



The Veterinary History Society

Newsletter October 2026

Welcome to the October 2026 newsletter of the Veterinary History Society.

September Meeting

Approximately 25 members and guests attended the meeting on Monday 14 September in London. Starting with a visit to the Museum of Anaesthesia in Portland Place, members were able to view for themselves many of the developments in human anaesthesia, and perhaps trace the links with developments in veterinary anaesthesia.



After a short walk, lunch was held at the BVA Headquarters in Mansfield Street, before the academic programme, with



both talks focussing on anaesthesia. Professor Eddie Clutton provided an extensive overview of changes in veterinary anaesthesia and analgesia that had occurred over nearly half a century. His presentation was thought provoking, highlighting how technologies (and associated costs) had advanced and yet peri-anaesthetic mortality had not changed at such a pace. His discussion on the ethical dilemmas now facing veterinary anaesthetists in

particular led to a healthy and broad ranging discussion amongst delegates, especially concerning changing attitudes towards euthanasia.

The issue of Chloroform anaesthesia in the Crimean War, some 175 years ago, was the subject of Dr Mike Hinton's talk. He detailed how the source of much controversy over the use of anaesthetics in the conflict had arisen, and how it had been addressed and finally resolved. Answers did not necessarily come quickly in those days.



The Society was most appreciative of two informative and thought-provoking presentations, and in both the authors highlighted the critical need in historical research to refer back to original reports.....and if they are not in one's native language, get them translated.

Our thanks to the speakers, and to Robin Bone and Clare Boulton for their help in organising this most informative and enjoyable meeting.

53rd Annual General Meeting

The 53rd Annual General Meeting of the Veterinary History Society was held on 14 September 2026 at BVA Headquarters. Reports from the Chairman, Treasurer and Editor of the Journal provided an overview of the work of the society over the last three years. The financial position of the society remains firm, after a significant spending to fund the new website, this being a major asset to the society.....and historians. The Editor again asked for members to consider submitting articles for the journal.

Tim Cox had decided to retire from the Committee after many years of service, and he was thanked for his contributions. Claire Barnes was elected to the committee. Welcome. Full details of the committee members are available at the website: <https://thevhs.uk/>.

A Report from World Association for the History of Animal Health (WAHAH).

The President of the WAHAH, Dr Alison Skipper (alisonmskipper@gmail.com) writes:

The Veterinary History Society is affiliated to the World Association for the History of Animal Health (WAHAH), which until 2024 was called the World Association for the History of Veterinary Medicine (WAHVM), but changed its name to acknowledge the broader history of animal health beyond formal veterinary care. Its members include historians, veterinary professionals and other scholars who share an interest in this field. WAHAH holds a biennial conference, which over the years has been held in various countries around the world, including the UK. In June 2026, WAHAH visited Asia for the first time, with members enjoying an excellent event hosted by the College of Veterinary Medicine at Seoul National University in South Korea, kindly and generously sponsored by Korea's Animal and Plant Quarantine Agency. Many thanks to our hosts for all their hard work, especially Professor Myung-Sun Chun, who not only masterminded the event very efficiently but even performed with her band at the gala dinner!

Over the three days of the event, we enjoyed a wide range of excellent papers given by speakers from around the world, ranging from academic considerations of historical topics to personal reflections by veterinarians. Attendees came from six continents and covered a huge range of topics and time periods, from the early history of traditional Chinese veterinary medicine, through to presentations on the study of ticks in Italy and of worms in the Soviet Union, to a near-current account of wild horse population management in the USA. Every paper showed us something new from a perspective we might not have considered previously, supported by vivid images.

Each hosting country also gives us a taste of local culture, both literally through the conference catering and through the social events programme. In Seoul, we enjoyed fried chicken on the first evening, followed by a gala dinner on the second night, where the entertainment included a skilful and very energetic display of K-pop dancing from students at the veterinary school. After the conference, we were treated to a coach tour of Seoul highlights, including the royal palace, a temple complex and the shopping district. And there was plenty of time to catch up with old friends throughout the event - many attendees are regulars who know each other well, although newcomers and locals are always warmly welcomed.

The UK was represented by Abigail Woods, Jane Davidson and me. WAHAH runs an essay competition for early career scholars, and Jane won second prize in this competition with an essay on the history of veterinary professional regulation in the UK, based on work from her PhD at RCVS Knowledge - congratulations again to Jane. We all had a great time and thoroughly recommend WAHAH events to all VHS members. The next one will be a bit more convenient for the UK, as our Dutch friends have kindly offered to host WAHAH 2028 in Utrecht - dates TBC. If you'd like to find out more about WAHAH's activities, do visit the website (<http://www.wahah.eu/>) or contact me for more information.

Call for Help

We have been asked for some help identifying some old veterinary equipment that has been found at the home of the Household Cavalry. A few pictures are found below; can any members suggest what they might be and/or their use. If you think you can help please contact Dr Graham Winton on winton.graham@gmail.com



The Hunterian Society

John Hunter (1728-1793), surgeon and anatomist, was the son of a farmer. He became closely involved with the establishment of the London Veterinary College, and in 1790 wrote that 'if he had been younger he would have taken up veterinary studies.' The Hunterian Society was founded in 1819 to honour Hunter. Although primarily medical membership it welcomes those from related professions. Previous veterinary members included Professor Jimmy McCunn and Sir Frederick Hobday (who gave the 1937 Oration on the topic of John Hunter's contribution to veterinary medicine). Currently there are a small number of veterinary surgeon members.

More details of the society can be found at <https://www.hunteriansociety.org.uk/>

At this website there is an extensive archive of transactions of their meetings, <https://www.hunteriansociety.org.uk/transactions-of-the-society/>

Our Journal

The editor has provided some suggestions regarding the format of articles at:

<https://thevhs.uk/submitting-articles/>

The editor, Teresa Johnston, welcomes any enquiries regarding potential submissions and will be only too happy to help authors. She may be contacted at: editor@thevhs.uk

Please remember, articles relating to veterinary history (in its broadest sense) will be very welcome, be they long or short.

Spread the Word

Feel free to pass this newsletter on to any colleagues who may be interested to know more about the society.

Feedback

If you have any questions or feedback, then please do not hesitate to contact us at info@thevhs.uk

And Finally: Veterinary Eponyms

Salmonella

Daniel Elmer Salmer (1850-1914) was an American veterinary pathologist. He studied at Cornell University, graduating in 1872. He practiced in Newark, New Jersey until 1879 then moved to the US Department of Agriculture in Washington DC. From 1884 he was the first director of the newly formed Bureau of Animal Industry. In 1886 his research assistant Theodore Smith discovered the non-lactose fermenting bacilli responsible for typhoid and paratyphoid fever and named it Salmonella in his honour.

In 1905 he became head of the National Veterinary School in Montevideo where he remained until 1912. He died of pneumonia in Montana in 1914.