

# THROUGH A GLASS DARKLY:

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## **Reflections and visions from ‘wise owls’ of the occupational therapy profession.**

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# THROUGH A GLASS DARKLY

- Apostle Paul : Corinthians – chap 13
- Looking to a future clarity and vision / understanding..... compared to current obscure or imperfect vision
- 1961 Ingmar Bergman film – Swedish. Four family members act as mirrors for each other.
- The Casson memorial lectures have been intended as visionary and inspirational

# BEGIN AT THE BEGINNING

## Casson Memorial lectures

- Started in 1973
- Commemorates Dr Elizabeth Casson, one of the pioneers of occupational therapy who opened the first school of occupational therapy in the UK, Dorset House, in 1930.
- It has become an annual event
  - AOTA - Eleanor Clarke Slagle Lecture
  - CAOT - Muriel Drive Memorial Lecture.
- **Prestigious.**

## CRITERIA FOR NOMINATION :

- Inspirational
- Excellent communicator
- Made a significant contribution
- Member of COT in good standing;
- Demonstrated use of advanced theory, standards and methods within occupational therapy
- Improved outcomes for service users and carers
- Promotes public awareness and understanding of the profession's contribution.

# INSTRUCTIONS !

- to reflect on the past, present and, especially, the future of occupational therapy;
- to consider national and international influences on the profession.

2014 adds:

- to challenge the profession,
- highlight innovation in practice, education and research,
- to stimulate debate about future directions in occupational therapy.

# CONTEXT

- Setting a time and context to the lectures

# CONTEXT - 1973



- IRA terrorist attacks in London (including the Old Bailey)
- Coal shortages and 3-day week.
- Open University awards its first degrees
- US troops withdraw from Vietnam
- Watergate hearings begin.



# 1983



- Seatbelts compulsory for driver and front seat passengers
- 1<sup>st</sup> flight of space shuttle Challenger
- Breakfast TV starts
- CDs go on sale for first time.
- Greenham common – women's peace camp against cruise missiles



# 1993



- Bank interest rate lowered to 6%
- Announcement of divorce Prince of Wales and Diana
- Warrington IRA bomb attacks
- Stephen Laurence killed
- Public sector trade union UNISON is formed (from NALGO, NUPE and others)
- Bill Clinton is president

# 2003 & 2013

## 2003

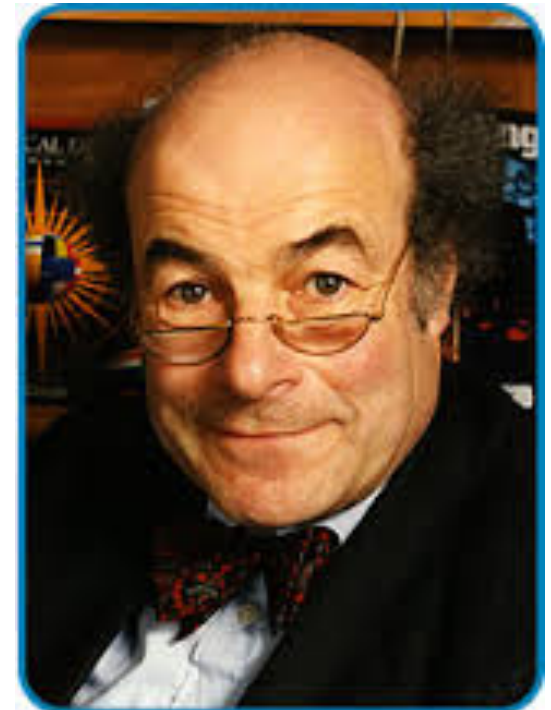
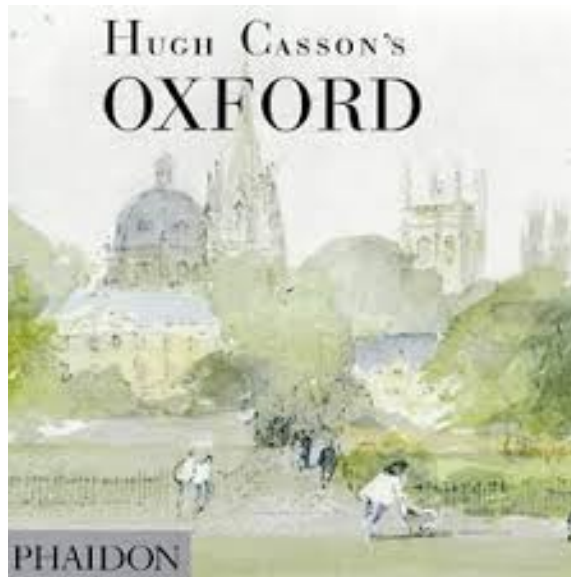
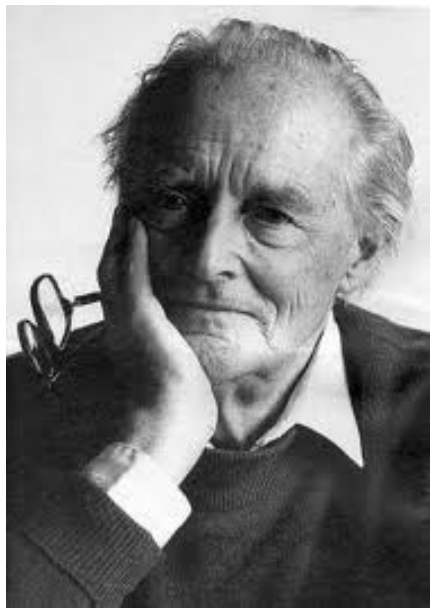
- London congestion charge starts
- Iraq war
- M6 toll road opens
- Space shuttle Columbia explodes

