



Artist
Gerard M Burns

Commissioned by
Glasgow Memory Clinic

Date commissioned
31st January 2018

Introduction

by Dr Fraser Inglis

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The condition he described, subsequently called Alzheimer's disease, would become the major cause of dementia globally in the 20th and 21st centuries”

It is probably unlikely that German doctor Alois Alzheimer, who was born in Bavaria on the 14th June 1864, would have imagined when he reported a sole case of a subject suffering from dementia in 1906 that he was witness to a sea of change in medicine. The condition he described, subsequently called Alzheimer's disease, would become the major cause of dementia globally in the 20th and 21st centuries. He stood at a point in history when the main cause of dementia, syphilis, was soon to be eradicated by another major discovery to be made by Scottish doctor Alexander Fleming, born in Ayrshire on the 6th August 1881.

Fleming's discovery of Penicillin in 1928 changed medicine and has saved millions of lives. To the best of our knowledge Alzheimer and Fleming never met. Their individual astute observations altered the face of medicine and continue to provide a salutary

lesson to clinicians and scientists today. The importance of original observations, accurately described – even a solitary case. It is also a reminder of how medicine changes and how it will continue to change and evolve with time and each new advance and discovery. Had Fleming's discovery come earlier Alzheimer's life could perhaps have been saved as sadly it is thought his early death in Poland, on the 19th December 1915, was a consequence of an earlier Streptococcal Infection – eminently treatable with penicillin.

Penicillin completely revolutionised medicine and surgery. Fleming lived to see the mass production and the enormous benefits of his discovery; one being the prevention of gas gangrene in infected wounds. He was honoured in his own lifetime and passed away on the 11th March 1955, in London, due to a heart attack.

The widespread availability of penicillin has brought and continues to bring enormous benefits to humans, but we now live in an era of penicillin resistance. This is a constant warning of the need for and importance of ongoing research into microorganisms and antibiotics. Fleming's discovery bought us time, but we cannot be complacent and new treatments for resistant bacteria and viruses are urgently needed. While symptomatic treatments for Alzheimer's became available in the late 1990's a cure for Alzheimer's disease is still being sought

today. At no point in human history have more scientists and researchers focussed their minds and efforts on finding a cure for Alzheimer's disease – this in itself is a cause for great optimism. Millions of humans across the world are now engaged in research.

The original timeless observations of Alzheimer and Fleming acted as catalysts that have supported the great movement and effort towards enlightenment through the research process and a much deeper understanding of the world we live in.

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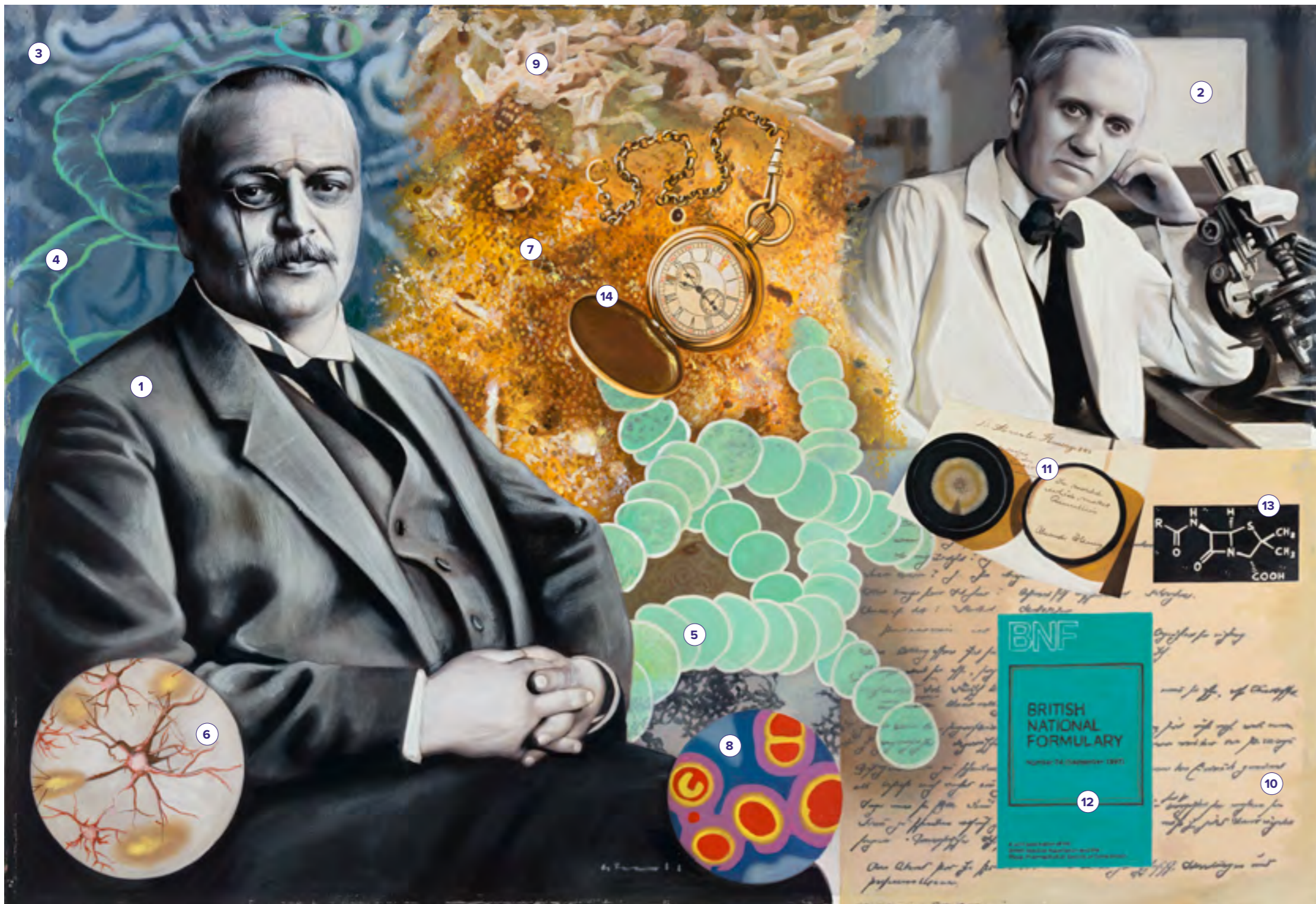
At no point in human history have more scientists and researchers focussed their minds and efforts on finding a cure for Alzheimer's disease”

