

THE FIRST 25 YEARS

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The British Connective Tissue Society (BCTS) was inaugurated on 19th September 1980 by the fusion of the Collagen and Mucopolysaccharide Clubs. It became the British Society for Matrix Biology (BSMB) in 1998.

The study of the connective tissues or extracellular matrix received a boost in the 1950s with the development of techniques such as electron microscopy and X-ray diffraction which allowed the visualization of collagen fibrils and revealed the regular periodicity along the fibrils. This was followed by new biochemical techniques which allowed amino acid analyses, etc. to be performed. The glycosaminoglycans (mucopoly-saccharides) were more refractory to biochemical analysis until the 1960s. By the 1960s, however, interest in both fields was sufficient for a NATO Conference to be held in St. Andrews, Scotland, in 1964 and a second one in Santa Margherita, Italy, in 1969.

With the growing appreciation of the importance of the extracellular matrix and the increase in the number of researchers, the Collagen Club and the Mucopolysaccharide Club were formed in the mid-1960s. These Clubs held meetings twice a year and from 1970, one joint meeting was held each year at which separate sessions were followed by one joint plenary session. By the early 1970s the very close association of the collagens and proteoglycans was becoming apparent and many people were members of both Clubs. They were frustrated that they could not attend all the sessions at the joint meetings.

The idea of a Connective Tissue Society was conceived in 1972, partly to fulfil the growing need to be informed about both collagens and proteoglycans and partly by the fact that the Clubs had no constitutions and hence no legal legitimacy. The possibility of a joint society was discussed at the joint meeting in April 1972 in Birmingham, but it was decided that the Clubs were not ready for such a venture.

By 1978, the costs of Club meetings were growing and the Collagen Club Committee felt that the Club should have a legal constitution. The Collagen Club Committee, Doreen Ashhurst, Allen Bailey (Secretary), Michael Barnes (Treasurer) and Geoffrey Herring, met on several occasions during 1979 to discuss a constitution and the possibility of applying for charitable status. By Autumn 1979 the Committee had prepared a draft constitution and was ready to present it to the membership. A question then arose - should the Committee circulate the Collagen Club membership and with its agreement go ahead with the adoption of a constitution, or should the Committee take the initiative and raise the question of forming a new, joint society. The Committee decided to circulate the memberships of both the Collagen Club and MPS Club with two proposals - firstly, that we should found the British Connective Tissue Society (BCTS) and secondly, that the Society should have a formal constitution. If a joint society was not acceptable, then the Collagen Club would go ahead and adopt its own constitution.

The idea was welcomed by most people, many of whom were members of both Clubs. A small number of members of the MPS Club was doubtful whether the needs of some of their members would be met. After much informal discussion, a meeting of the committees of both Clubs was held at Queen Elizabeth College, London in Spring 1980 and it was decided to go ahead and found the BCTS.

On 19th September 1980 the BCTS held its inaugural meeting in the Physiology Department at University College, London. After a brief scientific programme (see [Appendix 1](#)), a Special General Meeting was held at which the prospective members adopted the Constitution and agreed that charitable status should be sought. Charitable status was granted on 21st January 1981. The results of a previously held postal ballot for the Committee were announced at the Special General Meeting. The first Chairman was John Dingle (Strangeways Laboratory, Cambridge), the Secretary, Tim Hardingham (Kennedy Institute, London), and the Treasurer, Doreen Ashhurst, (St. George's Hospital Medical School, London). The ordinary members of the Committee were Margaret Harkness (UCL, London), Ian Dickson (Strangeways Laboratory, Cambridge), Michael Grant (Manchester), Roger Mason (Charing Cross Hospital Medical School, London), Yousef Ali (Stanmore) and Bryan Sykes (Oxford).

At the first Annual General Meeting held in Spring 1982 during the Meeting in York, the founding members and long-serving Secretaries of the Collagen and Mucopolysaccharide Clubs, Allen Bailey and John Scott, respectively, were elected to Honorary Membership. At this Meeting, Dame Honor Fell, FRS and Miles Partridge, FRS were similarly honoured. Subsequently, John Dingle, the first Chairman, and Helen Muir, FRS were elected to Honorary Membership in 1988, and

the first Treasurer, Doreen Ashhurst, in 2002.

The membership of the Society grew rapidly to reach about 300 within five years. This figure increased to over 400 in 1990, and since 2000 has been in the region of 500.

The Officers of the Society over the 25 years were as follows:

Chairmen - John Dingle, 1980-1987; Michael Grant, 1987-1992; Roger Mason, 1992-1996; Timothy Hardingham, 1996-2002; Bruce Caterson, 2002-.

Secretaries - Timothy Hardingham, 1980-1984; David Woolley, 1984-1987; Victor Duance, 1987-1990; Simon Robins, 1990-1994; Karl Kadler, 1994-1997; Rose Maciewicz, 1997-2003; Anthony Hollander, 2003-.

