

## Meeting Report

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The fifteenth meeting of the European Histamine Research Society was held in Hindsjavl Castle, near Odense, Denmark in May 1986, at the kind initiation of Professor N.K. Chakravarty. It was attended by over 120 members and guests who were accommodated at the Castle and the nearby Middelfart Holiday Centre. Sixteen countries of Europe were represented and others came from Canada, Japan and the U.S.A. The weather was mixed but all events took place as planned.

After the speech of welcome from Dr. Carl Pedersen, the Rector of Odense University, and a short historical account of the Castle by Dr. Tore Nyberg of the Department of History, a Reception and Get-Together Party was held on the Wednesday evening in the Castle. It was at this function that we heard stories of delays in the transport of members and guests to the meeting. Some were many hours late in arrival due to the poor weather conditions, some failed to come on the right day, whereas others had narrow escapes. For example, the British group of 19 arrived at Copenhagen Airport almost one hour later and only just managed to catch the connecting train at Copenhagen Station, actually with only one minute to spare.

The meeting got underway on the Thursday with the main lecture being given by Michael Beven (of N.I.H., Bethesda, U.S.A.). He spoke on the mechanisms involved in signal transduction for the secretion of histamine and it was well presented and enjoyed by all. Briefly, activation of phospholipase C results in hydrolysis of cell membrane inositol phospholipids to yield inositol 1,2,4-triphosphate (IP<sub>3</sub>) and diacylglycerol which in turn induce mobilisation of calcium ions from the endoplasmic reticulum and activation of protein kinase C. These reactions provide synergistic signals from secretion, these being dependent on intracellular ATP. The remainder of the day was concerned with short papers on histamine release. We were able to discuss, among other topics, cation exchanges, calcium uptake, phorbol esters, stabilization of cell membranes, and antigen-induced release. Sayings of the day included 'I'm as much in the dark about this type of histamine release from mast cells as you are', 'Experiments are better on isolated cells as you really know what you know', 'Skinned mast cells are better than intact mast cells as they have skins', 'We diluted water with water to obtain 10<sup>13</sup> M histamine', and 'Playing games with compounds acting on mast cells is like playing games on computers'. During this day's session, the audience was amazed when the screens moved up to the ceiling at the same time as the room lights actually moved down. Those in the front row quickly took cover.

The day on histamine release was followed by a Society Photograph, Dinner and a one hour discussion of the posters (all 60 of them). This was a success as the four Chairmen were carefully chosen and helped the meeting along and was made all the more enjoyable by the issue for free drinks at the bar later in the evening. The ladies incidentally had a quiet day, using the Castles supply of bicycles to get around the surrounding area.

The second scientific day was confined to an interesting morning session on the release of histamine and leukotrienes, mast cells and basophils, and histamine in the Central Nervous System. During the first of these, one eminent member of the society noted, with great feeling that the number of ladies present at our meetings was increasing rapidly. He went on to say that these pretty ladies greatly enhanced the gathering and he hoped the trend would continue. Also a special

plea from a member ended with these words – ‘You must really treat your samples of mast cells with loving care’. The excursion after lunch took us all to the Southern Coast of Funen, the island on which we were meeting. We had a guided tour of Valderner’s Castle and then a boat trip to Svendborg where a fine concert in a church was laid on for us. There was a first-class organist but an even better soprano to sing for us. At the time, it was not appreciated that her husband was Dr. Johansen, one of the organisers of the meeting at Hindsgavl. The boat then took us to a First Class Hotel at Troense where the meal was superb. After several courses of food and much wine (of course), we finished the evening with some singing. The coaches came and took us back to Hindsgavl.

On Saturday, it was histamine receptors (where the most interesting compound SKF 95282 was described), histamine and the cardiovascular system (where the statement of note that you can never tell when a patient is going to flush but you must be ready to rush in to collect samples, histamine metabolism (where we heard that member had tried pentagastrin on himself and he didn’t like it) and finally the pathophysiological role of histamine and its clinical aspects. During these sessions, we heard ‘I have the scatter plots in my pocket but I’m not going to show them to you’, ‘I like feeding the anaesthetised animals as you are sure of the dose’ and ‘My results don’t set the world on fire’. The General Meeting of the members followed without few questions of note. The ladies had been on a guided tour of Egeskov Castle and had met the owner for lunch.

The Farewell Banquet was held in the Castle and again it was a super meal. Of course, we sang the International Anthem. A magnificent violinist named Anker Buch entertained us during the meal with wit and magic playing. Later, he gave a short classical concert and we all retired to bed. Not quite all, as a small party, I understand, was held in one of the bedrooms until the early hours of the morning. A highly successful and satisfying meeting had come to an end and our sincere thanks go to the organisers, Dr Chakvararty and his staff. The next meeting will be in the High Tartras, near Bratislava in May 1987.