

## Review of “The Heart Club” by Tom Treasure

Tom Treasure writes with enviable ease. This is a fascinating history of the development of a new branch of surgery by a group of pioneers in London over a 10-year period in the aftermath of World War Two. This was a time of austerity, rationing of food and clothing but enormous optimism and idealism as Clement Atlee’s government worked towards a “New Jerusalem”. The most durable result of this effort was the creation of the NHS in 1948.

Based on the written record of the Peacock Club, a rich seam of medical history has been mined in an engaging and thorough manner. What comes across from the efforts of these pioneers is the meticulous preparation, recording and audit of their efforts to help patients with heart disease so recently regarded as not possible to treat. This was team work in the true sense and their meetings, which often went on to 11 pm, attracted visitors from Europe and North America. There must have been many disappointments but the steady resolve of Brock and Campbell in particular, enabled progress to be made. The clarity of Brock’s publications has always been admired so it is interesting to note that he took Higher Certificate (the fore-runner of A-levels) in arts subjects and his first encounter with natural sciences occurred when he entered Guy’s medical school in the 1920s.

The character of Brock is revealed by the quote: *“it was very easy to go on finding objections, the thing was to get on with the job”*. This is much in the same spirit as Winston Churchill who, during wartime, when challenged with “difficulties” replied: *“Don’t tell me about the difficulties, they can speak for themselves”*.

This book will appeal directly to doctors and other health professionals interested in heart disease, but the arrangement of the chapters, which stand independently, allows the lay reader to appreciate the personal accounts of three patients, living today, whose lives were significantly altered by heart surgery in its early days.

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