me,

yours very truly, Moynihan.

Julian Smith Esqr.,F.R.C.S., Honorary Secretary, Royal Australasian College of Surgeons, 6, Collins Street, Melbourne. C.1.



After Lord Moynihan was unable to travel, the presentation of the Mace was performed by C.H. Fagge, who had just completed two years as senior vice-president and had been much involved in the 1930 discussions. Here Sir Henry Newland, now PRACS, receives the Mace while the portrait of his predecessor, the late Sir George Syme, looks on.



The journal was yet another of Devine's initiatives; originally approved 'for a limited time', its first two issues were paid for by Devine himself. Two matters arouse one's curiosity: in the first place, the enigmatic 'for certain reasons I am anxious to hold this diploma'. What reasons? The fact that his wife's illness had deprived him of the award a couple of years earlier or a desire to hold the honorary fellowship of every surgical college? (He probably held most already.) Then there is the curious fact that Smith makes no reference to this letter in his text: did he reproduce it to remind himself and his readers that he had been in confidential correspondence with the doyen of English surgeons? Whatever the underlying story may have been in 1934, the sad fact is that Moynihan was unable to travel in 1935 and died the following year, full of honours but still deprived of the honorary fellowship of the young College whose symbols he had been so helpful in securing.

By the end of 1935 the College possessed most of the trappings that a surgical college cannot do without. One more remains to be mentioned briefly (and that, indeed, one of the first; but, as in the Memorandum of Association, it is late in attracting attention in this story). It is, of course, the journal.

Like so much in the formative years of the College, it owed its existence to Devine.¹² After the first annual meeting in Canberra in March 1928, he had accumulated enough material to fill one issue. He was able to have this published in July – 170 pages of it – by the Australasian Medical Publishing Company and able also to obtain Syme's approval to run the project 'for a limited time'. The Council confirmed this approval with the same condition attached.

The journal was named *The journal of the College of Surgeons of Australasia* and included on its title page the *Medical Journal of Australia's* favourite pleonasm: 'which includes New Zealand'. Devine chaired an editorial committee of 20 members; Mervyn Archdall was the editor.

More than seventy years (and sundry facelifts) later it is a monthly publication. After the College name change of 1931 it was renamed *The Australian and New Zealand Journal of Surgery*, remaining that way until the abbreviated form 'ANZ' came in with the turn of the century. As 'limited times' go, seventy-odd years is quite a long time.

NOTES

1. Smith, C.V. (1996) A muted mutiny; in *History, Heritage and Health*, Brisbane, Australian Society of the History of Medicine, p.21.

2. Lambert Rogers was an Australian expatriate; he (1943-59) and Gordon-Taylor (1932-48) were on the council of the English College and each rose to be a vice-president.

3. The American College was the first 'new' surgical college, our own the second twentieth-century foundation. The precursor colleges in the United Kingdom had roots going back several centuries.

4. Davis, L (1960) Fellowship of surgeons, Chicago, C.C.Thomas and American College of Surgeons, pp.89ff.

5. The phrase 'which includes New Zealand' (the *Medical Journal of Australia* called it 'the pleonasm introduced by the College of Surgeons of Australasia') may reflect the geographic uncertainty that affects Australians.

6. The monarch concerned was King George V, who had visited Melbourne and opened Australia's first Federal Parliament on 9 May 1901, in the course of an Empire tour as Duke of Cornwall and York. He and his Duchess, the future Queen Mary, travelled in the converted Orient liner *Ophir*, going on to New Zealand before returning home by way of Canada.

7. The subject was researched by the late Peter Jones, paediatric surgeon of Melbourne, a man of wide knowledge and great charm who later became a Councillor. His papers on College heraldry, published in Vol.40 of the *Aust. N.Z. J. Surg.*, have provided me with much of the detail that would otherwise be lacking from this account (for Colin Smith tells me that much of the material used by Jones has since been lost. Archivists, like the psalmist, may find themselves by the waters of Babylon.)

8. Devine was not at this time a Fellow of the English College. In 1939 he was awarded an honorary Fellowship, which was ultimately conferred in 1945 at a private ceremony at Government House in Melbourne by the then governor-general of Australia, the Duke of Gloucester. The Duke was himself an honorary English Fellow, who took this distinction seriously enough to be the guest of honour at the sesquicentenary celebrations of 1950. The Australasian College awarded no honorary Fellowships between 1939 and 1947, thus losing the opportunity of giving its own recognition to the Duke.

9. Sir Neville Howse, who was Moynihan's friend, was also present. Devine recalled 'Sir Neville Howse spoke. The experienced politician in him was brilliant.' (RACS Archives, SB102/14/3.) In February 1945 the honorary Fellowship of the English College was conferred on Sir Hugh Devine by HRH The Duke of Gloucester at Government House in Melbourne. From left: Balcombe Quick, Sir Alan Newton PRACS, W.A. Hailes, Sir Hugh Devine, HRH The Duke, Brig. D. Schreiber (ADC).



10. That is to say, it did until the anaesthetists needed to subdivide off half the entrance hall to provide additional office space.

11. Jones gives the date of this cable as February 1931, which has to be an error if we recall that Devine was in Toulon on his homeward journey by November 1930.

12. Devine paid for the first couple of issues out of his own pocket.