

60 YEARS OF NEUROENDOCRINOLOGY

Celebrating 60 years of neuroendocrinology

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Sixty years ago, in 1955, Geoffrey Harris published his seminal work on the relationship between the hypothalamus and pituitary. Originally based on his realisation that seasonal breeding necessitates some sort of central control of gonadal function, he established without doubt that there is a portal blood connection flowing from hypothalamus to the pituitary, which could thereby connect the CNS with the regulation of a multitude of hormonal functions. This groundbreaking and original thesis was supported by extensive precise experimental studies, establishing once and for all how the brain may influence endocrine function, a true 'paradigm shift' in our understanding, and forming the basis of the new science, neuroendocrinology. As noted in the following introduction, Andrew Schally, one of the laureates to be awarded the Nobel prize for sequencing the first hypothalamic releasing factors, wrote to Geoffrey Harris with the conviction that the latter should be one of

these laureates. Sadly, not only was he not included, he did not even live to receive this letter. With a background in Cambridge, London and finally Oxford, Harris' work was a tribute to precise experimental design, careful observation and exacting anatomical dissection. We are delighted to introduce this collection of memoirs of Geoffrey Harris' life and review articles, summarising the state of play of modern basic and clinical neuroendocrinology to celebrate this 60th anniversary. It is fitting that this should be sponsored by the Society of Endocrinology and its flagship journal, Harris having given the Dale Lecture on his work in 1971. We hope this will both mark a tribute to his scientific breakthrough and reveal the fascinating of state of play of modern neuroendocrinology.

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