## 2013

- Boston marathon bombs
- Pope Benedict resigns
- Nelson Mandela dies
- Skeleton of Richard III found in car park
- Andy Murray wins Wimbledon

# METHODOLOGY OF THE REVIEW

- **To read all the available papers**
  - Sadly Sir Hugh Casson's lecture in 1974 was not saved, nor Prof. Heinz Wolff's from 1984



## METHOD (CONT.)

- To form a framework of coding for **ideas** and **themes** that emerged, repeated and resonated as the years unfolded.
  - *No ‘critical appraisal’- each lecture was an individual’s approach to ‘saying something’ to the profession.*
- Considered the lectures within their context – the prevailing ideas and assumptions of the time. Including language.....

# REFLECTION

- .....on my personal journey as an OT, including
- People I had met, knew and worked with
  - Own roles:
    - OT
    - Educator
    - Researcher
    - R&D Board – member and Chair
    - COT Council - member and Chair
  - So a personal interpretation – both as participant and ‘insider’.

# CASSON LECTURERS

Having told you about what exacting criteria there are for the nominations...

Who ARE the Casson lecturers?

- In the early years, apart from Sir Hugh Casson, the speakers were largely from the medical profession.
- First OT as Casson lecturer in 1978: Alicia Mendez.
- 1980 & 1981 – 2 OTs.....
- From 1982 – 1986 : 4 medical Drs
- Only since 1987 have all the Casson lecturers been OTs.

# 1<sup>ST</sup> CASSON LECTURER

Sir George Godber – Medical officer at the Ministry of Health in the 1940's, Chief Medical Officer 1960-73





# A FEW PAST CASSON LECTURERS





# OT CASSON LECTURERS

- From 1987, the OT's giving the Casson lectures, have overwhelmingly been academics and researchers:
    - 18 academics and researchers
    - 3 AHP Dept of Health / government officers
    - 4 clinicians
    - 1 COT officer
- (2 lectures not given due to ill health)
- This lecturer profile begs many questions.....

# THE AUDIENCE ?

Recent figures suggest that people attending the COT conference (and therefore listening to the Casson lecture) fall into 2 main categories:

- 70% clinicians (social care and health)
- 16%-24% education/ research (incl. students)
- Audience figures are not available from the early years of the Casson Memorial lectures

# PURPOSE OF THE LECTURE

The speaker has 2 jobs:

- To engage the audience there.
- To fulfil the needs of the paper publication in BJOT that follows the lecture.
- So the tension lies between being a 'performer' and 'in the moment' for the audience, and delivering a text that will also read well and coherently in a journal publication.
- For some professions the tradition of 'reading your paper' is the norm. In OT it is not.

# CASSON LECTURERS

- Over the years I have met a good number of the (latter) Casson lecturers.
- Whoever they were, all lecturers considered it a HUGE honour to be selected.
- To a person they were passionate about their chosen topic, and earnest in their endeavour.
- Many were nervous of their obligation and responsibility – would they meet the challenge and earn the respect of their peers.
- Many sought advice from previous Casson lecturers.

