Middle Articles

Westminster Hospital: First 250 Years

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On 14 January 1716 four men met at St. Dunstan's Coffee House in Fleet Street. This momentous meeting led to the foundation of Westminster Hospital and later, under strange and peculiar circumstances, to the foundation of St. George's Hospital also. The four men were: Henry Hoare, banker; Robert Witham, vintner; William Wogan, writer; and the Rev. Patrick Coburn. At this time there were only two hospitals in London—St. Bartholomew's in Smithfield and St. Thomas's in Southwark.

Yet it has been estimated that the population of London was in the neighbourhood of 640,000, so that the position of the sick poor was desperate indeed. This was especially true in Westminster, which was then built up only as far to the south-west as Horseferry Road. Beyond this line low-lying marshy fields, scarce one foot in parts above the river bank, led down to the Chelsea Waterworks, which was situated in the area now occupied by Victoria Station. The area was notorious for various types of febrile illness, including malaria.

The Charitable Society

At the first meeting at St. Dunstan's Coffee House the "Charitable Society for relieving the Sick Poor and Needy" was established and "Mr. Hoare said that he had £10 in his hands." This money was distributed to sick poor prisoners in the great London prisons, "the White Chapple, the Kings Bench, the Clink and the Marshalsea." From January to April the four men busily visited the sick, having joined to them Mr. Saville, an apothecary, and Mrs. Sherman, a midwife, who lived in Bird Cage Walk. In April it was decided to restrict their efforts to the parish of St. Margaret's Westminster, "until it shall please God that our stock increases." At this time, too, Sir John Colbatch, a well-known physician, offered his

services as a consultant. They were beginning to receive donations and their enterprise seemed well launched, yet on 14 April the minutes cease and the Charitable Society stopped its efforts. No one has ever found out the reason for this sudden abandonment of the Society's efforts in 1716.

Infirmiry for Sick Poor

However, on 2 December 1719 the Charitable Society was revived by Mr. Hoare and Mr. Wogan and ten other gentlemen, including Samuel Wesley the younger, elder brother of John and Charles Wesley. This time there was no lack of support. They were determined to found an infirmary for the sick poor. On 9 December the first consultant physician, Dr. Alexander Stuart (M. D. Leyden, 1711), promised his services to the Society. The next meeting on 16 December was held at the Grey Coats School, and Mrs. Jane Alden was appointed as the Matron to the infirmary at a salary of £6 a year (with board and lodging); in 1722 her salary was raised to £9 and in 1725 to £12 "On her promise to desire no further advance any more." After a little searching the Society finally found a house to let suitable for its purpose as an infirmary. It was owned by Mr. Phillips, tallow chandler, the second house on the north side of Petty France beyond its junction with Broadway, now buried under Queen Anne's Mansions. The house was taken on 20 March 1720 at a rent of £22 per annum. A nurse, Ann Squire (wages £5 10s. per annum), a servant, Ann Miller (£4 per annum), and a messenger were engaged. On 4 May Dr. William Wasey (M.D. Cantab.) offered his services as the second consultant. Later he became P.R.C.P. (1750-5).

The first patient, John Kelly, "Evill in the joints and scurvy," was admitted on 12 May; he was discharged cured on 8 June. By 13 July the Society had treated 14 out-patients and 16 in-patients and there were 12 in the house.

In January 1721 there was a donation of £5 5s. from their Royal Highnesses and the young Princesses (George, Prince of Wales, his wife Caroline of Ansbach, and their daughters). The governess to the Royal children, the Countess of Portland, was a most enthusiastic supporter of the Charitable Society. The hospital can proudly claim to have had the support of the Royal family ever since.

After one year the accounts were found to be satisfactory. The Society had received £491 8s. 3d. and paid out £417 8s. 6d. In 1721 the infirmary had the support of John Douglas, who, with his brother William, had worked out a method for suprapubic lithotomy, the bladder being distended with water first. He operated on four boys by this method and three recovered. He was elected F.R.S. in 1722 and published an account of the cases in his book *Lithotomia Douglasiana*, dedicated to the Trustees of the Westminster Infirmary in 1723. Although

St. Dunstons Coffee House
14 Jan^y 1715/6

Mr. Henry Hoare, Mr. William Wogan,
Mr. Robert Witham and Mr. Patrick Coburn
being met together to consult upon the
most effectua^l Methods for relieving the
Sick and Needy.

Mr. Hoare reported that he had Ten pounds in
his Hands to be disposed of for the relief of Prisoners

Westminster Hospital Minutes, page 1, volume 1, 14 January 1715-16.

