DEPARTMENT OF PATHOLOGY

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In 1855 Lord Panmure, then Secretary for War, instructed a young Irish doctor, R. D. Lyons, to proceed to Scutari to "make pathological researches in the hospitals attached to the Army in the East." This letter, a facsimile of which can be seen in the Pathology Department of the Royal Army Medical College, may well be called the Charter of Army Pathologists. It foreshadowed the formation of the first Practical Army Medical School at Fort Pitt, Chatham, in 1860, for one of Doctor Lyons's assistants was William Aitken (later Sir William), who became the first Professor of Pathology at the Army Medical School, a post he held for 32 years. He was succeeded in this post at the Army Medical School, then at Netley, by Dr. (later Sir) Almroth Wright and from this date dawned the golden age of Army Pathology. Here he developed his classic work on the anti-typhoid vaccine; his first trials were on himself and his colleagues, two of whom were Leishman and Bruce. Bruce was assistant professor at Netley, but his famous discoveries and work in connection with Malta fever and trypanosomiasis were carried out before and after this period at Netley and do not strictly belong to a dissertation on the Army Medical College. Later he was to become commandant of the College during the Great War and, although then officially an administrator, he flung himself into supervising research on trench fever and typhus.

At Millbank the first Professor of Pathology of the new College was Colonel (later Lieut.-General) Sir William Leishman. Here he perfected his work on kala azar, begun at Netley and studied with the aid of the new Romanowsky stain which he perfected. He carried out in the College further studies on the anti-typhoid vaccine. He was assisted by Major (later Colonel) Lyle Cummins who was in charge of the Vaccine Department and who later held the Professorship of Pathology at the College for a short period at the beginning of and for three years after the first world war. When Lyle Cummins retired he was appointed Professor of Tuberculosis at the Welsh National School of Medicine, a post which he held till 1938. Between the wars research continued at the College and from it emerged such notable results as the development of tetanus prophylaxis by Major (later Brigadier Sir) John Boyd, whose work on bacillary dysentery in India was already famous, and the significant lack of immunity produced by all but highly virulent strains of enteric organisms in mice, described by Perry, Findlay and Bensted. During the second world war the Vaccine Department moved out of the College as the Emergency Vaccine Laboratory, later to settle in East Everleigh, Wiltshire, as The David Bruce Laboratories. The Army Blood Transfusion Service built up so energetically by Sir Lionel Whitby had its humble beginnings at the College.

The Pathology Department of the College at present consists of a Morbid Anatomy Department, including the Army Tumour Registry, a Serology Reference Laboratory,
a Bacteriology Laboratory and a Virus Reference Laboratory. There are also smaller departments of Haematology and Parasitology. The Tumour Registry was initiated in 1948 and maintains specimens and reports of all tumour and glandular tissue removed from service personnel and their dependants since that date. It is linked with a follow-up register of tumour cases maintained by the Professor of Army Surgery. The Serology Reference Laboratory is soon to be abolished, its work being done elsewhere, but the Virus Reference Laboratory, started in 1954, has been considerably enlarged and will in the very near future be able to deal with all viruses including the arthropod-borne series. All departments have recently been modernized and the Animal House which was completed in 1951 is one of the largest and best ventilated in England. The Pathology Museum which was damaged in the War was completely redecorated and rearranged in 1953.

In addition to diagnostic functions, the Pathology Department of the College teaches Officers and Other Ranks, the former as Specialists or on refresher courses and the latter as Laboratory Technicians. Largely as a result of teaching here, the Institute of Medical Laboratory Technology recognizes our Laboratory Technician Class II Examination as equivalent to their Intermediate Examination and our Laboratory Technician Class I Examination as equivalent to their Associateship. Demonstrations are given for various outside bodies and the classroom is used for holding external examinations such as the Diploma of Pathology and those of the Institute of Medical Laboratory Technology.

The department is recognized as a teaching centre for such qualifications as the Diploma of Pathology and the Diploma of Tropical Medicine & Hygiene. Students from the London School of Tropical Medicine & Hygiene come to the College for demonstrations twice a year and instruction for the Diploma of Tropical Medicine & Hygiene is given to Officers at the College.

With the advent of the virus age, we must inevitably turn our attentions in this direction, and whatever other research is carried out, such as the storage of blood by freezing, on new antiseptics, hand lotions, etc., that on viruses will most certainly have pride of place and the College will as ever be in the forefront of "things pathological" in a changing world. No description of the College would be complete without a list of Professors of Pathology.

1860–1892 Professor: Sir William Aitken.
1892–1903 Professor: Dr. Almroth Wright.
1903–1914 Professor: Lieut.-Colonel Sir William Leishman.
1914 Professor: Major S. L. Cummins.
1919–1921 Professor: Colonel S. L. Cummins.
1921–1926 Professor: Lieut.-Colonel H. M. J. Perry.
1926–1930 Professor: Colonel A. C. H. Gray.
1930–1934 Director and Professor: Colonel A. C. H. Gray.
1934–1941 Director and Professor: Major-General H. M. J. Perry.
1941–1945 Director and Professor: Major-General L. T. Poole, M.C.
1945–1946 Director and Professor: Brigadier J. S. K. Boyd.
1946–1949 Director and Professor: Brigadier H. T. Findlay.
1951–1953 Director: Brigadier A. Sachs.
1951–1952 Professor: Colonel A. M. Pugh.