

The Irish Neurological Association

A Glance back at the First 25 years

Dr Michael W. Swallow in 1989, edited by Dr Stanley Hawkins in 2021

FOREWORD - Stanley Hawkins:

In 2014, Stanley Hawkins was asked by Jim Morrow to give a presentation on the origins of the INA at the 50th meeting in the Titanic Building in Belfast. Before the meeting, he tried to access the original minute books, but was informed that they could not be found at the time. He travelled to Dublin to visit Dr Eddie Martin in his home in Waterloo Road. He was received graciously, but unfortunately Eddie had no material to hand. He also asked Michael Swallow if he had any material. He could not recall having anything, but he was able to attend the dinner as a distinguished guest, looking fit and well. Michael died in 2018, and after his death in a nursing home, his daughters cleared his house in South Belfast and came upon a folder marked "Irish Neurological Association". In the folder is a paper on the first 25 years of the INA, presented in 1989 in Belfast. The INA should be grateful to Nicky and Gemma Swallow for their consideration in preserving the file. The original minute books have been rediscovered, after several years, and are now with the rest of the INA records. In 2020 at the AGM, it was agreed that INA archive material should be lodged for posterity in the archives of the RCPI.

Michael Swallow wrote in 1989:

The idea of a North / South of Ireland Neurological Association was the brainchild of Eddie Martin in Dublin, inspired by the formation of the Corrigan Club five years previously. In the course of 1964/5 Eddie wrote to a number of people in Ireland concerned with the neurosciences. **Table 1** shows the names of those who accepted the invitation to join the association and those that attended the first meeting are marked with an asterisk.

The **first meeting** was held in Dublin on November 5th & 6th 1965. Twenty-three of the founder members attended. Dr R S Allison, having retired in 1964, was then the senior neurologist in Belfast. He was indisposed and was unable to attend. The Northern members travelled to Dublin on the 5:30pm Enterprise express train and were entertained to a buffet supper in the Colles Room of the Royal College of Surgeons. The meeting started at 9 pm. Two or three bottles of Guinness were placed on every desk.

Professor Adams McConnell chaired the opening session. (John Lanigan reminded Michael Swallow that Adams McConnell performed the first neuro-surgical operation in Dublin in 1912 – a posterior fossa craniotomy).

On the following Saturday morning, the session was held in the Anatomy Lecture Theatre at Trinity College, chaired by Dr Brendan McEntee. Lunch was held at the Royal Irish Yacht Club. The cost of the meeting was two guineas (£2.10 sterling), including supper and lunch.

The papers at this meeting included contributions from Dr Harold Millar on two areas of high risk for multiple sclerosis in N. Ireland, John Lanigan on recurrent meningioma, Colin Gleadhill on familial intracranial aneurysms, Alan Mooney on illustrated clinical cases in neuro-ophthalmology, and Tom Wilmot on the use of vestibulometry in vertigo.

Eddie Martin arranged an exhibition of selected volumes of antiquarian books of neurological interest in Trinity College Library – the earliest dating from 1754 and 1755. (A list of the books has been preserved). There was no formal business, but the minutes recorded that “Golf might be a suitable addition to a future meeting, but quoits and horseshoes were also mentioned.”

A **second meeting** was held in Belfast on November 25th & 26th 1966. Twenty-six members attended. Papers were accepted from two members of Belfast junior staff. These members were Dr Chopra and Dr Vijay Kak. Dr Chopra returned to India and had a very distinguished career. In 1989 he was Secretary General of the World Federation of Neurology and arranged the international meeting in Delhi. It was agreed to elect junior staff in the neurosciences to associate membership. One pound was collected from each member “to establish a credit at the bank.”

On the Friday evening a sherry reception and buffet supper was held in the Royal Victoria Hospital by invitation of the Belfast Hospitals Management Committee. On that occasion Dr Allison was present and chaired the Friday evening session. A sign of the times was a note in the invitation to the meeting stating: “for those wishing to travel by car there is plenty of parking space at the Royal Victoria Hospital.”