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Cheselden took up this technique and gave Douglas the credit for this innovation, the latter became later his bitter enemy. It must have been especially galling to Douglas when Cheselden became attached to the infirmary in 1724.

Second Infirmary

By the end of 1721 the infirmary was flourishing, and on 8 November Claudius Amyand, Sergeant-Surgeon to George I and a most competent surgeon, joined the staff. Finally, on 20 December the other Sergeant-Surgeon, Ambrose Dickens, also joined.

On 9 January 1723 two revealing minutes are recorded:

"The Physicians Report that the Patients are in a fair way of recovery."

"Ordered that Mr. Wisdome (the Treasurer) have power to treat about taking the next House to be added to what we at present have."

This latter project was unsuccessful, but in March 1724 new premises in "Chappell Street" (now Broadway) were easily secured at a rent of £35. This was a much bigger house, and whereas the first infirmary finally held 18 beds, the second finally held 31 beds. It was occupied on 10 June 1724.

The staff at the first meeting in Chapel Street were attended on by Mr. William Cheselden, who brought a gift of £50 "from an anonymous donor." He was asked to join the staff. At the time he was surgeon to St. Thomas's Hospital and the leading anatomical teacher of the day. It is doubtful if he was ever surpassed for dexterity in performing "lateral lithotomy." He could easily extract a stone from the bladder in under a minute. Furthermore, he was a very capable eye surgeon. He is described as being an eager, active, impulsive man "quick in perception and speedy in decision." In Chapel Street the Trustees had installed a resident surgeon, a Mr. Wilky (or Wilkie), at £20 per year. This was a new departure and later was commented on unfavourably.

The affairs of the infirmary progressed favourably but it is sad to record that on 12 March 1725 the principal founder, Mr. Henry Hoare, died at his house in Fleet Street. It says

William Cheselden, F.R.S., Surgeon to Westminster, 1724 to 1739.

on his monument at Stourton Church, where he is buried, "He lived under a settled habit of private Charity and bore a Noble Share in all those Public acts of Piety and Mercy which have continued the Blessings and averted the Judgements of God."

Foundation of St. George's Hospital

By 1733 the staff and the Board of Trustees were now so confident of their success in running the infirmary that they began to look for larger premises. They had elected Richard Willis, D.D., Bishop of Winchester, as President of the Society and Mr. William Green, a brewer, as Vice-President. On 13 June Mr. Green offered three houses he owned at the junction of Petty France, Castle Lane, and James Street (now Buckingham Gate) for the uses of the infirmary. A committee of medical staff and trustees was duly appointed to examine these houses to report as to their suitability.

On 20 June the committee reported that the houses situated as they were on freehold land were eminently suitable. A Special General Board was held on 7 September; there was a very large assembly of trustees (for all who regularly subscribed £3 3s. a year became trustees). It was put to the meeting that Mr. Green's house be taken, and this was passed without demur. Then Dr. Stuart read out a letter to himself from Mr. Bell Lane offering the use of Lanesborough House at "High Park Corner" as suitable for the infirmary. The question was put to the meeting. "It passed in the negative." A further committee was formed to prepare a lease with Mr. Green. The committee reported back to the Board on 27 September 1733 with a draft lease. There was much debate and some heat was engendered. It was finally decided to defer all proceedings for six weeks. Later it was found that Dr. Stuart had already (on 20 September) signed a lease of Lanesborough House for seven years, the co-lessees being Dr. Wasey and Dr. Tessier, Sergeant-Surgeon Dickens and Sergeant-Surgeon Amyand, and a Mr. Thomas Smith. At the next meeting on 9 October the Board heard from Mr. Green that the Bishop of Winchester could not be contacted to discuss the matter. Despite this, the Board decided to make a definite contract to take Mr. Green's houses. On the next day Dr. Stuart, Dr. Wasey, and Mr. Wilkie resigned from the Westminster Infirmary. Although the Sergeant-Surgeons and the remaining physician, Dr. Tessier, did not formally resign their services, their connexion with Westminster also ceased at this time. Together with a minority of wealthy trustees they actively set about the formation of the hospital at Hyde Park corner. Here they were joined by the Bishop of Winchester. In this manner St. George's Hospital was founded. The position of Mr. Cheselden is interesting. He did not resign from Westminster but merely joined the staff of St. George's.

