

Brian Neilly

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## 1.1 Background

The post-war period of the late 1940s and the 1950s was a productive time for developments in the use of radionuclides to diagnose and treat human disease. The pioneers of these developments in the UK were eminent scientists such as Norman Veall, Russell Herbert, WV Mayneord, and John Mallard who carried out research using radiopharmaceuticals and designed and built simple homemade detection systems [1, 2]. The field developed rapidly but failed initially to capture the imagination of clinicians other than endocrinologists such as Edward McGirr (second President of the BNMS) who used <sup>131</sup>I to study and treat thyroid disorders. Influenced by progress reported at international meetings, the availability of commercially built scanners and the increasing access to radioisotopes other than I-131, things were changing in the UK and elsewhere. Progress with radioisotopes had largely been the preserve of Medical Physics Departments but by 1960 it was recognised that the move of radioisotopes from bench to bedside necessitated medical leadership of the new discipline of ‘Nuclear Medicine’, a descriptor imported from North America. The 1960s saw the appointment of the first consultant physicians in Nuclear Medicine in the UK.

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## 1.2 The Original Four

Against this changing landscape, four clinicians with an interest in Nuclear Medicine, Steve Garnett, David Keeling, Ralph McCready and Edward Williams met at the Prince Alfred pub in Queensway, London (Fig. 1.1) on Tuesday 19th July 1966 to

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**Fig. 1.1** The Prince Alfred, Queensway, London

discuss the future professional situation of physicians working in Nuclear Medicine [2]. The group formed the Nuclear Medicine Society (NMS) and resolved to hold 4 meetings a year. This was a courageous move leaving behind, as they did, the protective environment of more established medical associations. The NMS meetings were held initially at the Middlesex Hospital, London and took the form of evening meetings followed by a buffet supper. Initially there were no officers but Ralph McCready took on the role as Secretary and David Keeling produced a short newsletter. The first AGM was held in December 1966 and the rules and byelaws were agreed and approved at a meeting of the NMS at the Middlesex Hospital on 6th October 1967. The first formal election of NMS officers took place in December 1967. Clive Hayter (Leeds) was elected as first President, Ralph McCready was confirmed as the Honorary Secretary and Steve Garnett (Southampton) as Treasurer. At this time the

fledgling society numbered 25 members and in January 1968 subscriptions were levied at £1 increasing to £2 by October of that year. In recognition of the many national Nuclear Medicine specialist groups that had formed globally, an EGM was convened on 19 November 1969, and the meeting voted to change its name from the ‘Nuclear Medicine Society’ to the ‘British Nuclear Medicine Society’ (BNMS) [3].

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### 1.3 First Steps

By the late 1960s interest in Nuclear Medicine in the UK was growing fast and in June 1969 the Royal College of Physicians held a meeting entitled ‘Advances in the Application of Physics in Medicine’ incorporating advances in Nuclear Medicine. The May 1970 BNMS Newsletter gave details of the London University Nuclear Medicine MSc course that commenced later that year. In 1971, Edward Williams, then head of the Institute of Nuclear Medicine at the Middlesex Hospital, was elected BNMS President and the same year became the first UK Professor of Nuclear Medicine. A paper given by Edward Williams at the ‘Whither Nuclear Medicine’ meeting at the Royal College of Surgeons in Lincoln’s Field in May 1971 helped foster the association with internal medicine. By 1972 there were 140 rectilinear scanners in the UK and 30 gamma cameras, a remarkable advance given that the first UK commercial scanner had been installed in 1958 at the Royal Marsden [3]. The success of clinical Nuclear Medicine highlighted tensions between the various professional bodies involved in Nuclear Medicine in the UK particularly over the matter of the HPA document ‘Organisation of Hospital Radioisotope Services (Nuclear Medicine) in the UK’ [3]. These difficulties were resolved by discussion and the groups have continued to work collaboratively over the years. Important associations were formed early on between the BNMS and international organisations such as the World Federation of Nuclear Medicine and Biology (WFNMB). In 1971 the BNMS was invited to sign as the UK representative to the WFNMB. In June 1974, Desmond Croft attended the ENMS meeting at Clermont-Ferrand and signed up the BNMS as the specialist NM society representing the UK [3]. Such developments helped strengthen and establish the BNMS as the recognised professional organisation devoted to Nuclear Medicine in the UK.

