

Introduction

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British Journal of Pharmacology (2006) **147**, S1. doi:10.1038/sj.bjp.0706499

Seventy-five years of age is a good time for a celebration. It exceeds the working life of even the most long-lived pharmacologists, making living memory of the initiating events rather unlikely. Yet it is sufficiently close in time in that we can readily recognise the impact on our lives today.

In 1931, Spain became a republic, Universal Studios released the movie *Frankenstein*, and the Empire State building was completed. Pluto had just been discovered, and Aldous Huxley was putting the finishing touches to *Brave New World*. In the world of science, Paul Dirac explained the quantal nature of electric charge and heralded the discovery of antimatter. The electron microscope was introduced. The first synthetic fibre (neoprene) was made from rubber.

Coming closer to the pharmacological context, a lack of funding led to Alexander Fleming temporarily stopping his work on penicillin, which he had discovered 3 years earlier. Gerhard Domagk applied for a patent for the first sulphonamide antibiotic (Streptozon). Von Euler and Gaddum discovered substance P. In this year, A.J. Clark was elected a fellow of the Royal Society for his contributions to the quantitative studies of drug receptor interactions. And it was

in 1931 that Walter Dixon, Henry Dale and James Gunn took the initiative that led to the creation of the British Pharmacological Society; this is chronicled in detail by Alan Cuthbert in this issue (see also Cuthbert, this issue).

The *British Journal of Pharmacology*, which is owned by the Society, began publication (as the *British Journal of Pharmacology* and *Chemotherapy*) in 1946. From 2000 to 2004, I served as Editor-in-Chief of the Journal, and considered it fully appropriate for the Journal to take the lead in the celebration of these 75 years of the Society's history. I was delighted when the baton was picked up by my successor, Humphrey Rang. A roster of distinguished pharmacologists were invited to assess over 30 different areas of pharmacology – not by way of comprehensive reviews, but with their personal perspectives of the development of their chosen fields over this period of time. We were delighted that all accepted, and we thank them sincerely for their contributions. The following pages present a unique celebration of much that the British Society of Pharmacology has fostered and cultivated over its lifetime.

Happy Birthday, BPS!

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