Alzheimer & Fleming
Observations in Time

Artist
Gerard M Burns

Oil on Canvas
160x120mm





Background & Key

by Dr Fraser Inglis

This painting was produced by renowned Scottish artist Gerard M Burns in collaboration with Glasgow Memory Clinic, a centre that has been designed to conduct modern day clinical trials exploring potential new treatments for Alzheimer’s. The painting depicts Dr Alois Alzheimer and Dr Alexander Fleming with images from medicine that are relevant and blended to tell a story of science, medicine and life. The key provided, details the elements included:

- 1. Dr Alois Alzheimer;
- 2. Dr Alexander Fleming;
- 3. MRI SCAN Image of Brain (an astonishing and fabulous scanning technology, that has further revolutionised medicine and that is routinely used now to assess subjects with Alzheimer’s disease);
- 4. Treponema Pallidum (The spiral shaped bacteria that causes syphilis);
- 5. Streptococcus (The organism that is thought to have led to the death of Dr Alois Alzheimer);
- 6. Artists Impression of nerve cells and plaques;
- 7. Brain Tissue (Stained for the plaques and tangles that Alzheimer first described);
- 8. MRSA (Methicillin resistant bacteria that have emerged as a consequence of the usage of penicillin);
- 9. Clostridium Welchii (Perfringens) (The bacteria that can infect wounds and cause gas gangrene);
- 10. Alzheimer’s Original Notes;
- 11. Penicillin Producing Mould (First observed by Fleming to inhibit the multiplication of bacteria);
- 12. The British National Formulary 1997 (A national prescribing reference guide, relied on and used by Doctors on a daily basis throughout the U.K. – 1997 being the year that the first licensed treatment for Alzheimer’s disease became available in the U.K.);
- 13. Penicillin Formula;
- 14. Timepiece (In the centre a watch symbolises the timeless observations made and floats on the surface of brain tissue that has been stained to highlight the plaques and tangles Alzheimer first reported. The stained tissue has a galactic type appearance and connects two geniuses of 20th century medicine whose original observations continue to benefit mankind.)

It was a pleasure to work on this project with Gerard Burns who took up the challenge with his usual great interest and enthusiasm, patience, tremendous skill, humour and humanity. We feel privileged to have this painting in the clinic and we hope you find viewing this work both interesting and enjoyable.

Artist's Perspective

by Gerard M Burns

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The placement of each of the visual elements being absolutely crucial to the way the overall work would ultimately be read.