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### 1.4 Annual Meetings

By the early 1970s efforts were concentrated on the creation of an annual meeting and AGM. The first annual meeting of the BNMS took place in 1973 in the Windeyer Building at the Middlesex Hospital and included a small commercial exhibition [4]. By 1975, and for economic reasons, the annual meeting [3] was held at the University of London Student’s union in Malet Street where the registration fee was £1 (£2 for non-members). The 1976 annual meeting was a 2-day conference held in association with the HPA where 24 proffered papers were presented [5]. The 1978 BNMS annual meeting was held jointly with the ENMS and SNME (the forerunner organisations of

the EANM) prompting a move to Imperial College where the venue remained until 1995. The single exception to this was 1985 (the year of the joint ENMS/SNME/BNMS meeting at the Barbican) when a 1-day BNMS meeting was held at the University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology during April. The 1980 annual meeting was the first UK meeting to be held over 3 days. The newsletter commented that one of the strengths of the meeting was ‘the enthusiasm of the commercial exhibitors to display and discuss their wares’ [6]. By 1986 at the 14th annual meeting, there were 162 proffered papers of which 119 were accepted and it was generally agreed that the standard of the scientific papers was high [5]. A central feature of the annual meeting is the guest lecture. Of the many distinguished lectures over the years, the BNMS were honoured to have Professor Henry Wagner deliver the 1987 guest lecture entitled ‘Imaging the Chemistry of Mental Illness.’

The need for space to accommodate the commercial exhibition necessitated a move away from Imperial College to more suitable venues. In 1996 the annual meeting was held in Brighton and thereafter at various venues including Brighton, Manchester and Edinburgh until 2009. The delegate numbers peaked at 768 at Brighton in 2000. However, the spiralling costs of the larger centres meant that it was no longer financially viable to continue at large city venues and a decision was taken to alternate between Harrogate and Brighton where the venue hire was more affordable during the period 2009–2015. The 2016 Annual Meeting will be held in Birmingham where fittingly the President is Dr Alp Notghi.

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## 1.5 Joint Meetings with EANM

Since its formation, the BNMS has held four joint meetings with the EANM in the UK. These were in 1978 at Imperial College, 1985 at the Barbican Centre, 1997 at the SECC Glasgow and 2011 at the ICC Birmingham. Over 3,000 delegates attended the Barbican Centre in 1985 where the Congress President was Keith Britton and the BNMS President was Keith Harding. The Congress President at the Glasgow Meeting in 1997 was Jim McKillop and the BNMS President was Harry Gray. Over 5,400 participants attended the 2011 Birmingham meeting where the local organiser was Alan Perkins, the first non-medical President of the BNMS.

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## 1.6 Membership

As a registered charity the BNMS is the only independent multi-disciplinary professional forum in the UK devoted to all aspects of Nuclear Medicine. The Board of Trustees of the BNMS (known as the Council) is responsible for the charity. Its members include clinical scientists, nuclear medicine physicians, nurses, radiologists, radiopharmacists and technologists. Initially, full membership of the BNMS was open only to medically qualified persons although Council had the right to admit to membership individuals thought to have a valid claim. At the AGM in 1972 the rules and byelaws were changed to allow non-medical colleagues to become full

members of the BNMS [3]. As a means of widening membership further, the Charities Commission was approached and gave permission in 1980 to establish a new category entitled ‘associate membership’ open to all scientists, pharmacists, technicians and medical staff not eligible for full membership. The initial associate membership fee was set at £8 allowing access to the newsletter section of the journal and reduced fees at BNMS meetings [3]. As a result of this and reflecting the growing interest in Nuclear Medicine, BNMS membership increased from 220 in 1982 to 752 (including 195 associate members) in the year 2000. The membership numbers have subsequently decreased but fluctuate between 450 and 500 members at present. The growth of the BNMS necessitated a change to the legal status of the organisation and in 2012 following a successful application to Companies House, the BNMS was incorporated under the Companies Act 2006 as a company limited by guarantee.