The Saturday morning session was held in Claremont Street Hospital, chaired by Alex Taylor. Papers included contributions by Dr Harold Millar on the long-term treatment of MS with ACTH, Michael Swallow on the earliest results of isotope brain scanning with Technetium 99, and Sydney Allison on the development of neurology in Belfast. The latter was the first of a number of historical papers given over the years, to which Jack Lyons made notable contributions. Lunch was held at the Royal Belfast Golf Club at Craigavad. Some members played golf in the afternoon, but there was no further mention of quoits or horseshoes.

MWS described these first two meetings in some detail as they set the pattern of meetings. The meetings alternated between Dublin and Belfast; Eddie Martin and Michael Swallow being the respective Regional Secretaries. The meetings started on Friday evenings and continued on Saturday mornings. A healthy rivalry developed between North and South over the social aspects and the entertainments.

The question of a constitution for the association was deferred regularly for many years. In fact, it was only in 1987 that rules were laid down.

Veterinary Surgeons contributed to many early meetings, for example Kevin Kealy on vertebral disc diseases in dogs, William Donnelly on storage diseases in domestic animals and Patrick Hartigan on cerebrospinal angiopathy in pigs.

In Dublin in February 1970 a joint meeting was held with the Scottish Association of Neurological Sciences. The venue was the Royal College of Physicians in Kildare Street. Lunch was sponsored by a pharmaceutical company. In the early years of the Association, Michael McConnail, the Professor of Anatomy in Cork delivered a

number of papers, often on rather obscure topics. At this meeting, his topic was “The display of Fibre Bundles within the CNS by Elliptically Polarised Light.” The contingent from Scotland included Ian Simpson who gave a guest lecture on myasthenia gravis. Lunch at that meeting was in the Guinness Brewery.

At this meeting, tributes were paid to Louis Hurwitz, who had died during the previous year. He had been a great supporter of the Association and contributed papers to four out of six of the early meetings. Prior to the meeting in 1989, MWS received a letter from Louis’ widow, Natalie conveying greetings to all her friends in the Association. A memorial volume compiled by MWS incorporated many of Louis’ most important published work, reprinted with personal memories and appreciations by his co-authors.

In 1970, in November, a second meeting was held in Belfast. Saturday lunch was at the home of Barbara and Michael Swallow, and this established a tradition of entertainments in the home of the Hon. Secretaries and Presidents, which has continued and become part of the social life of the Association. The dinner at the meeting was attended by Professor Sir John Henry Biggart, who although a member of the Association, did not attend any other function. (At the time he was the dean of the medical school in Belfast).

During the early years of the Association, there was some emphasis on music and the arts in the form of after-dinner entertainment. In Belfast in 1972, Saturday lunch was preceded by a visit to the Octagon Gallery, and in 1976 the meeting coincided with the Arts Festival at Queen’s University. Members attended a concert in the Whitla Hall given by John Lill, followed by a reception which he also attended. In 1980 the Association attended the newly re-opened and refurbished Grand Opera House in Belfast for a performance of “Tosca”.

In 1973 a decision was made to publish abstracts of the scientific business in the Irish Journal of Medical Science. This continued for many years.

In Belfast in 1974, the tenth meeting of the Association coincided with the 25th Anniversary of the Ulster Neuro-psychiatric Society, so a joint meeting was held. This meeting also included the Section of Neurology of the Royal Academy of Medicine in Ireland since Harold Millar was also its President. A guest lecture was given by Ian McDonald on “Mutiple Sclerosis and the Pathophysiology of Central Nerve Fibres.” Dinner was in the Board Room in the King Edward Building of the Royal Victoria Hospital. It was attended by sixty-five members and guests. Peter Froggatt proposed a toast to the Ulster Neuropsychiatric Society.

In Dublin in 1975 it was agreed that selected Irish Americans and other ex-patriot Irish neurologists and neurosurgeons might wish to join the Association. This link was established. A number of trans-Atlantic members supported the Association and made notable contributions to meetings.

In 1977 the first regional meeting was held in Cork, and saw a significant expansion of the Association, with thirty-five members attending. There was a “ladies programme” and a guest lecture given by David Marsden.

