

Meeting Report

G.B.West (London)

The twelfth meeting of the European Histamine Research Society was held in Brighton, England in May 1983 at the kind initiation of Dr G.B.West. It was attended by over 140 members and guests who were accommodated at the Bedford Hotel. Eighteen countries of Europe were represented and our guests also came from Canada and Japan. As on last year's meeting, the weather was mixed. The location for the meeting was on the sea-front and was first class and all arrangements went according to plan. A very respected and old member of the Society invited 5 lady guests and having requested 4 double rooms and one single said he himself would arrange the sleeping positions! Others came because they considered the greatest discoveries on histamine receptors were made in the U.K. and they could meet to gain new ideas and inspirations for future work.

Most of the participants arrived on the Sunday in time for the Civic Reception given by the Mayor of Brighton, in the Brighton Centre, a huge building used for political party conferences and beauty contests. We were all amazed how young the Mayor and Mayoress were and how interested they were in our activities, not least because they had a Swedish au-pair and we had Swedish members at the gathering. We returned to the Hotel for dinner – 120 diners and 30 bottles of wine!

After some opening comments by the local Chairman, the meeting got under way on the Monday with the main lecture by Karl Sewing from Hannover. We all enjoyed the fine presentation of his work on isolating parietal cells from the stomach and the effects of antisecretagogues. It seemed that progress is very rapid now in elucidating mechanisms of action of drugs preventing gastric ulcers. Nevertheless, we must report that the lecturer repeatedly referred to exposing cells to different concentrations of drugs – and we happened to see that one of our Italian colleagues several times wrote in his notes that 'we exposed ourselves' instead of 'we exposed our cells' which was the favourite phrase used by the lecturer. Anyway, the lecture was clearly presented and enjoyed by all. The remainder of the day was concerned with Histamine and the Gastrointestinal Tract, Histamine Receptors, and Histamine and the Central Nervous System. For the first time so far in our meetings, we were able to discuss poster material (all 34 of them) in the morning coffee and afternoon breaks. The day finished at 5.30p.m. when the National Secretaries gathered together to discuss finance, the next meetings, and terms of office of Secretaries. Sayings of the day included: (1) we always use large chunks of human tissue and put them up in baths, (2) a little bit higher secretion of pepsin than normal, (3) it is typical surgery to remove half the blood volume or even more, and (4) don't write your abstract until you've done the work (as one worker did), for he reported quite the opposite result to that shown in the abstract. During the day, the ladies had been spending money at Churchill Square Shopping Centre and The Lanes, but they also saw the Royal Pavilion, a building built for the Prince Regent in 1822 and said to be the most exotic and dazzling palace in Europe, with Indian exterior and Chinese interior. Dinner was taken by all in the Hotel that evening.

The second scientific day was confined to an interesting morning session on Histamine Distribution and Metabolism before we all departed on an afternoon excursion to Leeds Castle, England's oldest and most romantic Stately Home, complete with aviary and duckery. It rained when we arrived (after a 45 mile coach trip) but it was sunshine when we had tea. No one was lost in the Castle which was full of fine paintings, furniture and internal decorations, but the driver of one

of our 3 coaches had his personal belongings stolen from the coach while we were there. At about 6 p.m. we moved on to Michelham Priory where we had a super dinner in a magnificent 16th century Great Barn. There were pigeons overhead but fortunately we did not disturb them! We arrived back at the Hotel about 10.30p.m.

On Wednesday, it was Histamine Release almost all day, and the quality of the papers was very high. We heard, amongst other things, much about vital staining of mast cells, the use of polymixin B in release studies in different species, nervous stimulation of gut resulting in histamine releases, and degranulation studies. Sayings of the day included: (1) we use pure, not impure, antagonists, (2) there was an increase of fluid secretion from ileal (not ileal) segments, (3) mushrooms produce intestinal cramps by inhibiting your MAO, (4) nude rats were supported by the German Pharmaceutical Industry, and (5) this is not my best result only a typical one. The last session was on Histamine and the Cardiovascular System, where it appeared that hearts of different species vary widely in their sensitivity to histamine, although some patients with heart failure respond well to H₂-receptor agonists. The General Assembly of members and scientific guests followed and was well attended. Procedures, Finance and the Society's future were all discussed at length. The next meeting will be in Florence in May 1984. Meanwhile the ladies had a fabulous excursion to Sheffield Park, a Tudor House remodelled in Gothic style, where they had lunch after a guided tour of the House. Later, they visited the Sheffield Park Garden, with its lakes and exotic plants and the sun shone for the quiet stroll round the gardens.

The Farewell Dinner in the evening was a lavish affair with the band playing for dancing and, of course, the singing of the International Anthem, this year with its 7 new verses. Our sincerest thanks go to all the British Organisers for a meeting of the highest quality, maintaining an atmosphere of friendship, science, comfort and entertainment. A telegram was received 2 days after the meeting closed from two Italian members who said 'we are not able to attend!!!'