

## ***History of Radiology Session, UKRC Radiology Conference, 2016, June 8, Liverpool***

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This year's annual congress was again held in Liverpool which now boasts a new conference venue linked to the previously used venue in the refurbished waterfront area of this great city and again the British Society for the History of Radiology organised a successful session of talks attended by a wide range of delegates.

The invited lecture this year was delivered by the distinguished retired physicist from the Royal Marsden Hospital and Institute of Cancer Research, Kit Hill whose talk was titled 'Sir Joseph Rotblat in Liverpool; pioneer of medical scanning; keeper of nuclear conscience'. In 2008 Kit Hill published a brief biography of Rotblat entitled 'Professor Pugwash: The man who Fought Nukes'

Rotblat was born in Poland in 1908 and studied physics in Warsaw obtaining his PhD in 1938. In 1939 he was recruited by Chadwick the discoverer of the neutron to work with him on the cyclotron project in Liverpool. In 1939 Otto Frisch had discovered nuclear fission and Rotblat worked with him in Liverpool on Uranium. Rotblat was aware that his work could be used to build a bomb and was part of the team that went to Los Alamos, USA to work on the Manhattan project to build the atomic bomb. Rotblat however was unhappy about the way nuclear weapons had been deployed in the Second World War and returned to Liverpool to lead the medical physics department there and became a pioneer in nuclear medicine imaging. He conducted pioneering research on radioisotopes and thyroid scanning publishing an important paper with Ansell in 1948 on this topic. He later moved to St Bartholomew's Hospital in London as the Professor of Medical Physics there retiring from the post in 1976.

Rotblat was a scientist with a deep moral conscience and ended up as a critic of nuclear weapons. With Bertrand Russell the eminent British philosopher and Albert Einstein he signed the now famous Russell-Einstein manifesto in 1955 and with Cyrus Eaton's funding the Pugwash conferences were born (Rotblat was general secretary) and the meetings became a leading forum for the campaign against nuclear arms. Rotblat was an energetic campaigner and was rewarded with a Nobel Peace Prize in 1995 (along with Pugwash) for his efforts and his ceaseless campaigning for nuclear disarmament.

This presentation was followed by preferred papers. Francis Duck delivered Adrian Thomas's paper (Adrian was unfortunately unable to attend) on Silvanus Thompson. Silvanus Thompson was a remarkable Victorian polymath, an electrical engineer, a Professor of Physics, a prolific author known for his book 'Calculus Made Easy' amongst others and of course the first President of the Rontgen Society. He became a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1891 and delivered the Christmas lectures at the Royal institution in 1910. He also wrote biographies of Faraday and Kelvin and coined the term Light visible and invisible in 1896 following Rontgen's discovery.

Francis Duck delivered the next paper titled 'Every picture tells a story-Salonika1917'. The mysterious investigation of a old photograph uncovered the fascinating stories of the Stoney sisters. The story of Edith Stoney the physicist and her contribution to radiography in World War 1 was retold including the contributions of the lesser known George Mallet from the picture in question.

Paul Bland then spoke on 'Challenges of Imaging 1896-1930 at St Bartholomew's Hospital'. The contributions of Dr Hugh Walsham were presented. In 1912 the departments split into the Xray and electrical departments the latter under the leadership of Elkin Cumberbatch. The safety aspects started to play a greater role with the adoption of aprons to protect against harmful radiation something that took a little while to be appreciated by health workers of that era.

The final talk by Marcelo Vasquez Rios was entitled 'A pictorial history of the Xray: from Rontgen to tomography'. The work of the early pioneers of Xray tubes and early technical advances including those of Siemens and Edison were included as well as the pioneering contributions of Rollins to radiation protection.

Again the session was well received and complemented by a stand in the exhibition.