EDITORIAL
SIR JAMES McGRIGOR 1771-1850

To mark the two hundredth anniversary of the birth of Sir James McGrigor we print a tribute to him from the pen of Lieutenant-General Sir Neil Cantlie who is particularly fitted to make this tribute for not only, like McGrigor, is he a graduate of the University of Aberdeen and a former Director-General but he is also the doyen of our Corps historians.

We are fortunate that Sir James McGrigor wrote a most excellent autobiography which must rank as one of the best to come from the pen of a doctor. We first read it at the tender age of 12 (having purchased it with our own pocket money from a second-hand book stall) and were held spell-bound by it; when we re-read it almost 50 years later it still exercised its magic. From its pages the personality of Sir James emerges and we see just what were the personal traits and characteristics which produced the achievements related by Sir Neil Cantlie.

First and foremost, Sir James was filled with an intense interest in the medical profession and took every opportunity to add to his professional knowledge and skill. In this his powers of observation and the importance he attached to the keeping of records were of great help.

Secondly, he had a profound sympathy for and understanding of the common man be he a private soldier or a junior officer and these were ever present spurs to improve their lot and medical care.

Thirdly, he was a man of integrity, courage and initiative and was thus well qualified to propose schemes and reforms and to see them through in the face of every obstruction and opposition.

Fourthly, he obtained his results by personal example and leadership and was one who called “Come on” and never “Go on”. As a result he had the support, loyalty and affection of all his juniors and most of his seniors.

Fifthly, he enjoyed the Army and being part of it he thus exercised his talents in a stimulating and congenial environment.

We had nearly added a sixth attribute—namely the supreme advantage of a Scottish education, when we reflected that, having been educated at both Sir James’ old school and university, we might be thought to boast and in any case the advantages must be self-evident to all sassenachs!

We were perhaps encouraged in our reflections by the fact that 1771 (a vintage year) also saw the birth of that great Scottish literary figure—Sir Walter Scott.

Lest the foregoing list of qualities give the erroneous impression that Sir James was a humourless prig, may we recommend his Autobiography to our readers and they can see for themselves what a likeable and human personality is revealed.

To enlarge further on Sir James’s worth is both to encroach on Sir Neil Cantlie’s province and to weary the reader and we therefore take leave of him with the thought that as long as our Corps exists Sir James McGrigor will never be forgotten and his example continue to be an inspiration to us all.
OPERATION SHOVELLER

It is a coincidence of considerable interest that, on the eve of this two hundredth anniversary of Sir James' birth, there occurred Operation Shoveller; the British Army contribution to the medical relief of Jordan in September 1970. We also print in this issue a number of papers on various aspects of this unique operation which, in the degree of autonomy afforded to the medical officer would have given Sir James the greatest satisfaction.

As we are aware it was the first occasion on which a force from the British Army, large or small, has proceeded overseas commanded by a Medical Officer. To make matters more unusual, the soldiers were unarmed and dressed in civilian clothes. Although the strength of the force was only about 150 all ranks, they came from many different units, and before proceeding to Jordan, they were all enrolled as members of the British Red Cross.

While the events which led to the confrontation in Jordan have been covered in very great detail by all the national news media it is helpful to recall briefly the background against which Operation Shoveller was staged.

Since the partition of Palestine in 1948 there has been a movement of the Arab population eastward across the Jordan. This population movement was accentuated by the 'Six Day War' so that now on the East Bank, the area of the former country of Transjordan, the people of Palestinian descent are in the majority. A large number of these Palestinians live in refugee camps and their one hope in life is to be able to return to Palestine, the country which they consider to be their homeland. The material expression of this hope was the formation of the Palestine Liberation Army, with many other forces of irregular troops sponsored by various political parties. These troops have been generally called the Fedayeen, which merely means someone who is prepared to die for his country. The existence of 'Private' armies in Jordan led to friction, and eventually to a showdown between the Fedayeen and the Government. Some fighting occurred in June 1970 but the main confrontation occurred in September 1970 when the Army moved into Amman and general fighting broke out between the two sides. Casualties were heavy and King Hussein asked for assistance in medical and relief work.

The control of the relief work was placed under the International Committee of the Red Cross and many countries responded with medical supplies and food. Surgical teams arrived from Egypt, Sudan, Kuwait, Switzerland and many other countries. The British, American and French Governments offered self supporting Surgical Hospitals. The punctilious of the Red Cross in ensuring that the British Hospital was acceptable to both sides in the fighting led to some delay in its arrival while clearance was being obtained from the Fedayeen. Eventually, after nearly a week waiting at the ready in Cyprus, the British contingent arrived in Amman on the 30th September 1970.

The British contribution in aid for Jordan was the most comprehensive of any national effort. In addition to providing a 50 bed Surgical Hospital in Amman and an inter-hospital ambulance service, it also provided a Hygiene Section which worked in close co-operation with the local health authorities. As the telephones in Amman were no longer working the Royal Signals provided wireless communication between the Red Cross Headquarters and the many hospitals in the area working under Red Cross auspices. Last, but not least, some casualties were flown unexpectedly to Cyprus where they received surgical treatment and care at the British Military Hospital, Dhekelia.
The papers which we publish in this issue cover many points of Corps activity for which Sir James was a fervent protagonist—not least are those of independence and sheer professionalism.

The papers on Operation Shoveller which appear in this number are based on talks given at various professional meetings since the return of the Force from Jordan.

Order of St. John of Jerusalem

Those recently appointed to, or promoted in, the Most Venerable Order of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem include:

As Commander (Brother)
Major-General R. J. Gray, Q.H.S., M.B., B.S.

As Commander (Sister)
Brigadier B. M. Gordon, C.B., R.R.C., Q.H.N.S.

As Officers (Brothers)
Brigadier J. Irvine, O.B.E., M.B., Ch.B.
Brigadier A. Crook, M.C., M.R.C.S., L.R.C.P.
Colonel D. D. O'Brien, M.B., B.Ch., B.A.O., L.M.

As Officer (Sister)
Lieutenant-Colonel H. Catternach, R.R.C., Q.A.R.A.N.C.

As Serving Brother
Captain P. W. Bryant, B.E.M., R.A.M.C.