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## 1.7 Aims and Objectives

While the agenda of early BNMS council meetings was dominated of necessity by the formation of its rules and byelaws and the arrangement of its scientific meetings, the matters discussed by council included issues of national concern such as staff training (technical and medical), advice to government bodies on the registration, authorisation and safe use of radioisotopes in medicine, and collaboration with other professional organisations such as HPA and BIR [3]. The business of these first BNMS Council meetings helped shape the aims and objectives of the Society that were subsequently crystallised and set out in the Articles of Association and now captured in the BNMS strategic plan 2010–2013 [7]. To help Council achieve its objectives, there are a number of Committees or Groups that report to Council. These include Professional Standards, Education, Science, Research & Innovation, Public Relations, Therapy and PET-CT groups. The administrative functions of the BNMS were ably supported by a number of individuals but notably by Sue Hatchard who was administrative secretary between 1986 until 2013. Sue ran the BNMS from the office in Regent House, SE London and on her retirement, the BNMS Offices moved to the Jubilee Campus at Nottingham University where Charlotte Weston is the Chief Executive Officer.

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## 1.8 The Journal

A significant development for Nuclear Medicine in general and the BNMS in particular was the creation of Nuclear Medicine Communications. The journal was formed to facilitate rapid communication of information within the international community. The first issue of Nuclear Medicine Communications was published in 1980 in association with the BNMS [8]. The success story that is Nuclear Medicine and the part played by the BNMS in its remarkable progress in the UK can be seen in the pages of NMC, as well as at scientific meetings of the BNMS and on its webpages.

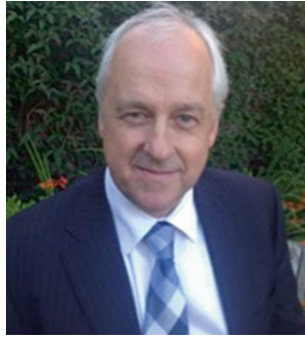
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**Brian Neilly** I graduated MB ChB from the University of Dundee and completed my house jobs with Dr Robert Fife in Medicine and with Professor David Carter in Surgery at Glasgow Royal Infirmary (GRI). I was offered a post in surgery but preferred the physician route and joined the medical SHO rotation at GRI and completed the MRCP examination. A medical registrar post followed during which I completed research for my MD in Cor Pulmonale after which I undertook a research fellowship in sleep medicine at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia. On my return to the UK I was appointed Senior Registrar in Internal Medicine and Nuclear Medicine at GRI where my training was with two former Presidents of the BNMS, Professor Jim McKillop and Dr Harry Gray of the University Medical Unit. I was appointed Consultant Physician with an interest in Nuclear and Respiratory Medicine at Glasgow Royal Infirmary in 1995 and, being a physician at heart, still enjoy the challenge of the acute medical take and continuing care of ward patients. Due to my interest in Nuclear Medicine training I have held posts as Chair of the STC, SAC and ICSCNM and am external examiner to the London Nuclear Medicine MSc. In line with my continued interest in pulmonary embolism, I was a co-author of the EANM Guidelines on VQ SPECT in Pulmonary Embolism 2009. As President of the BNMS from 2012 to 2014 I was lead author of the Medical Radioisotopes Report 2014. As Chair of the ICSCNM I led the successful initiative to apply to the GMC for Curriculum Change in Nuclear Medicine Training in the UK, commenced 2015.

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