Captain Hudson, one of the seceding trustees, held a key to the iron chest in which Westminster kept its monies and East India bonds. Prompted by the Bishop, the chairman of the St. George's Board wrote suggesting that these valuables be divided between the two institutions, but to this the Westminster Board would not agree and eventually Captain Hudson yielded up his key. Whoever was in the right in this matter, the general public were the gainers, for there were now five hospitals in London—St. Bartholomew's, St. Thomas's, Westminster, Guys Hospital (1724), and St. George's. This was a great improvement on the position in 1716.

Third Infirmary

The Westminster Board quietly put its house in order. Dr. Wigan and Dr. Cotes replaced Dr. Stuart and Dr. Wasey, and Mr. William Pyle with John Price as Assistant Surgeon

took the place of the departed Sergeant-Surgeons. Incidentally Dr. Cotes, who later married Cheselden's daughter Wilhelmina, was not medically qualified. He held the degree of D.C.L. and did not get his M.D. until 1736. He was, however, M.P. for Tamworth (1734). Westminster Infirmary received much public support at this time and both Sir Hans Sloane and Dr. Richard Meade offered their "advice and support and assistance on any extraordinary occasion."

During 1734 work went ahead on Mr. Green's houses. Queen Caroline sent £100, the Bishop of Winchester died, and Sir Joseph Jekyll, Master of the Rolls, became President

The Third Westminster Hospital, James Street, 1735 to 1834.

in his stead on Christmas Day 1734. Finally, the Infirmary moved to its new quarters on 24 February 1735. It stayed there for 99 years.

The Third Infirmary (or Hospital as it came to be called after 1760) at first flourished. The Trustees established a new venture, an Establishment for incurable patients. Patients were admitted if a medical board deemed them incurable and they could prove they had no relatives or other means of support. The number of incurables depended on the income of special funds expressly deeded for their support. In 1948

there were four such patients: the last died in 1962 at the age of 89, having been on the establishment since 1933.

In 1735 there is the first mention of medical students (or "cubs" as they were called), for William Pyle and John Price were expressly forbidden by the Board to bring them into the Infirmary. This rule was relaxed in 1738.

In 1736 Benjamin Hoadley, F.R.S., who had the unique distinction of being granted the degree of M.D. (Cantab.) by Royal decree, joined the staff. He was created physician to the Prince of Wales's household and moved in Royal circles. It was, no doubt, owing to his influence that Augusta of Saxe-Gotha, the mother of George III, became the first Royal Patron to the Infirmary. After her death in 1772 Queen Charlotte assumed this office.

Eminent Surgeons and Physicians

The Third Infirmary rapidly grew in size. By 1757 there were 98 beds. This was brought about by acquiring two contingent houses and by building out wards. Although progress was somewhat hampered by the almost continuous state of war from 1760, the Hospital managed to hold its own and many eminent men (some eccentrics among them) became part of the staff. One may mention here Sir Richard Jebb in the latter category. Of him Lettsom said, "I loved that man" and George II declared, "I will have Jebb." Another such was Henry Watson, F.R.S., surgeon and anatomist, who joined the staff in 1762 and died (still on the staff) in 1793 in his 91st year. To the end of his days he persisted in wearing a curled wig, a full cuffed coat with a number of huge buttons, and a cocked hat—the clothing of a bygone era. He also carried a cane. Two of his pupils later joined the staff. The first, John Vincent Sheldon, F.R.S., was the first medical aviator. On 16 October 1784 with Jean-Pierre Blanchard he ascended in a balloon from Lochees Military Academy in Chelsea. The balloon came down at Sunbury, where Sheldon injudiciously got out, whereupon Blanchard, hurriedly re-adjusting the ballast, took off again and went as far as Rumsey, hotly pursued by Sheldon on horseback. In his later years Sheldon invented a poisoned harpoon to kill whales. He even went to Greenland to try it out.

Sir Richard Jebb, F.R.S., Physician to Westminster, 1754 to 1762. (Royal College of Physicians.)

Mr. J. V. Sheldon, F.R.S., Surgeon to Westminster, 1786 to 1788. (Royal College of Surgeons.)

