Brucellosis (The Corps Disease)
Col E E Vella
MD, FRCPath, L/RAMC
Reader in Pathology, Royal Army Medical College, Millbank

SUMMARY: Quotations from the many parts played by British army doctors interpreting the various facets of the anthropo-zoonosis Brucellosis, a disease which itself (as well as the generic name of its etiologic agent) is indeed named after one of them.

PROLOGUE
1904
Major S Glen Allen
‘as it was owing to the perserverance and acumen of an RAMC officer that the real cause of the fever was first discovered . . . and as it is also due to the work of the former Professor and Assistant Professor of Pathology at Netley, that we possess the method of serum diagnosis, Mediterranean fever may be considered in a great degree as the special property of our Corps.’

CLINICAL
1859
Assistant Surgeon J A Marston
Report on Fever (Malta) Army Med Department

‘The patient is prone to relapses, and the disorder is followed by a protracted convalescence . . . very frequently also by rheumatism of some form or other.’

1879
Surgeon Major H Veale
Assistant Professor of Military Medicine
Report on the cases of fever from Cyprus, Malta and Gibraltar
‘Is it a specific disease? That it is not our enteric fever appears certain, that it is not malarial fever seems proved by its absolute resistance to quinine, that it is not relapsing fever may be concluded from the fact that no spirilla have been found in the blood, and that it is not dengue . . .’

Fig. 1 Malta Fever Commission—April 14th to May 5th 1906
Front row: - May J C McNaught, Dr J W Eyre, Col D Bruce, Major T McCulloch, Staff Surgeon F H A Clayton RN
Back row: - Dr T Zammit, Capt J Crawford Kennedy, Maj J C Weir.
**Etiology**

1887

**Surgeon Captain David Bruce**

*Note on the discovery of a micro-organism in Malta Fever*

'On placing the slide under magnifying power of 500 diameters, the field of the microscope was literally crowded with myriads of micrococci dancing about in the most active manner.'

**Diagnosis**

1897

*Army Professor of Pathology Almroth E Wright*<sup>a, b</sup>

*Surgeon Captain F Smith*<sup>c</sup>

*On the application of the serum test to the differential diagnosis of Typhoid and Malta Fever*

'By this method the blood of the patient who is suffering, or who has suffered, from a continued fever is tested in turn with any pathogenic microorganisms which are casually associated with typhoid fever and Malta fever.'

**Prophylaxis, Even!**

1897

*Army Professor of Pathology Almroth E Wright*<sup*d, e</sup>

*Assistant Professor of Pathology Surgeon Major D Semple*<sup>f</sup>

*Remarks on vaccination against typhoid fever*

'Comparative experiments on monkeys inoculated...
with dead and living cultures of Malta Fever have led us to believe that dead cultures in suitable doses give quite as effectual an immunity as living cultures.'

**Colonel Sir William Heaton Horrocks KCMG CB.**

(a) His work on Malta Fever finally and completely proved that goat’s milk is the chief factor in its spread.

(b) In World War II was Chairman of the Anti-Gas Committee and thus played a conspicuous part in some of the major episodes of that war; gave his name to the Test Case for Water Supplies known universally as the Horrocks' Box.

(c) Editor of this journal for an unbeatable, unrepeatable period 1908-1944.

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**EPIEMIOLOGY**

1905

**Major W H Horrocks** and **Captain J C Kennedy**

*Mediterranean Fever Commission Reports*

On July 18 1905 the chairman received preliminary notes showing :

(a) One or more apparently healthy goats in every herd are excreting *Micrococcus melitensis* in their milk and urine.

(b) 50% of goats in Malta react to Mediterranean Fever when examined by the serum agglutination test.

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**EPilogue**

Bruce and the Microbe

“David found a little germ
Its name of course, you know:
For everywhere that David goes
That name is sure to go.

He found it in a spleen one day
and raised a cultured stock:
“With you,” he said, “I’ll demonstrate
The postulates of Koch.”
OBSERVATIONS
(a) Gave the name Rubella to German Measles.
(b) Served on the Mediterranean Fever Commission
(c) Bruce: Brucellosis. Brucella melitensis. Trypanasoma brucei.
(d) Introduced prophylactic Typhoid vaccination into army practice and vaccino-therapy into civilian practice.
(e) Made history by rising from the ranks to medical officer status.
(f) Internationally famous for his Semple (modified Pasteur-type) Rabies Vaccine.

BIBLIOGRAPHY
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5 Bruce D. Note on the discovery of a micro-organism in Malta fever. The Practitioner 1877; 39: 161.
6 Wright A E and Smith F. On the application of the serum test to the differential diagnosis of typhoid and Malta fever. Lancet 1897; 1: 656.
8 Wright A E and Semple D. See Note 2 under references to Remarks on Vaccination against typhoid fever, Brit Med J 1897; 1: 256.
10 Cassar P. Published in Risorgimento (Malta) 9 Jan 1911 and quoted by Dr Paul Cassar in his pamphlet 'Sir Themistocles Zammit and the controversy on the goat's role in the Transmission of Brucellosis 1909-1916.' Valetta, Malta Information Division, Malta Govt., 1981.

Footnote: You have been reading a party political paper on behalf of The Royal Army Medical Corps