Treasurers - Doreen Ashhurst, 1980-1987; Michael Bayliss, 1987-1993; John Gallagher, 1993-1999; Jay Dudhia, 1999-2004; Graham Riley, 2004-.

The members are kept informed of Society news and forthcoming meetings through the newsletter, Connective Issues, which is produced 3 or 4 times each year. Reports of Society meetings are also included. Members are kept up-to-date with information about other relevant societies and meetings, both in the UK and abroad, via the newsletter.

Meetings have been held twice yearly, except in 1986 and 2002 when the Society hosted the biennial meeting of the European Federation of Connective Tissue Societies. After the first meeting, a specific topic and appropriate organizers were chosen for each meeting - see [Appendix 2](#), list of meetings 1980-2005. The meetings typically comprise papers by invited speakers, and papers and posters submitted by members. The abstracts are published in the International Journal of Experimental Pathology. Small specialist workshops are held from time to time. Some meetings were designated in honour of retiring members - Allen Bailey, Spring 1996; John Scott, Spring 1997; Roger Mason, Autumn 2003; Michael Grant, Autumn 2005.

The Society had to build up its funds during the first few years. Generous grants towards the costs of meetings from various trusts and companies meant that overseas scientists could be invited to give papers. As soon as finances permitted, bursaries were offered to students and young scientists to attend both the Society's meetings and the Federation of European Connective Tissue Societies' meetings. After 25 years the Society's finances are healthy. This will enable more ambitious meetings to be planned and more young people can be awarded bursaries.

The Society has played a full part in the Federation of European Connective Tissue Societies (see [Appendix 3](#)). Successful Federation meetings were hosted in Manchester in 1986 and in Brighton in 2002. A FECTS Constitution was proposed by John Scott and Leslie Robert (France) in 1979, which was adopted at the FECTS meeting in Prague in 1980. This placed restrictions on participation by non-European scientists and funding for students and invited speakers which caused general disquiet among many European scientists from the beginning. It was not until after the FECTS Meeting in Lyon in 1994 that an initiative was taken by the then BCTS Chairman, Roger Mason. He drafted a new FECTS constitution, more appropriate to present circumstances, and which, after consultation with the Chairpersons of the other constituent Societies, was adopted at the FECTS meeting in Munich in 1996.

Over the past 25 years connective tissue research has metamorphosed into matrix biology, as evidenced by the change in the Society's name. Much research still concerns the collagens and proteoglycans, but other matrix macromolecules, growth factors and receptors, etc. now form an integral part of the field. The Society encompasses both the old and the new topics in its meeting programmes.

Thus, since 1980 the Society has gone from strength to strength and in this 25th Anniversary Year it is thriving. This is due in large part to the considerable amounts of precious time devoted to it by the Officers and Committee Members over the years. Long may the Society and its dedicated field of research continue to prosper!

Appendix 1

BRITISH CONNECTIVE TISSUE SOCIETY

The inaugural meeting of the British Connective Tissue Society, organized by Professor R D Harkness and Mrs M L R Harkness will be held on Friday 19th September 1980.

The meeting will take place in the Physiology Lecture Theatre, University College, Gower Street, London.

PROGRAMME

10.00 am	COFFEE
10.30 am	AORTIC PROTEOGLYCANS: THE EFFECT OF LATHRYTIC AGENTS ON THEIR EXTRACTABILITY Professor Charles Phelps, University of Lancaster
	CROSS-LINKING OF COLLAGEN IN MATURE TISSUES Dr Nicholas Light, University of Bristol
	RESORPTION OF COLLAGEN FROM THE RAT UTERUS Mrs Sue Wray, University of London
1.00 pm approx.	LUNCH PROTEOGLYCAN DEGRADATION IN NORMAL AND OSTEOARTHRITIC CARTILAGE Dr John Sandy, Kennedy Institute of Rheumatology, London
	TEA
3.00 pm	BUSINESS MEETING

