one chapter on the therapeutic use of music at Horton Hospital which certainly deserves a wider circulation. After four brief literary excursions on Hamlet, Byron, Shaw and Joyce, we come to a heartwarming and delightful account of his late marriage. The first child of this happy union was born in the year of his retirement.

So the book ends, and the view from the punt has been, on the whole, one of contentment, enlivened by some awkward moments. Our guide reveals himself as a kind man of considerable intelligence and wit, with his own strong feelings against hierarchies and in support of the man at the bottom of the pile. The hands that grasp the punt pole remain those that once wore boxing gloves. Dr Rollin can fight his corner for the causes which he holds dear.

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The Florey: the story of the Sheep Hilton. By Tim Hewat. Angus & Robertson, 1990. 211 pp. £16.25.

The authors of books claiming comprehensibility for both lay and scientific readers usually steer an erratic course, but here the pilot is excellent, and so he should be, for Tim Hewat is a legendary Daily Express man who in the early 1960s devised the ITV programme World in Action, where complicated issues had to be clearly explained.

The book is a history of the Howard Florey Institute of Experimental Physiology and Medicine in Melbourne, nicknamed the Sheep Hilton because the chief experimental animals were treated so well. The director, and the inspiration behind most of the work, has been Derek Denton, a scientist whose thoughts are never far away from the arts, and who combines a knowledge of the increasing reductionism of biology and the human skills required in medicine. His interest in salt metabolism stemmed from two patients, the first a 17-year-old boy who in 1947 (when Denton was a young house surgeon) lost vast quantities of abdominal fluid as the result of peritonitis after an operation for duodenal ulcer in which the wound would not heal because of potassium loss from the cells.

The second patient, also a duodenal ulcer case, similarly had post-operative problems, but with Denton’s help the correct treatment was given, though in carrying this out Derek showed how the Fantus test (designed to monitor the presence or absence of chloride in the urine) could give erroneous information. This led to the redrafting of the rules concerning the balance of salt and water in the body, and formed the basis of what is now standard post-operative intensive care. Denton’s group, needing an experimental animal, chose the docile, easily trained sheep, with its large flaps of neck skin into which endocrine glands could be easily transplanted. The underlying initial objective was to identify precisely how salt levels in the body are controlled using conscious and apparently happy animals.

The actual Florey Laboratories (later the Institute) were named after the famous Howard Florey, and the chapter ‘Game, set and . . .’ gives details of how in 1963 the money was eventually raised, key names being the two Myers and Ian Potter.

Derek had for long been a great traveller, but an ‘institute’ gave him more kudos and he attracted to Melbourne many brilliant workers from widely different disciplines. Thus the studies of two of his colleagues, Sylvia and James Tait, investigating adrenal and renal secretions led to practical developments for everyday treatment of hypertension (eg captopril and enalapril), while others discovered the main chemical strategies used by wild animals to cope with salt deficiencies in areas many miles away from the sea.

On the obstetric side, using molecular genetics, Hudson and coworkers synthesised and then cloned the genes for the hormone relaxin which makes for non-traumatic childbirth. Again, using DNA manipulation, Niall and Tregear contributed to the notion of a once-a-year immunisation against pregnancy, and it was they who brought to the Florey a large international block grant which was to be solely devoted to molecular genetics.

The details of such technical achievements are wisely interspersed with biographical memoirs of the many senior figures who backed the institute such as Professor Sir Douglas (Pansy) Wright or those who particularly influenced Derek, for instance the eccentric J. B. S. Haldane, who after a classical education at Eton and New College became the editor of the Communist Daily Worker.

Altogether this is an absorbing book written in a most lively way, and the experimental work is described with the help of excellent diagrams put together in a single 24-page section. If one must find fault, it is to say that the chapter titles would be improved by subtitles indicating more precisely the content of the chapter. For example, one would not guess that ‘Dr Guillotine’s assistant’ explains why the sheep was chosen as experimental animal.

The great lesson to be learnt from The Florey is that outstanding scientists need not be narrow. Denton was a great friend of John Betjeman, and loves Mexican painting, music and ballet — in 1953 he married the dancer Margaret Scott, founding director of the Australian Ballet School.

SIR CYRIL CLARKE
President of the Royal College of Physicians 1972–77

ABC of resuscitation, 2nd edition. Edited by T. R. Evans. British Medical Journal Publications, 1990. 72 pp. £6.95.

This is a revision of the edition first published in book form in 1986. Each chapter deals with an aspect of resuscitation and the authors are mainly members of the Resuscitation Council (UK). New topics in this edition include resuscitation in trauma and in late pregnancy, and the problem of HIV and other infections. I