

Meeting Report

The fourteenth meeting of the European Histamine Research Society was held in Aachen, West Germany in May 1985 at the kind initiation of Dr W. Schmutzler. It was attended by over 130 members and guests who were accommodated in different hotels. Nineteen countries of Europe were represented and others came from Brazil and Japan. The weather was very spring-like and all the activities took place as planned. The location for the meeting was at the Eurocongress which has direct access from the Steinberger Hotel. For the first time in the history of the Society, the National Secretaries met before the Scientific Sessions.

The welcome cocktail party took place at the Steinberger on the Wednesday evening and it was followed by a guided visit to the International Casino Aachen. We saw plenty of other people using their money on roulette and vingt-et-un, and then some of our own members had a try. Needless to say, no major gains were made by any party but the experience was well worth having. Play continued into the early hours of the morning.

After opening remarks by the Chairman, the meeting got under way on the Thursday with the main lecture by Geoff West, from London. It was well presented and enjoyed by all. With a title of 'Mast Cells re-visited', the field was wide open for reminiscences as well as for developments in more recent years. It was fascinating to hear how the relationship between mast cells and histamine was established so many years ago (1952) and how important mast cells stand today in the field of allergy and amine release mechanisms. The remainder of the day was concerned with morphological aspects of histamine, its formation, distribution and metabolism, as well as clinical and chemical aspects. We were able to discuss 18 Posters and 12 Oral presentations, discussion of the posters being a new method of indicating their importance. Sayings of the day included – 'Postoperatively we always decided on appendectomy', 'Nude mast cells always failed to release histamine', and 'All patients were re-strung by insects under strictly standard conditions'. Meanwhile, the ladies were taken on a City walk which included a tour of the Klinikum Aachen, a huge building housing both the teaching and the nursing components of medicine under one roof. In the evening, we all went to Aachen Cathedral to hear an Organ Recital and to see where Charlemagne was enthroned many years ago. This was followed by supper at City Gate House, one of the old round towers in the wall which surrounded the City in the olden days.

The second scientific day was confined to an interesting morning session on histamine receptors (6 poster and 4 oral presentations), and histamine and the gastrointestinal tract (9 posters only). During the latter period, one member groaned that the torch for the screen was not working, only to find he had the wrong end facing the screen and he was illuminating his own abdomen! Another said he always stimulated gastric secretion for gastrectomy. Meanwhile the ladies were visiting the Vulcan Forge Studio Bredohl where specialised metal goods are made. This Forge was responsible for the Poster prizes which were presented to the winners later the next day.

After these sessions but before lunch, we all set out for an excursion via the Eifel Mountains to the Research and Teaching Vineyard. A packed lunch was taken at Huppenbroch and tea was at Blankenheim Ahr (where the local Chairman showed us the place where 'we make the water for the River Ahr' – meaning the origin of the river). The Vineyard, with its 12th century old monastery attached, is the place where new methods are being used to grow grapes on the very steep slopes. Tradition (using the ancient monastery cellar) and progress (using new practical methods) are

intimately related. Supper was held at the Bad Neuenhr-Ahrweler and what a meal it was! Yet it did not finish there, for we went through an interesting wine-tasting session as well, tasting all 11 wines of the district. Number 3 was described as useful and youthful, No. 7 was red but not translatable, No. 9 had plenty of play whilst No 10 was sufficiently round yet possessed fire! We had had a full day and were ready to return home on the motorways.

On the Saturday, it was histamine release (12 posters and 8 orals), followed by methods (4 posters), the cardiac and vascular systems (6 posters and 1 oral), the central nervous system (5 posters and 3 orals). During these sessions, we heard, 'Yes, you may ask me a question. If you want a France answer to it, I only give my answers in French' and 'I have tried histamine release by soaps from different countries' as well as 'What a very strange mixture of rat and man you have used'.

The farewell Dinner was held in the Coronation Hall of the Town Hall after a reception by the Deputy Mayor. This was a fine occasion, ably supported by a Band of 4 musicians. Strangely enough, the main course of the meal got stuck in a traffic jam in Aachen and we had to wait over half an hour for it. But this time was not wasted for we were able to present the two prizes for the most fascinating and discussion-stimulating posters (won by Tasaka from Japan and Jurgenson et al. from Germany). This innovation was a highlight of the meeting although an independent jury of 6 is too many to agree on the choice. The meal was followed (as usual) by the singing of the International Anthem (with 2 new verses). Our thanks go to the German Organisers (including Barbara) for a top quality meeting. The next meeting will be in Odense, Denmark in May 1986.

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