

## BOOK REVIEW

### **The “Acci” : How the Birmingham Accident Hospital led the World in the management of the severely injured** *by Ian Greaves*

Hard and Softback, 160 pages  
Brewin Books, ISBN 1858587638  
September 2023

Ian Greaves is Professor of Emergency medicine at South Teesside University Hospitals and also Consultant in Emergency Medicine to the British Army. This book, which is ostensibly about the Birmingham Accident Hospital known locally as ‘The Acci’, also reflects the author’s interest in pre-hospital care for both military and civilian personnel.

The book starts with a 5 page introduction to the history of trauma care, taking the reader up to the 19th century. There is then a short ‘prelude’, which describes the early 19th century industrialisation of Birmingham and the factors which led to the opening of Birmingham’s Queens Hospital, the city’s second large teaching hospital, in 1841. The first of the main chapters, titled ‘Foundations’, deals with the history of the Queens Hospital, the important roles played by William Sand Cox and influential medical staff, including Sam Gamgee and John Hall Edwards. The funding and expansion of the hospital through the 19th century is well described. The second chapter deals with the transformation of the old Queens Hospital into the groundbreaking Birmingham Accident hospital in 1941, the first modern metropolitan trauma hospital in the world. The author explains how the support of local industry and the requirements for rehabilitation of trauma patients were key factors in establishing the new hospital. Birmingham was heavily bombed in World War II, triggering the development of world-leading burns and bacteriology units at the hospital. The crucial work of surgical director, William Gissane, is highlighted. Further chapters deal with the experimental mobile surgical unit, made by the Austin Motor Company, the important work of the Head Injuries Club and the 1993 closure and subsequent legacy of the hospital.

In addition, there are 4 chapters headed first to fourth interlude, which are interpolated in the narrative and cover related historical themes including the history of orthopaedics, the development of Advanced Trauma Life Support (ATLS) in the 1970s, the Birmingham bombings of 1974, and various military medical advances. These chapters provide the context for developments in major trauma care nationwide.

Inevitably with such a broad-sweep narrative there are a few errors in the detail ( for example Evan Thomas, the Liverpool bonesetter, did not have his home attacked by jealous rivals ) and the lack of referencing is disappointing but, overall, this is an enjoyable read, packed with interesting anecdotes and a suitable tribute to the memory of this pioneering hospital.

**Bryan Rhodes**  
January 2024

Published online at [www.bshm.org.uk](http://www.bshm.org.uk).