

## **Report of the Chairman of the Worcestershire Medico-Legal Society for 2018-9**

This was an active year. First and foremost, we continued our programme of speakers and as usual there were five talks which as ever covered a variety of topics. We began with Dr Stephen Leadbeatter, Senior Lecturer in Forensic Pathology, Wales Institute of Forensic Medicine, Cardiff University who had the somewhat provocative title of '*Forensic Pathologist – A Wasted Life?*' This was followed by '*Medicines, Murder and Manslaughter*', the subject of the talk by Prof Robin Ferner, Consultant Physician and Clinical Pharmacologist, Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust; Honorary Professor of Clinical Pharmacology, Institute of Clinical Sciences, University of Birmingham. The next talk was titled: '*The Role of the Prison Governor*' and was due to be given by Mr Gareth Sands, Governor, HM Prison Hewell, Redditch. In fact, he was unable to come and the talk was given by one of his staff. I must confess that I had thought the title of the talk was somewhat dull but in fact the actual evening was an absolutely riveting one.

We then had '*Breach of Duty in Paramedic Practice*' given by Dr Tim Kilner, Senior Lecturer – Advancing Practice, Allied Health & Social Sciences, Institute of Health & Society, University of Worcester and ended with one by Jonathan Sutton, Chief Executive of St. Paul's Hostel, Worcester This replaced one scheduled to be given by Mr Geraint Williams, HM Senior Coroner, Worcestershire Coroner Service, who had retired. This was unfortunately the least well attended of the talks as it coincided with the School of Law exams, but it proved to be a fascinating one. The title was: "*Stop asking what's wrong with you and ask what happened to you? Another way of thinking about chronic homeless*"

On the subject of membership, I must stress once again that our individual membership is in fact slowly declining – this is a worrying trend and so I do urge any of you here tonight who are not members to consider doing so. The consequence of this decline is that the society is in fact being financially sustained by fewer and fewer people. This cannot go on.

One positive note is that after much delay we managed finally to be registered as a charity. Our income is below the limit for registration with the Charity Commission but we are registered as a charity with HMRC which enables us to claim gift aid on subscriptions. Our number is ZD02089. The fact that we are now a registered charity should also help to improve our standing both locally and in the wider world.

The loss of our meeting room at the Charles Hastings Postgraduate Medical Centre at Worcestershire Royal Hospital has meant that we get fewer medical professionals at our

meetings which is a loss. Can I encourage them to continue to support us in our new meeting place, the School of Law at the University? This has proved to be an excellent venue especially as it attracts students at the University.

I try as your chairman to attend other events in Worcestershire concerned with health and social care. In order to further these links your committee decided to become a member of the Reference and Engagement Group of Worcestershire Healthwatch. I have been associated with Healthwatch for many years in another capacity and, to quote from its website, it is the *'independent consumer champion –giving the public, patients and users of health and social care services in Worcestershire a voice.'* Being a member of the Reference and Engagement Group does not involve us in any commitment beyond receiving information about what is going on in health and social care in Worcestershire. We can feed this back to our members and it should also give us ideas for future speakers.

In my last report I mentioned that I went to a meeting at the University organised by Dr. Peter Unwin, Senior Lecturer in Social Work, to establish a local branch of the British Association of Social Workers and that following this we hoped to hold some joint meetings. Although strictly outside the scope of this year's report it is worth mentioning that this did take place and in September 2019, we held a joint meeting on the topical subject of Continuing Health Care.

May I thank all of our committee members for their constant support and for being such a fertile source of ideas for speakers. The committee members for 2018-9 were: Dr. Tony Cole, Dr. Jonathan Leach, Dr. Helen Taylor, Susan Jarvis, Gill Porter, Erica Wassell Laura Taylor and Sherri Ogston-Tuck.

Finally, I must end as ever by thanking you all for your support, our excellent speakers for without exception being so interesting and, on the personal level, so friendly and above all Lesley who is a real gem as a secretary/treasurer and does all the hard work!!

John Duddington November 2019