THE EIGHTIES

My personal introduction to the new decade was a sudden awareness of things called 'word processors'. Histopathologists like me, for those who may not be aware, spend a great deal of their time looking down a microscope at preparations of pieces of tissue removed by clinicians, mainly surgeons. They record their opinions in written or typed reports. Several thousand of these reports were, and are, generated each year in the lab at Frenchay; their production is so much easier with the now common, but then very rare, word processor. I asked for one. In those days such largish items of capital equipment had to be purchased with Regional funds and had to be backed by local (district) support. The waiting list for Regional funding was about five years and my heart sank. However, the submission went up to District at the end of May 1980. To my great delight the District Treasurer, Doug Woods, rang me and said: 'I allocated £25,000 for possible computer purchase in this financial year. You are the only person to ask for one - you can have it!' And so it came to pass that the Department of Histopathology at Frenchay became one of the first in the world with this type of technology. If only the rest of the decade had been so easy!

Firstly, there was the re-reorganisation already touched upon. In April 1982 Avon AHA was disbanded and the individual Health Districts for whom they had been responsible became a little more autonomous. The administrative structure became centred around 'Units' under, in the old Frenchay District, Frenchay Health Authority. We had a General Unit consisting of Frenchay, Manor Park, Burden and Cossham Hospitals. There was also a Community Unit consisting of Chipping Sodbury Hospital and the Community Health Services. Glenside Hospital formed the Mental Health Unit and the Mental Handicap Unit consisted of Stoke Park, Purdown and Hanham Hall Hospitals as well as Clevedon Holiday home. By 1987/88 the cost per in-patient day at Frenchay Hospital had risen to

£120.91; the overall cost per in-patient stay was £1037.74. Of course these figures hid widespread differences in cost between the individual specialties and changed in 1988/89 to £136.25 and £934.97 respectively. The Medical Staff committee was a unitary one and we met for our regular monthly meetings on a rotational venue basis. The food supplied for these working lunches when we met at Manor Park and Stoke Park Hospitals always seemed so much better than Frenchay.

The second major change in this decade was the realisation that, at last, there was going to be a proper rebuilding programme at Frenchay. In 1981 we celebrated the Golden Jubilee of the opening of the 1931 wards (more of this later). A special brochure was produced, at the end of which was a photograph of the model of the proposed redevelopment. Plans still had to be finalised, but it was hoped that work on Phase 1 would start in 1985 at a cost of £8.5 million. A great deal of preparatory work had been done before 1981. I remember that both the Medical and Nursing staffs had been consulted about the overall general shape of the new buildings; both groups were unanimous in their desire to maintain the low-built character of the wards. We were told that we could not have a replacement in a single storey style since this would mean that when patients were transferred from old to new premises this would not release sufficient land necessary to proceed with the subsequent phases; we would have to accept a multi-storey building and, since it was uneconomic to put in lifts just to serve two storeys, then a three storey structure was inevitable. When the plans showed only two storeys, we were all delighted and didn't question the change in heart.

The construction of the new hospital involved a number of large preliminary works. It was necessary to build a new, bigger, boiler house and it was also vital to upgrade the drainage facilities. These changes were virtually complete by the spring of 1986. The shell of Phase 1 proper was readily visible by late 1987. In order to clear the building site the road near to the original 1931 wards 29 and 30 was

diverted to run close to the front of the wards themselves. Previously, as some of the photographs show, there had been a wide area of grass in front of these wards; this was the only significant amount of open space lost in rebuilding programme, all the remaining development taking place on land cleared of older buildings. The ceremony marking the cutting of the first sod of Phase 1 proper took place on the morning of October 17th 1986. Geoff Mortimer, the Chairman of the Health Authority, and the Lord Mayor of Bristol performed the actual cutting. Also prominent at the ceremony was John Zorab, Consultant Anaesthetist and Medical Representative on the Planning Team. It was through his efforts that the very first phase of the redevelopment had been carried out a few years earlier. He reported to the Medical Staff that the Regional Health Authority had agreed to allocate £20,000 to plant a mass of saplings of different types to act as a nursery for the eventual landscaping of the estate. These trees were planted around the eastern and northern perimeter of the grounds. Most were never used for their intended purpose; as a result, in 1994 we have a splendid forest in the area, part of which is now a wildlife park. This park was first designated in the winter of 1983-84 as a result of the efforts of a few enthusiasts. Most eventually left the hospital as their careers evolved and the park almost disappeared. However, in 1994, it was redesignated with special emphasis on access for the disabled.
[In Feb 1996 Fred Dane told me the story behind the funding of the tree planting. At that time Fred was Director of Works at the hospital and was, naturally, part of the planning team. He heard that grants were available for tree planting from the Forestry Commission and Local Authorities. He asked for, and got, a total of about £20,000 for the proposed landscaping of the new hospital. As a result there was no cost on the NHS!]

