

Hedgehog Ringworm

There is a type of ringworm infection in man that results from contact with infected hedgehogs. Almost half of the hedgehogs in New Zealand carry the fungus that causes it,^{1,2} named by M. J. Marples and J. M. B. Smith¹ *Trichophyton mentagrophytes* var. *erinacei*. The fungus has also been isolated from hedgehogs in Britain,^{3,4} but reliable figures for its incidence are not yet available. In both countries the discovery of the fungus on hedgehogs was preceded by its isolation from human patients and was the result of a deliberate attempt to trace the source of the human infections.

It is perhaps a reflection on British mycology that the disease should have been described first from New Zealand, since all New Zealand hedgehogs are direct descendants of British animals introduced into that country about 1885 onwards,⁵ so that *T. mentagrophytes* var. *erinacei* was probably present in Britain at that time. Like other animals introduced into New Zealand the hedgehogs flourished and multiplied, and there is good evidence that the New Zealand population is now very much denser than the British.⁶ Not surprisingly the incidence of human infections is also much higher there than in Britain.

R. A. Quaife⁷ has recently recorded three patients infected with hedgehog ringworm in Hampshire. He suggests that the incidence of human infection may be increasing, at any rate locally, in Britain; but many more reports of the incidence of the condition will be needed before this can be proved. Possibly the incidence is fluctuating regionally in accordance with changes in the population of hedgehogs.

Hedgehog ringworm in man is commoner on exposed sites and often cannot clinically be differentiated from other forms of ringworm. M. P. English and her colleagues² mention that some cases on the hands were similar to an infected eczematous pompholyx eruption, and one of Quaife's patients is reported as having had blistering and peeling of the skin of the hands.

The origin of another uncommon human ringworm, caused by *T. persicolor*, has recently also been traced⁸ to a wild mammal—namely, the field vole (*Microtus agrestis hirtus*). The chance of man coming into direct or indirect contact with voles must be considerably less than with hedgehogs, and this could account for the rarity of the human infection. The fluctuating incidence in man of infection with *T. persicolor* is probably due to fluctuations in the vole population.

Royal Microscopical Society

Next week the Duke of Edinburgh, President this year of the Royal Microscopical Society, will open its Charter Centenary meeting in London (18–22 July) in the lecture hall of the Royal Geographical Society. The scientific sessions and the exhibitions will be housed in the Imperial College of Science and Technology. At an exhibition of the history of the microscope some of the earliest instruments will be displayed, and a second exhibition will include a large number of optical and electron microscopes of British and foreign manufacture. A third exhibition will illustrate potential developments in microscopy through working models and photographs.

The Royal Microscopical Society was founded in 1839 as the Microscopical Society of London. But for the outbreak of war it would have celebrated the centenary of its foundation in the autumn of 1939. It was almost exactly one hundred years before (3 September 1839) that seventeen gentlemen assembled "to take into consideration the propriety of forming a society for the promotion of microscopical investigations, and for the introduction and improvement of the Microscope as a scientific instrument."

Their leader, in whose house at 50 Wellclose Square the meeting took place, was Edwin J. Quekett, F.L.S., who had qualified in medicine at University College and who combined his practice with the duties of lecturer on botany at the London Hospital Medical School. The seventeen gentlemen formed a committee to draw up a set of rules. They decided on the name of their society and on 20 December 1839, at a public meeting in the Horticultural Society's rooms at 21 Regent Street, Professor Richard Owen took the chair and was elected first president. He had been one of Abernethy's dissectors before becoming lecturer on comparative anatomy at St. Bartholomew's Hospital and Hunterian professor at the Royal College of Surgeons. The first librarian, and curator, of the Society (1841) was John Thomas Quekett, youngest of three brothers, of whom Edwin was the eldest. He became M.R.C.S. in 1840 and succeeded Owen as Hunterian professor when the latter retired in 1856. In the autumn of 1866 the Society obtained its royal charter. It is thus the centenary of this event which the Society is celebrating this year.

In its early days the Society was composed largely of amateur rather than professional microscopists. Although those members who applied the instrument exceeded numerically those who worked on its theoretical aspects, advances made by the second group were enormously influential. Development of the microscope and standardization went hand in hand. It is not generally realized, for instance, that the size of the standard microscope slide, 3 × 1 in. (7.5 × 2.5 cm.) was fixed by the Society at its second meeting in January 1840. The standard R.M.S. thread for objectives and the standard R.M.S. diameters for eyepieces also achieved international recognition.

At the present time the Royal Microscopical Society is in a phase of expansion, but its basic objects remain essentially the same. They are the promotion, discussion, and publication of observations and discoveries relating to improvements in the construction and mode of application of the microscope and subjects or research in which the microscope is an important instrument of investigation.

The Society now embraces both light and electron microscopy, having recently extended its sphere of influence by taking into its structure two groups which are, in other countries, invariably independent. These are the electron microscopists and the histochemists and cytochemists. In forming sections, run by independent committees, for these two disciplines the Society has inevitably acquired a third,

¹ Marples, M. J., and Smith, J. M. B., *Nature (Lond.)*, 1960, **188**, 867.

² English, M. P., Smith, J. M. B., and Rush-Moore, F. M., *N.Z. med. J.*, 1964, **63**, 40.

³ — Evans, C. D., Hewitt, M., and Warin, R. P., *Brit. med. J.*, 1962, **1**, 149.

⁴ La Touche, C. J., and Forster, R. A., *Sabouraudia*, 1963, **2**, 143.

⁵ Wodzicki, K. A., *Bulletin of New Zealand Dept. of Scientific and Industrial Research*, 1950, No. 98.

⁶ Brockie, R., *Proc. zool. Soc. Lond.*, 1960, **134**, 505.

⁷ Quaife, R. A., *J. clin. Path.*, 1966, **19**, 177.

⁸ English, M. P., *Sabouraudia*, 1966, **4**, 219.