A very different type of man was William Lynn, surgeon to Westminster from 1788 to 1834. He was, says Clarke in his *Autobiographical Recollections of a Medical Man*, "one of the most skillful of surgical artists." In 1792 he ligated the common carotid artery to stop haemorrhage from the parotid. The operation was successful, but the patient died a fortnight later "from debility." It was probably the first time this operation had been performed in a human being. When Henry Watson died in 1793 a new era started, for he was replaced by his other famous pupil, Anthony Carlisle. This remarkable man, from Stillington, County Durham, was born in 1768. He came to London in 1785 and studied art under Sir Joshua Reynolds and anatomy with John Hunter. He became a great comparative anatomist and when Hunter died he was offered the post of Curator of the Hunterian Collection. In 1800, with W. Nicholson, he performed the fundamental physical experiment of the electrolysis of water by the voltaic current. He was made F.R.S. in 1800 and knighted for professional merit at the instance of the Privy Council in 1820 on the accession of George IV. Carlisle had one great gift—"a remarkable facility for making friends." "No one tells a story like Carlisle," said Charles Lamb. It is true that in his later years he became vain, self-opinionated, and somewhat lax in his professional duties. He was, however, a great man and even introduced a new word into the English language. The word was "hibernate," first used by Carlisle in the Croonian Lectures of 1804-5.

Carlisle had a brilliant apprentice, Anthony White, born at Norton, County Durham, in 1768. He graduated from Emmanuel College, Cambridge, in 1804 and came to London in 1806. While at Cambridge he showed his immense surgical skill and ability by excising a patient's upper jaw for chronic sepsis with gratifying results. The sinuses healed, the proptosis subsided, and the lower jaw became mobile again. He became assistant surgeon in 1808 and full surgeon in 1823.

To these three men there was added as fourth surgeon in 1827 the famous George James Guthrie, F.R.S., the foremost military surgeon of his day. Of Scots descent, he was born at Wakefield in 1785. He qualified M.R.C.S. at the age of 16 and became surgeon to the 29th Foot (The Worcester

Regiment). He went to the Peninsula with Sir Arthur Wellesley in 1808 and was present at almost all the battles of that famous campaign from Roliça to Toulouse. Wellington thought highly of him and promoted him to the post of Deputy-Inspector of Hospitals, but the War Office, "with the usual gratitude of British Government," refused to confirm the appointment. Guthrie went on half pay and by 1815 had got two private patients, who refused to speak to him again when he went to Brussels immediately after Waterloo. He was "shrewd, quick, active and robust . . . voluble to a fault."

These four men, Lynn, Carlisle, White, and Guthrie, all became President of the Royal College of Surgeons—Lynn in 1825, Carlisle in 1828 and 1837, White in 1834 and 1841, and Guthrie (F.R.S., 1827) in 1833, 1842, and 1854.

In this period the Hospital did not lack physicians of equal merit, such as Sir Alexander Creighton, knighted by the English and Russian rulers; William George Maton, F.R.S., botanist and archaeologist, physician to George III, his family, the Duchess of Kent, and Princess Victoria; and John Ayrton Paris, later P.R.C.P. (1844-1856). There was also George Leman Tuthill knighted in 1820, another friend of Charles and Mary Lamb, whose pretty, diminutive French wife got him released from French custody by a direct personal appeal to Napoleon himself.

New Westminster Hospital

Although the staff and the practice of medicine and surgery flourished in this epoch, the building was coming to the end of its useful life. Stimulated by the President, Hugh Percy, 4th Duke of Northumberland, his brother Algernon (later the 5th Duke), and the redoubtable treasurer, the Honourable Philip Pleydell-Bouverie, a building fund was inaugurated. A site near the Abbey was purchased and a new Westminster Hospital was built and opened in November 1834. Its cost, including the site, was £40,000. A much lauded feature of the building was the newfangled water closets—one to each ward. This building, much altered over the years, remained

Anthony White, P.R.C.S., 1834, 1841. Surgeon to Westminster, 1823 to 1849.

George James Guthrie, F.R.S., P.R.C.S., 1833, 1842, and 1854. Surgeon to Westminster, 1827 to 1843.

in use until 1939, when the Hospital, Nurses' Home, and Medical School were transferred to their present site at St. John's Gardens, Westminster.

NEW WESTMINSTER HOSPITAL.
The Hospital in Broad Sanctuary, 1834.

The early years in the new building were marked (and marred) by considerable dissension among the staff and their supporters on the Board of Governors (the Hospital had become incorporated by Act of Parliament in 1836). Two factions arose, Guthrie and his protégé, Francis Hale Thompson, with their supporters and the rest of the staff with *their* supporters. Clarke suggested that the Hospital had been built over the old Westminster cockpit. When he was Guthrie's pupil in 1827 Hale Thompson had interjected an insulting remark during an argument between Guthrie and General Sir Charles Ferguson Forbes about the affairs of the Westminster Eye Hospital which they had founded. Hale Thompson's remark infuriated Forbes, who challenged him to a duel. They fired three shots at each other on Clapham Common but no hits were scored. Someone unkindly suggested that they would perhaps have been more dangerous with the knife than the pistol. In any case the *Lancet* christened Thompson "Bullet-proof Thompson" for many years. But as the years passed these dissensions died away.