As mentioned earlier, in 1981 the hospital celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the opening of the 1931 wards. The American Ambassador visited the hospital and a special open weekend for the public took place at the end of September. Vera Wilson produced her

book at the time and the Health Authority a brochure and an exhibition in the Postgraduate Centre. A special celebratory lunch was also arranged, to take place in the Administrative H.Q. - the original Georgian mansion. Because of the strong connections with the U.S. military during the War it was decided to invite an American representative to the lunch. Since the nearest U.S. base was only 30 or so miles away at RAF Fairford, the current serving Medical Officer there was asked to come. He turned out to be a very distinguished looking and surprisingly old looking man - certainly to still be a serving officer. I was lucky enough to spend some time with him and he told me that during the war he had been a Corpsman (nursing orderly) in the U.S. army. After the War he had studied medicine and gone into practice in California. At the age of 55, a year or two before we met at the lunch, he and his wife felt that they would like to see some more of the world. He had always toyed with the idea of re-enlisting in the military and so he offered himself to the USAF. In spite of his age they took him with alacrity (they were short of military doctors) but told him, to his and his wife's disappointment, that he would never receive an overseas posting. However, much to their delight he was shortly posted to Holland and then, to his immense pleasure, to Britain and specifically to the U.S. base at Fairford in Gloucestershire. From there he was invited to the aforementioned lunch. After lunch I walked with him around the hospital. Much to my bafflement he started to tell me about the different buildings that we passed. It turned out that his time as a nursing orderly in the war had been partly spent at Frenchay. Because of his unique career and his entry at such a late stage into the USAF, he must have been the only medical officer in all the U.S. services with such wartime connections. To this day I am still amazed by the coincidence. I tried to trace him later but I can't remember his name and the records at Fairford are not permanent - they never keep a note of the personnel who have worked on a base, only those who are currently working. Pity.

Mention has been made of the background to the establishment of a

photographic department at the hospital in 1949. At that stage it was housed at one end of the building it shared with the dental department, demolished with the construction associated with Phase 1. In the late 1960s, it came to be resited at the far end of what, in 1994, was the Department of Medicine. These premises were too small, not only for the increased workload, but also the changed nature of the work. As a result, a new department of Medical Illustration was opened in 1986 on a small area of grass immediately adjacent to the Plastic surgery theatres (the treatment block of the 1931 wards). The ceremony was performed by Dennis Bodenham, F.R.C.S, the second Consultant Plastic Surgeon to be appointed, shortly after 'Fitz' FitzGibbon.

A significant amount of private money was donated to the hospital in the middle part of the decade. In 1983 Jack Britton, a local millionaire, donated more than £100,000 for the establishment of a Hall of Medical History in memory of his wife, Monica. He and his wife had been treated by Colin Davidson, F.R.C.S., one of the General surgeons. Initially Jack Britton wanted the Hall to be built at Cossham Hospital because of his boyhood connections with it. However Colin persuaded him that, since it was an educational building, it would be better placed at Frenchay. By the autumn of 1984 the shell of the striking octagonal building next to the Postgraduate Centre had taken root.

