He died on 6th March in France, and details of his life are given in *The British Medical Journal* of 17th March 1917. At Cambridge, where he was at Downing College, he was President of the Cambridge Natural History Society, and interested, we are told, in almost every department of natural science and in philosophy. It was said that he was 'a real amateur of science in the best sense of that word'.

Leaving Cambridge, he completed his medical studies at St Bartholomew's Hospital, London. He studied X-rays which had just been discovered, and qualified as a doctor in 1897. Finding, however, that the examiners for the Cambridge MB would not accept knowledge of physiology and general science in lieu of midwifery, he never graduated in medicine at his university.

For two years he held a minor post on the staff of *The British Medical Journal* – his uncle was Editor – and he practised as an X-ray specialist. In neither of these roles was he successful. His obituary puts it amusingly: 'Rowland, although a good and interesting conversationalist, was singularly devoid of any literary faculty, and it was impossible for one of his nature and unbusinesslike habits to remain at his rooms and await the advent of patients'.

He was then appointed as assistant bacteriologist at the Lister (then Jenner) Institute of Preventive Medicine at Elstree, and was able to devote his time to scientific investigation. He remained a member of the staff there until his death of cerebro-spinal fever in France.

He was a good mechanic and engineer and never happier than when devising apparatus to be used in investigation. Indeed, he was so preoccupied with how to solve technical problems that when they had been overcome his interest in the actual work of the investigation was less keen.

His interest in microscopical skills began at Cambridge, and his abilities in this field were equalled by few British pathologists. His first scientific paper dealt with the study of bacteria, and he later contributed an article on apparatus for pulverising tuberculo-bacilli. He worked on methods of producing an antigen which might help cure diseases such as typhoid, and in 1905 was one of two researchers to be seconded to work in Bombay upon the Commission for the Investigation of Plague in India. This was in an attempt to halt the spread of the bubonic plague. There, he was engaged in meticulous work on rats and fleas to determine carriers and the sequence of the spreading. Hundreds of thousands of dead rats were dissected, and a quarter of an anna was paid for each one delivered.

After two very busy years, Rowland was back in England and was assigned to an outbreak of an unusual and fatal strain of what was believed to be bubonic plague in the East Suffolk village of Freeston. Between 1909 and 1914 Rowland published a number of papers on inoculation. These are recorded as being 'the most thorough and quantitative researches'.

At the outbreak of war he at once volunteered his services and was sent to France in charge of No 1 Mobile Laboratory, the first such pathological laboratory in France. There he dealt with problems with his usual ingenuity, and his laboratory, which was attached to General Headquarters, became a model for others. He was promoted to major. His special study was of methods of treating septic wounds and the carriers of meningococcus. Such dedicated and self-denying efforts

Rowland and his mobile laboratory in 1914

meant, inevitably, that it was not long before he contracted the disease himself, and he died in France at the age of 44.

The last paragraph of *The British Medical Journal* is worth quoting in full. It gives the impression of a marvellously scatty enthusiast who drove colleagues mad but of whom one was bound to be fond.

'Sydney Rowland was a cheery, erratic creature, with a vivid zest in life. He had a fine imagination, towards which he was not always sufficiently critical. He was courageous, impulsive, sensitive, generous to a fault, withal casual and thoughtless; but in view of his many sterling qualities, his friends willingly put up with any shortcomings. He was a charming companion, and much beloved by those who knew him well. Especially he endeared himself to all those who had to work under him. He was a great favourite with children and among those who will miss him most will be the many young people of his acquaintance.'

That is a testimonial for which many of us would be happy to settle and it was in these terms that I thought of him this August as I stood by his grave in the Etaples Military Cemetery. Among those dunes where once there had been all the bustle of encampment and desperate medical activity, there was now a hanging quietness as the breeze sifted in from the estuary. Arcs of headstones fan out at the base of a slope – 17,000 in all, soldiers and nurses – below the two memorial bastions and the gleaming white stone of the cross. It was all beautifully kept. Even the grass of the entrance was as green as perhaps the memories of those who come there to discover something that still lingers from so long ago.