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My priority in every painting I make, is to ensure that what I produce works first and foremost on a visual level. I have always maintained that in order to deliver any underlying symbolic or literal meaning it is essential that the work of art first of all 'captures the attention' of the viewer... only then is it possible to deliver any additional symbolic meaning or narrative.

That said, in this instance I was acutely aware from day one that the narrative, and the presentation of the visual elements (in a way which could be easily read and identified) was crucial to the success or failure of the artwork. As such I approached it in much the same way you would a giant, super-complicated jigsaw puzzle... the placement of each of the visual elements being absolutely crucial to way the overall work would ultimately be read.

It is no exaggeration to say that the painting only exists because of the collaboration between Dr Fraser Inglis and myself (pictured

opposite)... in no imaginable circumstances would or 'could' I have made something like this without an extremely detailed brief of the concept. The process which led to the production of the painting involved a great deal of debate/exploration/and fine tuning between Dr Inglis and myself... as such it is arguably his creation as much as my own.

Finally... and best of all... one of the most fascinating things about any artwork in my opinion is that it only truly lives and breathes via the experience of those who stand before it in the years to come. Therefore without you the viewer, the artwork arguably does not exist? As such it's now down to you to make up your own mind about whether or not what we have created here has been successful... do the visual elements hold together? Has it made you want to find out a bit more about Alois Alzheimer, Alexander Fleming and their work?... all questions for you to answer... enjoy!



About Gerard M Burns

Born in Glasgow in 1961, Burns graduated from Glasgow School of Art in 1983 with a degree in Fine Art. Drawing and Painting have been his passion since childhood. He shared this enthusiasm throughout his teaching career, later leaving a successful post as principal of art at St Aloysius College Glasgow to pursue his painting full time. Since 1999 this commitment has resulted in his current standing as one of Scotland's most respected artists.

His growing client base varies from A-list celebrities to prominent members of business communities in the UK, Canada, Europe and the USA who collect his work for both personal and corporate folios. His paintings, most noted for their modern day translations of traditional themes, grace homes and workplaces worldwide.



For those coming to Gerard's work for the first time it is worth taking into account that although we are presented with an image which could be described as representational, even photographic, each of the various pictorial elements also contains a deeper symbolic meaning.

Whether it is wolves prowling around the legs of a small girl, a pinstriped figure on a high wire suspended above the city, a young woman standing at a water's edge, or a child leading a black horse through a winter wilderness, each combination is intended to provoke in us an 'emotional response', a sense of place, a feeling almost that we "have been here before"... in essence that the whole becomes far greater than the sum of its parts.

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Dedicated to improving the early diagnosis and treatment of Alzheimer's disease

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About Glasgow Memory Clinic

by Alison Cranmer

We are an independent research organisation and are engaged in National and International research studies that seek to find better treatments for Memory Impairment, Alzheimer's disease and Dementia.

A major focus of the centre are studies that seek to prevent the onset of memory impairment and dementia due to Alzheimer's in healthy volunteers. Founded in 1999 and initially located at the Golden Jubilee National Hospital, the clinic relocated to the West of Scotland Science Park in 2006. We moved within the Park to the current facility the Altum Building, a state of the art clinical research centre of circa 20,000sq ft.

Our research team of 40 are experienced healthcare professionals who have now dedicated their time to research and the team continues to expand.

Some key achievements of the centre:

The only centre in Scotland that has conducted research on all of the currently licensed treatments for Alzheimer's disease. The first patient in Scotland was entered into an Alzheimer's Vaccine Trial 2007. The clinic has for several studies been the top global centre and has emerged as the leading centre for Alzheimer's clinical trials in Scotland.

What are the benefits of participating in a clinical trial?

There are many benefits from taking part in clinical research such as screening tests, potential access to promising new treatments, regular health check-ups and reviews. Many of these are not available outside the clinical-trial setting. The chance to play an active role in your own health care and gain a greater understanding of your condition.

An opportunity to help society by contributing to medical research. Even if you don't directly benefit from the results of the clinical trial you take part in, the information gathered can help others and adds to scientific knowledge. People who take part in clinical trials are vital to the process of improving medical care. It is recognised that those who take part in research studies generally have better overall outcomes.

Art works

From the early days of the clinic staff and visitors have enjoyed the wonderful landscape photographs of Scotland by Colin Prior and more recently beautiful abstract works by Swiss artist Albert Enz. This most recent commission by Scottish artist Gerard M Burns – "Alzheimer and Fleming – Observations in Time" is a fascinating addition to the clinic and tells a story of science, medicine and life.



Scan our QR Code to watch a video and find out more about Glasgow Memory Clinic



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