Another major donation came in the mid 1980s in the shape of £1,000,000 from John James, another local millionaire. The money was specifically for the purchase of a new type of scanner, based on Magnetic Resonance Imaging - M.R.I. for short. The money did not cover the cost of housing or running the machine; in consequence a major fund raising appeal had to be launched. Gordon Thomson, Consultant Neuroradiologist, was prominent in obtaining both the initial donation and the subsequent fund raising. A special building was constructed at the back of the swimming pool and, in June 1987, the new scanner was installed. It was only the ninth in the U.K. at the

time. Such was the success of the fund raising that a second scanner could be afforded; it arrived on site in January 1992 and was working by April. A third M.R.I. scanner, this time funded by the Department of Health and housed in a building near to Neuro X-ray was due to be installed in 1994/95. This scanner was the first of its type to installed in a hospital anywhere in Europe, the only other one being at the Philip's factory. On installation, the first of the M.R.I. scanners was then decommissioned.
[I have been reminded that Terry Beddoes, a local GP, was also a major influence in the establishment of the scanner.]

Not only was Frenchay prominent in the pioneering use of M.R.I. technology but, as Vera Wilson's account of the 1970s relates and due to the enthusiasm of Huw Griffith F.R.C.S., Consultant Neurosurgeon, one of the very first CAT scanners had come to the hospital in 1973. This 'Emmy' (EMI) scanner was eventually replaced, but its installation was nearly a world first. The replacement was initially a trial with one built by a newly founded firm called 'Meditech'. A special room to house it was built off the main corridor near to Neuro X-ray. Unfortunately, the machine failed to come up to specification and, in turn, was replaced by a different make. CAT scanning has grown to be a major tool in the diagnosis of many conditions, particularly of those seen by neurosurgeons. A second such scanner was installed in 1991.

The reputation of Frenchay as a centre of research excellence was underlined when the Imperial Cancer Research Fund decided to establish a laboratory in 1989. The facilities moved out of the Institute of Child Health at Great Ormond Street Hospital, London in October and were transferred to the Frenchay site, in a new building just behind the Doctors' Mess, on the site of a tennis court.

The hospital staff had been kept up to date with events with the aid of a hospital newspaper. Since March 1986 'Free Speech' conveyed the news. The paper lasted into the 1990s when, in April 1992, it was

replaced by 'Frenchay Wide'.

The changes becoming current in treatment procedures were applied to Frenchay when a new Day Case Centre opened in March 1988. Some time prior to this, in 1984, Frenchay had gained its first professorial chair in medicine when Gordon Wilcock was lured from Oxford to take up the post of Professor in the Care of the Elderly. Subsequently, two further professors came to be based at Frenchay when Richard Langton-Hewer and Hugh Coakham both received personal Chairs.

Two royal visitors came during the decade. In 1988 the Duchess of Kent opened the refurbished Entrance Lodge (where Mr Abbott, the farm bailiff had lived) and renamed it CLIC Cottage on behalf of the Cancer and Leukaemia in Children fund. Also in 1988 the Duchess of Beaufort opened Headway House for the rehabilitation of brain injured patients.

And so, as the decade came to an end, great progress had been made with the redevelopment of the old hospital. However, on the very near horizon, was - yet another N.H.S. reorganisation ...

1990 - 1994

Although the next phase of N.H.S. reforms loomed large in most conversations whenever the N.H.S. was discussed, the precise nature of how they were to affect Frenchay was not clear. In the late 1980s the Government, along with virtually all developed nations, became intent on curtailing the ever-increasing cost of medicine. The answer in the U.K. was deemed to be 'competition', not from the private sector, but from the idea of 'the Internal Market'. Work previously done on a hospital-wide basis started to be costed at a departmental level; for instance, Medical Physics began to send invoices for repair work done. At first this was only a paper exercise in preparation for the real thing. The Department of Pathology, along with Radiology, had been among the first to be given a theoretical and then an actual budget. The initial bases on which the budgets were founded were frequently spurious, since there really was no information on which to base them. Nevertheless, the budgets came and the words 'purchaser' and 'provider' became common place. Hand in glove with this exercise was the concept of whole hospitals running their own budgets (and being held responsible for them in a way that had not happened before). N.H.S. Trust Hospitals were born, with an initial group being granted this 'honour' in 1991. Frenchay applied for Trust status in April 1991. This application was preceded by consultation with various groups of the staff, most of which were apprehensive and preferred to stay as they were and had been. In spite of this, it was decided that an application should be made and Trust status was granted on 16th October 1991, to be effective in April 1992, the intervening months to be used to set up a Shadow Trust.