Hugh Staunton reminded MWS that up to then the dress code at the meetings had been rather informal “tweed jackets with leather cuffs and patches.” Ted Buckley

recalled that the venue for the meeting was the chapel at St. Finbar's Hospital, that chapel had been re-consecrated as a place for protestant worship. Subsequently it was further converted to a Roman Catholic Chapel.

Leading up to 1989, there were some other developments. An Annual Guest Lecture was introduced. The list is appended at **Table 4**. Particularly notable is the one delivered in 1981 in Cork by Norman Geshwind on "Apraxia", just a few months before his premature death. Eddie Martin recalled particularly the wit of his after-dinner speech.

In 1980, it was agreed that there should be an elected President for each meeting, normally the host in the city in which the meeting was held. It was also agreed that there could be a rotation between Belfast, Cork, Galway and Dublin, but a meeting should be held in Belfast at least every three years. A list of Presidents is attached **Table 2**.

Eddie Martin continued as Secretary of the Southern group until 1979, when he retired after 14 years in that position. He was succeeded by Michael Hutchinson. Michael Swallow continued as Secretary in the North until 1983, when he handed over to Dermot Byrnes. Membership grew in 1989 to ninety-six with nine associate members and seven overseas members.

In Cork in 1985, a joint meeting was held with the Danish Neurological Society, whose members presented eight of the papers. This was a two-day meeting and included a lecture on the Scandinavian invasions of Ireland, by Henry Jeffries of the Department of Irish History, University College, Cork. The meeting included a historical tour of Kinsale. The dinner was held at Arbutus Lodge.

An analysis of the scientific papers is appended - **Table 3**. During the first twenty-five years 406 papers were presented, 35% from N. Ireland, 55% from Southern Ireland and 10% from overseas. The three commonest topics for presentation were multiple sclerosis (36 papers), medical aspects of epilepsy (30) and muscle disease, including myasthenia gravis (28).

Postscript:

Before Michael Swallow compiled the above notes in 1989 he wrote to many of the original members of the Association, seeking comments or reminiscences. Some have been quoted above. Letters sending good wishes to the Association were received from Tom Wilmot, Eddie Martin, Niall O'Donohoe, Searle Grebbell, Noel Callaghan, Hugh Staunton, John Dodge, John Moran, Seamus O'Daly, Ian Forsythe, Ingrid Allen, Ted Buckley and Jack Lyons. All these correspondents wished the Irish Neurological Association continuing health and happiness for the next twenty-five years. They could be assured that the neurosciences in Ireland have prospered.

Table 1.

Irish Neurological Association: Membership 1965

Dr R. S. Allison	Retired Consultant Neurologist, Belfast
Dr Ingrid Allen*	Senior Registrar, Neuropathology, Belfast
Dr P. J. Bofin*	Senior Registrar, Neuropathology, Dublin
Dr Noel Callaghan	Consultant Neurologist, Cork
Dr Nina Carson*	Consultant Clinical Chemist, RBHSC, Belfast
Mr P. Carey*	Consultant Neurosurgeon, Richmond Hosp., Dublin
Dr J. Dodge*	Consultant Paediatrician, Belfast
Dr D. Donovan*	Consultant Paediatrician, Galway
Mr F. Donovan*	Consultant Neurosurgeon, St. Vincent's Hosp., Dublin
Mr C.A. Gleadhill*	Consultant Neurosurgeon, Belfast
Mr D. S. Gordon*	Consultant Neurosurgeon, Belfast
Dr F. S. Grebbell	Consultant Neuroradiologist, Belfast
Dr L. J. Hurwitz	Consultant Neurologist, Belfast
Dr W. I. Forsythe	Consultant Paediatrician, Belfast
Dr J.G. Kirker*	Consultant Neurophysiologist, Dublin
Mr J. Lanigan*	Consultant Neurosurgeon, Richmond Hosp., Dublin
Dr J.B. Lyons*	Consultant Physician, Dublin
Prof E. McCaughey	Professor of Pathology, TCD
Prof A.A. McConnell*	Consultant Neurosurgeon, Richmond, Dublin
Dr B. McEntee*	Consultant Physician, Richmond Hosp., Dublin
Dr S. Malone*	Consultant Neuropsychiatrist, Mater Hosp., Dublin
Dr E.A. Martin*	Consultant Neurologist, Dublin
Dr J.H.D. Millar*	Consultant Neurologist, Belfast
Dr A. Mooney*	Consultant Neuro-ophthalmologist, Richmond, Dublin
Dr S. O'Daly*	Consultant Paediatrician, St. Vincent's Hosp., Dublin
Dr N. O'Donohoe	Consultant Paediatrician, Dublin
Dr P. O'Malley	Consultant Neuro-psychiatrist, Mater, Belfast
Dr M. Ryan	Consultant Neuroradiologist, Richmond, Dublin
Mr A.R.Pate*	Consultant Neurosurgeon, Richmond, Dublin
Dr W.H.T. Shepperd	Consultant Neuroradiologist, Belfast
Dr M.W.Swallow*	Consultant Neurologist, Belfast
Mr A. R. Taylor*	Consultant Neurosurgeon, Belfast
Dr R.P. Towers	Consultant Pathologist St. Vincent's Hosp., Dublin
Mr T.J.Wilmot*	Consultant ENT Surgeon, Omagh