School of Medicine

In 1834 Guthrie proposed that a Westminster School of Medicine be opened connected with the Hospital. This was violently opposed by his colleagues. He therefore opened a private "Westminster School of Medicine," which became a great success and was later accepted and finally incorporated as an official School attached to the Hospital in 1841. By this time the number of intending medical students was very few. The lecturer in anatomy, a Dr. Hunter from Glasgow, had so few students that he finally sold out to J. E. Erickesen in 1846 and went back to Glasgow taking his anatomical specimens with him. Thereupon the Council of the Royal College of Surgeons refused to accept the School as competent to teach anatomy. The School was completely extinguished in October 1846, when a compulsory purchase order was served on the premises by the Commissioners of the Westminster Improvements in order to complete the building of Victoria Street. Land was leased at the back of the Hospital and a new school housed in temporary accommodation there. The Royal College still would not recognize its museum, so Mr. Carsten Holthouse put in three months' intensive work and for £30 made good its deficiencies. This was in 1849.

In 1851 twelve months' notice was served by the Government on the land occupied by the School, and in 1852 it was accommodated in cramped quarters on the Hospital site. Advantage was taken to redesign the Hospital accommoda-

tion. By this time many changes had taken place in the staff. William Lynn retired in 1834, Sir Anthony Carlisle died in 1840, and Anthony White in 1849. George James Guthrie, a sad sufferer from chronic bronchitis and emphysema, died in 1856. A new era in surgery had, however, been opened at Westminster. On 11 January 1847 Mr. Hale Thompson performed the first operation under ether anaesthesia for the excision of condylomata. The anaesthetist was a dentist, Mr. Robinson of Gower Street. It was a complete success. The man who developed anaesthesia at Westminster was the Hospital Surgeon-Dentist, Mr. Chitty Clendon. He published many cases, especially those where difficulty or lack of success occurred.

John Snow

But the Westminster man who did more than anyone else to put anaesthesia on a sound scientific basis was the old Westminster student John Snow, immortal alike for his studies in anaesthesia and respiratory physiology and in the epidemiology of cholera. Snow was born at York on 15 March 1813, the oldest son of a farmer. Apprenticed at the age of 14 to William Hardcastle at Newcastle, he faced an epidemic of cholera when he was 18 at Killingworth Colliery. He came to London in 1836, walking from Liverpool to Bath and thence to Westminster. During 1837 and 1838 he studied clinical subjects at Westminster. He qualified in May 1838 (M.R.C.S.) and became L.S.A. in October. He took his M.B. (London) in 1943 and his M.D. in 1844. He began his anaesthetic studies in 1846. His studies were extensive and correct, first on ether and then on chloroform. He gave chloroform to Queen Victoria (chloroform à la reine) in 1853 at the birth of Prince Leopold and in 1857 at the birth of Princess Beatrice; between these dates there occurred his famous intervention in Broad Street, Golden Square, during the cholera epidemic of 1854. Snow died in 1858—he was only 45.

Nursing Staff

From 1847, when Elizabeth Eager became Matron, there began a violent struggle to improve the status and conditions of the nursing staff. Miss Eager was the first to use the term "trained nurse" and wished to put a trained nurse, a "Sister," in charge of each group of wards. The Board, horrified, rejected the term "Sister" and introduced Head nurse" instead (cf. modern American practice). They later relented. It was Lady Stanley and her Ladies Committee, together with a most remarkable man, an old Westminster student, Sir Rutherford Alcock, who finally established modern nursing conditions at Westminster. A Nursing School was finally established in Queen Anne's Gate, where the building is so marked to this day.