In the meantime the rebuilding of the hospital was continuing. The opening of Phase 1 with its 258 beds was held up for some months by problems with nurse staffing levels on the wards. Eventually the Phase was opened on 13th October 1990. Within the building was a new Burns Unit, later to be called 'The Michigan Unit' in memory of

the Medical and Nursing staff of the 298th U.S. General Hospital who came from the University of Michigan and ran the hospital for many months during World War II. As a memento of the opening, the hospital produced a limited edition mug which could be bought for £1. I have one and cherish it greatly. The official opening of the wards was carried out on 25th January 1991 by the Duchess of Gloucester. Shortly thereafter, in February, the new Department of Orthopaedics was opened on the site of the old CSSD, in turn on the site of the U.S. Sterilising Department. The CSSD itself had been rehoused earlier in a new building on the site of the water tank in which Sam Caseley's god-daughters were swimming when the first Americans arrived, just at the back of the North Lodge where he, and later Vera Wilson, lived and which itself had been knocked down to make way for the resited Transport Department.

In early 1991 a number of strange new direction signs appeared around the hospital. They were white with red lettering and were erected for a very special reason. A few weeks earlier Iraq had invaded Kuwait. The United Nations, mainly in the shape of the U.S., but with prominent British help, attacked Iraq itself. The hospital was one of several in the country put on a war footing with a special role in the treatment of burns cases. In the event we had only one patient from the Gulf War - a British soldier who turned out to have been fatally burnt in an accidental petrol fire. At the time we were not to know exactly how many casualties were to come and it was even possible that there would be American wounded again in Frenchay.

Although we had no American wounded, the Americans nevertheless did return a year later. This was because back in the late 1980s it had struck two of us, Dr Tony Bennett, Consultant Anaesthetist, and myself at about the same time, that 1992 was the fiftieth anniversary of the arrival of the first U.S. troops. This date clearly needed some sort of celebration. Over the years I had managed to gain contact with a number of U.S. veterans, mostly staff but with the occasional patient traced. Using these as the basis, an ever-increasing address

list was drawn up. It was obvious that there was a response from the States and so we set up a 'Fiftieth Anniversary' working party. This consisted of Tony Bennett, Brandon Lush, retired Consultant in the Care of the Elderly and a Medical Officer himself in World War II, Diane Redsull, General Manager and Barbara Burgess, Manager of the Postgraduate Centre. Over the months and years we gained sponsorship and worked up a programme of events to cover a weekend.

Indications came from the States that the price of air fares dropped at the beginning of September each year in consequence the first weekend in September was selected by the working party to be the date of the actual reunion. Some months before the date arrived, the photocopied pages of 'Medicine under Canvas', mentioned earlier, came to me from the States and, much to my amazement and pleasure, it became clear that our date of September 4th coincided exactly with that of the arrival of the 77th Evacuation Hospital fifty years earlier! In spite of this happy coincidence, the plans did not go completely problem free. Initially the whole of the U.S. arrangement was being carried out by an organisation called the 'Military Locator Service'. They produced a ten-day plan for a tour of Britain built around the reunion in Bristol. A few months before the actual weekend itself the Locator Service pulled out of the idea. They said that they were one traveller short of the number needed and it was uneconomic to proceed. To the members of the working party this was a disaster; however, salvation was at hand in the shape of one Jim Donohue, ex-sergeant in the Reception and Evacuation area with the 298th, and Lott Bloomfield's friend mentioned earlier, now residing in Pasadena, California. He had organised a number of reunions of the 298th in the States and he took over the transatlantic side of things. Eventually about forty five people came, about forty actual veterans and their families plus current representatives of the University of Michigan - the weekend was saved!

With some of the documentation and photographs that I had received

over the previous few years was a copy of the little brochure produced by the 117th U.S. General Hospital for Thanksgiving 1944, and donated by Hilda Fry (the brochure itself is now in the Monica Britton Hall). Inside was the menu for the Thanksgiving Day meal; we decided to copy it exactly. As the weekend approached there was a great deal of coverage by HTV; many people contacted me with memories and some with actual offers of help. One man wanted to line the Lime Tree Drive with World War II tanks, trucks and jeeps - we had to refuse. Other help was of a more practical type, particularly that of the Parkway Big Band who offered their services free of charge (we didn't have any surplus money to pay them in any case). This offer was gratefully accepted and, on the Saturday evening, we had a grand drinks reception to which all the U.S. visitors were invited plus many local people with past wartime connections. This was followed by the 'Thanksgiving Day' menu - all accompanied to Glenn Miller style music by the Parkway Band. The Americans were overwhelmed! The full weekend itinerary was as follows:

PROGRAMME FOR AMERICAN VISIT TO BRISTOL: 4th - 6th SEPTEMBER 1992

Friday 4th
8.15pm Evening Group to be met at their Hotel (Swallow Royal) and, if appropriate, to have talk on the history of the hospital.