Those who attended the first meeting marked with an asterisk *

SAH is grateful to Prof Michael Hutchinson and Prof Michael Farrell for their assistance in confirming affiliations

Table 2

Irish Neurological Association

Presidents 1965 – 1989

1980	Harold Millar	Belfast
1981	Noel Callaghan	Cork
1982	John Moran	Galway
1983	Derek Gordon	Belfast
1984	Patrick Carey	Dublin
1985	Ted Buckley	Cork
1986	Michael Swallow	Belfast
1987	John Moran	Galway
1988	Hugh Staunton	Dublin
1989	Ian Bailey	Belfast

NB Before 1980 the meetings were very informal. The arrangements were made by Eddie Martin and Michael Swallow, the Regional Secretaries. No member presided over the entire meeting. Chairing of sessions was ad hoc.

Table 3

Irish Neurological Association

1965 - 1989
Scientific Papers

Total number of papers presented	406	
Northern Ireland	145	(35%)
Southern Ireland	221	(55%)
Overseas	40	(10%)

Main subjects of Scientific Communications:

Multiple sclerosis	36
Epilepsy (medical)	30
Epilepsy (surgical)	5
Muscle disease	28
Aneurysm & SAH	18
Cerebral Tumour	16
Migraine / headache	13
Animal work	12
Neuro-ophthalmology	11
Neuropathy / radiculopathy	12
Neuropsychology	10
Head injury	10
Neuroradiology	10
Neurophysiology	10

Table 4

Guest Lecturers 1965 – 1989

- 1970 Dublin: Ian Simpson “Myasthenia gravis”
- 1974 Belfast: Ian McDonald “M.S. and the pathophysiology of central nerve fibres”
- 1977 Cork: David Marsden “The basal ganglia 1977”
- 1979 Dublin: John Walton “Muscle disease – some new perspectives”
- 1980 Belfast: Richard Godwin-Austen “Current trends in the management of Parkinson’s disease”
- 1981 Cork: Norman Geschwind “The apraxias”
- 1982 Galway: Graeme Bydder “Nuclear Magnetic Resonance”
- 1983 Belfast: Martin Halliday “Evoked responses and the pathophysiology of M.S.”
- 1984 Dublin: Peter Thomas “Diabetic Neuropathy; do we know the cause?”
- 1985 Cork: Johann Aarli “The brain and the immune system”
- 1986 Belfast: Richard Jeffreys “Cervical spondylotic myelopathy”
- 1987 Galway: Alan Davison “Recent advances in the research of Alzheimer’s Disease”
- 1988 Dublin: Fred Andermann “The selection criteria for epilepsy surgery”
- 1989 Belfast: John Pickard “Brass, science and aneurysms”