

**Professor Peter Calverley is Emeritus Professor of Respiratory Medicine, University of Liverpool.**

**Professor Calverley was BTS President 2006-2007, and one of the 500 founding members of the Society in 1982.**

**Here he shares his memories of the first years of the Society after its formation.**

### **My memories of BTS**

In 1982 when the BTS was formed I was a research fellow at McGill University in Montreal and so missed our first Winter Meeting, something I have seldom done in the subsequent 40 years.

I knew the predecessor Societies well. The British Thoracic Association was a friendly clinical gathering of chest physicians with a predominant interest in tuberculosis, a disease then in decline. By contrast, the Thoracic Society was more austere, academically rigorous and exclusive.

Like many others, I hoped the new BTS would be a home for all, promoting excellence in science and clinical practice without losing its human face – and so it proved to be.

The BTS became **THE** place to present your research work, catch up with colleagues, make new friends and eye up the competitors you would meet at your next job interview.

Unsurprisingly manpower was an early concern and although the accuracy of our workforce predictions was admired, little was done to expand consultant posts in line with clinical need.

The BTS Annual Dinner varied from the staid to the raucous with the most memorable being the ceilidh held when Antony Seaton

was President, an event where the enthusiasm of the participants far exceeded the grace of their dancing!

The BTS meetings would seem odd from the perspective of 2022. Between 300-400 predominantly male doctors would gather on a university campus in Summer and usually at Kensington Town Hall in Winter to give spoken presentations (although poster sessions were soon adopted) and hear plenary lectures or attend symposia given by distinguished speakers. There were few scientists and almost no professions allied to medicine, but you could dip into a wider range of topics as multiple parallel sessions were uncommon.

As the Society grew so did its ambition and impact. By the 1990's highly regarded guidelines on asthma and COPD management had been published, standalone educational courses developed and the Summer meeting now focused on education while the Winter meeting had moved to the QE2 Conference Centre. Thorax had become more international and the Society much more representative of all who had an interest in Respiratory Health.

I was lucky to be involved in all of this from the beginning and even helped shape some of these changes.

One thing though has never changed and that is the friendship, enthusiasm and good humour of our Community which is what makes the BTS so worthwhile.