Saturday 5th
9.45am Bus to pick up Group from Hotel for visit to the Merchant Venturers' Hall: tour and talk.

11.45am Leave Merchant Venturers' by bus for Frenchay Hospital.

12.15pm Lunch at the hospital.

1.30pm - 3.30pm Conducted walks around the site. During this time there will be a special ceremony at the Michigan Burns Unit; representatives of the University of Michigan, past and present, plus Frenchay Plastic surgeons and others will participate.

3.30pm Tea.

4.00pm Return to hotel for those so wishing; for the others there will be an opportunity to watch a film made by Dr Conger during his time as a urologist 1942 - 1944. The film includes many scenes of the hospital at work and play as well a brief glimpses of the bombed City Centre. Possibly visit new part of hospital.

Dedication of the Michigan Burns Unit. Ron Hiles (left), senior Plastic Surgeon, presents a Bristol blue glass decanter to George Zuidema, Vice Provost, Medical Affairs, University of Michigan. Giles Bole, Dean of the Medical School, University of Michigan (centre) and Clifford Kiehn, Emeritus professor of Plastc Surgery, University of Michigan (right) look on.

6.30pm Drinks reception, Frenchay Hospital with the Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress of Bristol, as well as many local people who were associated with the hospital whilst American Forces were present 1942 - 1945.

7.30pm Dinner in the Postgraduate Centre.

10.30pm Return to Hotel.

Sunday 6th
10.15am Bus to pick up from Hotel for a visit to Berkeley Castle (about 30 miles north of Bristol) for tour and talk, followed by a visit to the nearby Jenner Museum (which commemorates Jenner's 'discovery' of Smallpox vaccination). Lunch at the Museum.

2.00pm Guided bus tour of Bristol.

4.30pm approx. Return to Hotel, and Au Revoir.

The menu was as follows:

Chilled Tomato Juice Cocktail
Soup de jour

Hearts of Celery
Roasted Vermont Turkey
Chestnut dressing
Tidbit Gravy
Cranberry Crown Sauce
Duchess Potatoes, Glazed

Buttered Green Giant Peas
Chef's Salad

Bread
Butter

Apple Pie with Cheese

Demi Tasse
Fresh Fruit Assorted Candy

Naturally we were not quite able to find things like 'Vermont Turkey' but, at the end of the meal, one American said to me, 'That was as good as any U.S. Thanksgiving Day dinner I have ever had'. Praise indeed! At the end of the weekend Jim Donohue said to me, 'We came because it was the fiftieth anniversary. We expected a walk around the hospital and not much more. What did we get? The weekend of a lifetime!'

Ex-Sgt Jimmy Donohue presenting a plaque to the author after the reunion dinner
[Jimmy Donohue died in Pasadena, California on 21st February 2002]

Prior to this, in May 1992, the Sanatorium school, which had become the Burns theatre for a while and then a laboratory, took on the role of the Laser Centre and was the first of its kind in Britain. Other new uses for old buildings were taking place, almost continually. Many of the back ramp wards were empty, with their patients now housed in the new hospital; ward 20 became Medical Physics; wards 18 and 19 became the Lime Tree Unit for Neurological Rehabilitation and was so dedicated by the Duchess of Beaufort in December 1992. Also late in 1992 work started on the Brain Injury Rehabilitation Unit. This was financed to the tune of £200,000 per year for five years by the Department of Health and was one of twelve projects funded nationally out of 83 applications. In both this scheme and that of Headway House, Brian Cummins F.R.C.S., Consultant Neurosurgeon, played a vital role.