Appendix 2

SCIENTIFIC MEETINGS HELD BY THE BRITISH CONNECTIVE TISSUE SOCIETY AND BRITISH SOCIETY FOR MATRIX BIOLOGY, 1980 TO 2005

Date	Title	Organiser(s)	Venue
1980 Autumn	General topics.	Margaret Harkness	UCL, London
1981 Spring Autumn	Elastin. Regulatory mechanisms in skeletal tissue.	Michael Grant Ian Dickson & D? Scott	Manchester Cambridge
1982 Spring Autumn	Collagen research and recombinant DNA technology. Physical properties and functions of connective tissue.	Ellen Solomon & Bryan Sykes Jeffrey Kempson	York Southampton
1983 Spring Autumn	Cell - matrix interactions. Matrix degradation.	Doreen Ashhurst & Peter Knox David Etherington & David Woolley	St. George's, London Bath
1984 Spring Autumn	Proteoglycans, matrix proteins and tissue organization. Collagen fibrillogenesis and minority collagens.	Tim Hardingham & Ian Nieduszynski Martin Francis & Alan Nichols	Lancaster Oxford
1985 Spring Autumn	Basement membranes. Heparin and heparan sulphate proteoglycans.	Bob Price John Anderson	QEC, London Manchester
1986 Spring Summer Autumn	Wound healing and development. FECTS Small workshops.	Charles Archer & Ian Silver	Surrey Manchester
1987 Spring Autumn	Molecular biology of extracellular matrix. Cell Biology of Bone (with Bone and Tooth Society).	Victor Duance & Ellen Solomon Yousef Ali	Bristol Middlesex, London
1988 Spring Autumn	Extracellular matrix in vascular pathology. Matrix assembly and interactions.	Michael Barnes, Michael Grant & Jenny Tyler Simon Robins & David Hulmes	Cambridge Edinburgh
1989 Spring Autumn	Matrix turnover. Mutations and connective tissue disorders.	Malcolm Davies & Geoffrey Laurent Robert Dalgleish & Alan Nichols	Cardiff Leicester
1990 Spring Autumn	Basement membranes. Cell Biology of cartilage and bone (with British Society For Cell Biology).	Shirley Ayad & Michael Bayliss Michael Grant & Fiona Watt	Manchester Oxford
1991 Spring Autumn	Differentiation and development. Cell-matrix interactions.	Steven Carney & Malcolm Davies Ian Nieduszynski & Roger Mason	Royal Holloway Lancaster
1992 Spring Autumn	Role of connective tissue in vascular physiology and pathology. Markers and skeletal metabolism of bone (with Bone and Tooth Society).	Jill Bishop & Geoffrey Laurent Nigel Loveridge & Simon Robins	IC, London Aberdeen

1993 Spring Autumn	Heparan and dermatan sulphates. Connective tissue degradation in health and disease (with British Society for Rheumatology).	John Scott Timothy Cawston & Gillian Murphy	Manchester Cambridge
1994 Spring Autumn	Cytokines and Bone. Molecular cell biology of cytokines and matrix (with Biochemical Society Glycobiology Group).	Rowena Bunning & Graham Russell Charles Archer & James Gallagher	Sheffield Cardiff
1995 Spring Autumn	Cell and matrix interactions in connective tissue. Growth factors and connective tissue integrity.	Martin Humphries & Karl Kadler Eleanor Mackie	Manchester RVC, London
1996 Spring Autumn	Ageing and related diseases. Physical regulators of cell metabolism and tissue function.	Allen Bailey, Victor Duance, Rose Maciewicz Jill Urban & Peter Winlove	Bristol Oxford
1997 Spring Autumn	Structure, function and chemical morphology of connective tissue. Folding, processing and assembly of matrix molecules.	Gavin Brown & Ian Nieduszynski Cay Keilty & Timothy Skerry	Lancaster York
1998 Spring Autumn	Molecular interactions and matrix assembly. Biology of hyaluronan (with Biochemical Society).	Malcolm Davies & Alwin Kwan Timothy Hardingham & John Sheehan	Cardiff Leicester
1999 Spring Autumn	Molecular and cell biology of wound healing (with European Tissue Repair Society). Biological and therapeutic strategies in skeletal diseases (with Bone and Tooth Society).	Malcolm Davies Stuart Ralston & Gary Rucklidge	Oxford Aberdeen
2000 Spring Autumn	Molecular cell biology of the synovial joint. Cell-cell and cell- matrix interactions in connective tissue development.	Michael Bayliss & Jay Dudhia Norman McKie & Mark Birch	RVC, London Newcastle
2001 Spring Autumn	Cellular and molecular mechanisms in tissue engineering. The impact of proteinases on matrix biology.	Timothy Hardingham & Cay Keilty Ian Clark	Manchester East Anglia
2002	FECTS		Brighton Conference Centre
2003 Spring Autumn	Extracellular matrix: from structure to function. The molecular basis of fibrotic disease in the kidney.	Anthony Day, Penny Handford, Helen Mardon John Couchman & Graham Riley	Oxford IC, London
2004 Spring Autumn	Grappling with the glycome. Cell based therapies.	Robert Lauder & Malcolm Lyon Anthony Hollander & John Tarlton	Manchester Bristol
2005 Spring Autumn	Collagens - from genes to fibrils. Pathobiology of bone and cartilage.	Anne Vaughan-Thomas Michael Briggs & Ray Boot-Handford	Liverpool Manchester

Appendix 3

FECTS MEETINGS 1968 to 2006.

1968	Cambridge	UK
1970	Hannover	Germany
1972	Turku	Finland
1974	Padua	Italy
1976	Liege	Belgium
1978	Paris	France
1980	Prague	Czechoslovakia
1982	Copenhagen	Denmark
1984	Budapest	Hungary
1986	Manchester	UK
1988	Amsterdam	The Netherlands
1990	Byalystock	Poland
1992	Davos	Switzerland
1994	Lyon	France
1996	Munich	Germany
1998	Uppsala	Sweden
2000	Patras	Greece
2002	Brighton	UK
2004	Taormina	Italy
2006	Oulu	Finland