

# EDITORIAL

*Clinical Focus Intensive Care*

The American motor manufacturer Henry Ford said "History is more or less bunk" (Chicago Tribune, 25 May 1916, according to the Oxford Dictionary of Quotations, 3rd edition). Curiously, this entry does not appear in the online edition of the same publication, which ascribes the following words to him: "We don't want tradition. We want to live in the present and the only history that is worth a tinker's damn is the history we make today".

Our colleagues in intensive care medicine will have little trouble in agreeing that the second, longer quotation describes their new clinical specialism quite well. Things are changing so fast in the light of research, new knowledge, new drugs and equipment and the rise of genuine, effective multidisciplinary care that there is no time to develop tradition, or so it seems in this issue. Quite the opposite, in fact. We have two nursing sisters writing about their work: Lynne Wyre wants to spread intensive care into the

continuum of hospital practice and Debi Wearing is working on the aftercare of patients who have been on ICU, and their families. No tradition there - but it's making history.

And we are fools to ignore the lessons of history. John Bateson, surgeon-apothecary and former president of Lancaster Medical Book Club, met a dreadful end in 1857. He might have survived if modern intensive care had been available then to his attendants. Who knows? All we can say is that his death is part of the collective, inherited consciousness of the profession which is such a powerful stimulus to better (intensive) care. Perhaps we shouldn't speculate. After all, if there had been that level of intensive care in 1857, he would have travelled by car instead. A Ford, no doubt. Henry was right.

**MIKE FLANAGAN**  
Editor

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