

Book Reviews

JOHN HENRY BIGGART

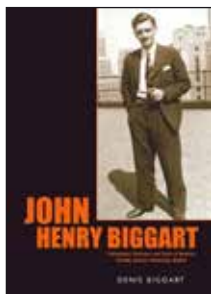
By Denis Biggart, Ulster Historical Foundation, Published 2012, Pages 194, Price £9.99

This is a delightful book written by John Henry Biggart's son, Denis.

Those of us who were interviewed by him as applicants to study Medicine at Queen's University, remember well a man who controlled our futures – beginning the interview – do you play rugby? Do you play for the First XV and what position do you play?

This book is a beautiful commentary on a man who was the 'star' of Ulster Medicine for over 40 years.

The book begins with John Henry Biggart's memories from his personal papers, meticulously dissected by his son, Denis (himself a Consultant Pathologist and academic in Queen's University). For those interested in social history there are titbits of the times in which he lived from his birth in Belfast in 1905, to his school days, University days (with the remarkable pranks of yesteryear) to the multiple anecdotes of the 'man himself', his mentors and teachers. As an aside there are wonderful stories of 'icons' of the day – such as



Dr Richard Hunter (Dicky) – author, actor, artist, anatomist and circus ringmaster. In the one year John Henry won the Symington Medal in Anatomy and the University Billiard championship!

The book traces John Henry's career as a young doctor in the Royal Victoria Hospital, his two years in John Hopkins in Baltimore and in 1937 his appointment, at age 31, as Professor of Pathology at Queen's University – the remarkable 27 years as Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, Knighthood in 1967 and Pro-Chancellor in 1972, his GMC role and his sudden death on the way to a GMC meeting in London on 21st May 1979.

A doyen of Ulster Medicine with a local, national and international reputation and yet with a quiet 'soft' side – which those of us as students never saw (the poet – appendix 4).

This little book will be of interest to those of us who were his students and to his many colleagues, as well as students of medical and social history. I would particularly encourage our new students of medicine, trainees and younger colleagues to purchase this little book – not only to realise the legacy left by this giant of Ulster Medicine but to learn about times and personalities gone by – maybe we can still learn from the past!

Well done Denis! – with the encouragement of Sir Peter Froggart you have done a great service in producing this book.

Professor RAJ Spence