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Professor Corris was Chair of the BTS Scientific Committee and a Scientific Meeting Organiser at BTS 1994-1995, and served as BTS President in 2009-2010.

Here he recounts presenting his research at and attending the very first BTS Summer Meeting in 1982.

The First Meeting of the BTS York in 1982

I have such clear memories of the inaugural meeting of the British Thoracic Society (BTS) held at York University in 1982, that it could be yesterday!

I suppose the background as to why it was so memorable lies in the fact I was a junior Fellow in Newcastle at the time working for my mentor, subsequent colleague and friend John Gibson. John was secretary of the Thoracic Society at the time and deeply involved in the merger of the British Tuberculosis Association (BTA) and Thoracic Society (TS) to form the BTS.

Moreover the late Alan Sumner, who was a Consultant Respiratory Physician working in a local District General Hospital in North Shields, was President of the BTA. Alan would attend the weekly Respiratory meetings in Newcastle and so the merger of BTA and TS was often the subject of chat over coffee post meeting.

It had taken a good deal of negotiation for the merger to have been accepted by both memberships but the wisdom of bringing both societies together for the benefit of Respiratory Medicine had triumphed.

There are of course other reasons why it remains so memorable.

I had submitted an abstract for the meeting, describing cases of patients who clearly had asthma, but had presented in right heart failure or cor-pulmonale, now recognised as group 3 pulmonary hypertension. This had been accepted as an oral presentation.

Presenting at scientific meetings back in the day as a junior fellow could be quite an ordeal, with some of the leading professors of the time (few in those days) taking apparent delight in asking the most difficult questions following the presentation.

The science underpinning Respiratory Medicine at the time was firmly Physiology, and my presentation included a quite complex study of respiratory control in the families of our patients, so I expected to be grilled quite fiercely! I arrived in York feeling quite nervous as a result.

In the end my presentation was well received, I handled the questions as well as I could and my "interrogators" seemed convinced.

The inaugural meeting of BTS in York in my view laid the foundations for its subsequent development as an exemplar for UK Academic Medical Societies and, from a personal standpoint, fostered my interest in taking on active roles within the BTS.

Moreover the pat on the back from my mentor John after my presentation really made my day. The experience taught me many valuable lessons including the wisdom of careful preparation before talking in public, confidence in my own abilities and the value of praise for a job well done from a senior. These are values I have always tried

to teach to my junior staff throughout my career.

There was another reason as to why the first meeting of BTS was so memorable and that was linked to the inaugural BTS meeting dinner.

Flushed with joy after my presentation I and indeed other friends, repaired to a Tavern in York to consume a beer or two before dinner. We fell into the company of two more senior figures, both of whom have had the most distinguished careers in Respiratory Medicine subsequently. As a consequence, we were plied with beer and invited to sit on their table at the dinner.

The dinner was most enjoyable but the layout such that we were sitting in a side area from the main hall out of sight of the top table. The speeches were long and the wine served copious so that by the time Margaret Turner Warwick stood to give the final speech as the first President of the BTS our table in common with many others had become quite raucous.

More valuable lessons were learned that night.

- Never to give an after dinner speech for more than eight minutes.
- That Respiratory Medicine attracts some of the friendliest group of people in Medicine.
- And finally, that attending BTS meetings affords one the opportunity not only to learn cutting edge science that underpins our speciality but to meet likely minded folk who may become loyal and trusted friends for the rest of one's life.