# **“HOW DID I GET HERE.....” ?**

Many Casson Lecturers stressed their ordinariness

- Everyone started as clinical OTs
- Took opportunities
- Told their journey.....

Implication -

- You, too, could be here.....
- You, too, can do what I've done.....

# MY CASSON EXPERIENCE - 2004



- I had just become Chair of Council
- I had just got news of my Professorship
- I was in the middle of a year of cancer treatment
- I played music in the middle of the lecture: Nina Simone - 'I Got Life'.
- Princess Anne was in attendance
- Title – 'The Fascination of the Difficult'
  - *Complexity, Thinking & Ethics*



# VISION FOR THE FUTURE?

- Each year - a repetition, to a greater or lesser extent, of the history of Dr Elizabeth Casson.

Method of:

- Professional socialisation,
- Re-stating of the roots of the profession

But is it 'visionary' or inspirational?

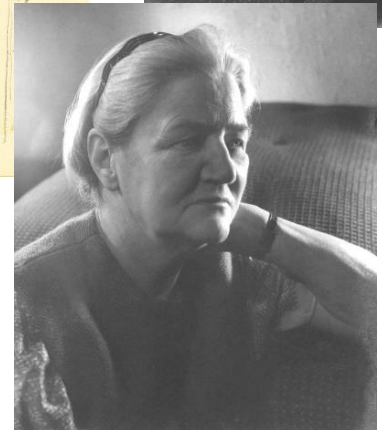
# INSPIRATIONAL?

- What makes a lecture inspirational?
- And to whom?
- Prof Ann Wilcock (2004) – Forward to the publication of Casson Memorial Lectures 1973 – 2004 to mark 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Elizabeth Casson's death:
- “...*each of you will find a statement or two more relevant than the rest, or one lecture more attuned to your state of being than others*”. Pp11.
- Recognise your own potential from the speakers words.



# IMAGES TO INSPIRE?

Images of Elizabeth Casson are very common in the annual lectures



# RESONATING THEMES THROUGH THE YEARS

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- Distinct contribution of OT / uniqueness
- Client-centredness
- Multi-disciplinary working / communication

# THEMES

- Change / moving forward in practice
- Need / impact of research / EBP
- Changes in Education of OTs
- Re-emergence of 'occupation'

# RESONATING THEMES THROUGH THE YEARS

- Population health, health promotion/  
return to employment.
- Equality / Occupational justice
- Politics / influence on government  
policies

# WHO WAS MISSING....??

- Sidney Locke



- Jennifer Creek



- Other clinicians, academics and researchers.....??

# GEMS

- Hagedorn (1995) telling us to stop making excuses for being a 'young' or emerging profession – computer scientists or rocket scientists don't make such excuses.....
  - Drummond (2010) suggesting we take on board the Royal Society's motto 'Nullius in Verba'
    - take nobody's word for it.
- Critical thinking always.....

# MY FAVOURITE LECTURE



Prof Moya Willson (2002)

- Started with a tale of being evicted from class by a pottery tutor for ‘persistently and aggravatingly pretending to be a bee’.
- As well as being Head of OT and physio courses at UEA, she had thrust upon her the role of Head of School of Nursing & Midwifery, much to the disapproval of the nurses and of the Royal College of Midwives - who seemed not at all impressed by her Kennel Club registration as a breeder of gun dogs as a potential qualification for the role!



## MY FAVOURITE LECTURE (2)

Willson (2002) says:

*“OT is pertinent, surprising, imaginative, but fundamentally practical and profoundly useful”.*

- She concluded that all Casson Lectures seemed to finish with a couple of items of advice
- Her advice was:
- “The best way to cook asparagus -
  - Toss the trimmed spears in olive oil, together with chopped garlic, basil leaves and stoned black olives. Roast in a hottish oven for 10 minutes

## IN CONCLUSION.....

- The 'wise owls' provided a snapshot of imperfect vision of the day according to their individual interest and experience.
- Each lecture is a mirror, to some extent, on the personality of the individual - and all the better for that.
- No guarantees for a clear, future vision was apparent, nor an influencing feature for change.
- Inspirational? – a very individual perception.

## AND FINALLY

The Casson Lecturers all reflected their own journey; showing the 'ordinary' can become 'extra-ordinary' by taking opportunities that present themselves, believing that possibilities are always there, and by being bold.



*Thank you*