Hear ye, hear ye: a trip down memory lane

My primary lymphoedema presented when I was 13 years old. Up came my left ankle, for no obvious reason, and it's been swollen ever since.

After exploratory surgery, the medics diagnosed 'inflamed tendon of the tibia', and sent me off to St. Thomas's. There, the amazing Professor Kinmonth, laconic but kind, with his gaggle of junior doctors around him, put a frightened 14-year-old at ease with brusque humour. I was in an adult male ward, with 30 patients in two facing-rows, with incredibly tall and well-spoken nurses, who had to kneel on the marble floors 3 times a day for prayers.

Professor Kinmonth arranged for me to have a deep green dye injected into my lymphatics, and I spent some 12 hours sparked out and being occasionally x-rayed to test the progress of the dye. This was a fairly novel approach then as an unprepared nurse nearly dropped my deep green specimen when she came to collect it. I went back to school...looking only pale green, and apparently the dye was discernible on x-ray months later.

Peter White is a Town Crier and Lymphoedema Support Network Member.

The result? I was told that I had a 'shortage of lymphatic vessels'. It was 1963. No treatment, just pink support stockings, the end of my bed elevated, and hefty massage using talcum powder which was brutal compared to modern approaches; all were quickly abandoned.

Later in life I adopted compression hosiery, now mercifully black in colour. And my visit to the annual Lymphoedema Support Network (LSN) Conference a few years ago finally convinced me to give up the diuretic my GP had me popping for 25 years to no good effect. Thank you LSN: what a relief!

I now wear compression hosiery; closed toe and knee length on both legs and they manage my condition well.

We would love to hear your experiences; please send them to editorial@daylong.co.uk