In March 1993 work started on further extension of the new hospital in the shape of Trauma and Orthopaedic wards, Day surgery and Endoscopy facilities. Opening was due to take place on 31st August 1994, but various problems meant that it had to be delayed by a few weeks.

And so, at the time of writing, in late 1994, we have come right up to date. In spite of all the encouraging progress and the millions of pounds spent, there is a large cloud on the horizon - rumours abound that Frenchay is going to be closed down as part of yet another structural change in the N.H.S. Personally, I can't imagine how this could even be considered as a practicality. By the time you read this my future will have become your present and past, and you will possibly know what came about.

Frenchay Hospital 1994. Photo by Dawn White, Frenchay Medical Illustration Dept.

FRENCHAY PARK SANATORIUM: THE VERY EARLY DAYS.

Information compiled in June 1996.

The earliest days of the sanatorium have been hard to uncover. Resort to the Bristol Corporation minutes for 1921-1928 and the Medical Officer of Health's Reports for 1920-25 give the following overall picture.

The Corporation was very worried about cases of untreated TB after the War. This worry was shared by the Ministry of Health who offered to part sponsor new TB facilities. As a result, in September 1920, the Corporation put up a plan to appropriate 60 beds at Lord Mayor Treloar's Hospital at Alton in Hampshire, where a Sanatorium already existed. In October a further plan to accommodate 100 pre tubercular children at Nover's Hill on land already owned by the Corporation was proposed. This scheme, reckoned to cost £78,000 but also to include a smallpox hospital for a further £20,000, was not approved by the Ministry and, as a result, an alternative to develop a 100 bedded facility for non pulmonary TB at Frenchay Park was proposed. At the same time the Ministry said that it would not allow the full Alton scheme. Eventually compromise plans were drawn up which included reducing the Alton beds and housing 35 children in the Manor House at Frenchay Park, with a view to a later increase in numbers. In May 1921 the Corporation agreed to purchase Frenchay Park and its attached 70.507 acres of land for £15,000, exclusive of the timber, electric lighting installation and fixtures and fittings, which they purchased for a further £2,350.

In spite of the above information the precise details of the Sanatorium and when it exactly opened remained unclear. The Deeds

of the House, now held by Frenchay Health care Trust, merely mention "July 1921" as the date of purchase by the Corporation. The 1921 Report by the Medical Officer of Health shows that only 20 of the planned 35 TB beds were available at Frenchay Park. A footnote to the bed lists says that on the 14th of October 18 patients were transferred from Snowdon House Sanatorium, Fishponds to the Sanatorium at Frenchay Park and Snowdon House closed down. Since there was only a total of 20 beds available, then it likely that the Sanatorium was empty prior to 14th October. Search of the microfilmed copies of the Bristol Times and Mirror for October 1921 held in the Central Library, Bristol showed that an elaborate opening ceremony was carried out on Wednesday 5th October. The edition for the 6th carried a major editorial on page 4, a detailed account of the ceremonies on page 5 and two large photographs of the dignitaries on page 9. The edition for Saturday 8th carried a short piece about the appointment of the Matron for the Sanatorium, Miss Lucy Allen, currently working as night superintendent at Ham Green Hospital and Sanatorium. It is thus clear that although the House and lands were purchased in July the Sanatorium facilities were not available until October, the intervening period probably being used for internal modifications to the House. The 35 beds, which were ready by 1922, indeed proved too small a number and in March 1924 the Corporation again approached the Ministry of Health with a view to enlarging the facilities. On this occasion the Ministry agreed for the provision of an additional 65 beds; the Corporation produced plans for two 44 bedded ward pavilions, a 12 bedded isolation pavilion and a school for 100 children. The children would be moved from the Manor House into the new wards and the House be used for administration. The plans were exhibited in the Council Chamber. The estimated cost was £45,800, with the Ministry paying a significant proportion. The Council minutes for September 1928

show that the estimated cost was later revised downwards to £33,200, £29,397 of which was for the new buildings and the rest for refurbishment of the House. A subsequent tender for £28,450 for the building was accepted. These facilities were opened on 17th June 1931, buildings which by the 1990s had become Wards 29 and 30, Occupational Health and the Laser Centre. Also opened in 1931 was a Treatment Block which became part of the Plastic Surgery operating theatres.