Notable Advances

Over the years the Hospital building had become somewhat in need of renovation and repair. The famous water-closets, in particular, had become a great source of trouble and a series of reconstructions began in 1877, culminating with the removal of the Medical School to a site in Caxton Street in 1883 and its opening there in 1885. A new spirit arose in medicine and surgery in the 1870s. In 1877 Dr. William Murrell was appointed medical registrar and later on the staff as physician. As registrar he introduced into medical practice the use of glyceryl trinitrate for the treatment of angina pectoris, a fundamental advance in cardiac pharmacology. In 1877 also the first operation in which Lister's principles were used was performed by George Cowell, assisted by Dr. Baptiste Potter, the obstetric physician. It was an ovariectomy and was completely satisfactory. Two young assistant surgeons, Walter Spencer and Charles Stonham, appointed at this time, eagerly seized on this new method and revived the practice and

teaching of surgery in a remarkable manner. They had two famous pupils who later became surgeons to Westminster—Mr. A. H. Evans and Sir Ernest Rock Carling. Both of these became implicated in an exploit of Stonham's. Stonham had formed "The Imperial Yeomanry Field Hospital and Bearer Company," and in the spring of 1900 the unit set sail for the South African War—Mr. Evans, imperiously summoned by telegram from Liverpool by Stonham, as a civil surgeon with the honorary rank of captain, and E. Rock Carling, still a

Westminster Hospital after the renovations of 1924.

student, with the honorary rank of private. The ship in which they sailed reached Capetown on 6 April 1900, sinking en route the R.M.S.S. *Mexican* (without loss of life). The members of the party marched 1,269 miles and were for a short time prisoners of the celebrated commando leader Christian de Wet. They were soon rescued and returned to England on 31 March 1901.

The Hospital was again extensively reconstructed in 1895, and in 1899 a clinical laboratory was built. This was opened in 1900 by Lord Lister, who symbolically subcultured the original Koch strain of tubercle bacillus, then maintained in the Hospital laboratory, for the Hospital had a celebrated pathologist, Dr. Richard Hebb, appointed in 1880. He acted as pathologist from 1880 to 1900 and from 1903 to 1918, being re-appointed when Dr. W. S. Lazarus-Barlow, appointed in 1900, fell dangerously ill in 1903.

In 1905 an important decision was made which was to discontinue the teaching of the preclinical subjects in the medical school. Just before the first world war an elaborate scheme was evolved to amalgamate with St. George's and build a new hospital either on Clapham Common or by Wandsworth Bridge but the negotiations fell through.

During the first world war 150 beds out of the 200 were offered to the Government. A Military Commandant was appointed and the Medical School was taken over for the teaching of Army pathologists. After the war the Hospital was much run down and there were but few students. Many members of the staff had left or retired. The Board of Governors and the remainder of the staff faced the position courageously. New members were elected, and one of these, Dr. Stanley Woodward, later Sir Stanley Woodward, was elected Dean of the Medical School. Over the years he successfully restored the number of students to a healthy position.

Renovating and Rebuilding

As to the building, the Governors raised £70,000. The building was closed in 1923 and thoroughly renovated and, to some extent, rebuilt. The Hospital was reopened in August

1924 with certain special departments it had hitherto lacked. In the late '20s certain interesting developments occurred. A most important one, the development of radiation therapy by large masses of radium, was begun by an old Westminster student, Stanford Cade. He was assisted by Mr. Rock Carling, enthusiastically supported by their old chief, Walter Spencer. By 1930 their efforts were so successful that a special Radium Annexe was opened at Hampstead.

Another important development was the exploitation of the possibilities of thoracic surgery by Tudor Edwards and his Westminster pupil C. Price Thomas, aided by the simultaneous development of anaesthesia by Ivan Magill and his pupils.

The year 1930 was marked by the retirement of the eminent neurologist Sir James Purves-Stewart, whose clinical demonstrations had become world famous. In his later years he had claimed to have produced a vaccine for the treatment of multiple sclerosis. The patient's cerebrospinal fluid was cultured in a special medium, when tiny organisms, visible by "dark-ground" microscopy, were seen. These were christened "insula spherularis" and were thought to be the causative organism of the disease. However, they were later shown to be a form of mycoplasma. How they gained access to the cultures was never explained. The whole investigation collapsed ignominiously.

Opening of New Buildings

The period from 1930 to 1939 was one of great tension, for the possibility arose of moving the Hospital and School to a new site. The crucial year was 1933. The St. John's Gardens site became available provided £100,000 could be guaranteed by 31 March 1934. A further £200,000 would be needed to start building. The Governors and staff rose to the occasion, the money was raised, and the site secured. The buildings erected—Hospital, Medical School, and Nurses' Home—owe their present form to an executive planning committee consisting of Sir Bernard Docker, Chairman, Mr. Power, House Governor, Mr. Maurice Webb, Architect and Governor, J. D. C. Couper, Consulting Engineer, and Mr. E. Rock Carling. Their ideas were put into solid form by the architect, Mr. Lionel Pearson. The Medical School was opened in

Sir Ernest Rock Carling. Student and Surgeon to Westminster, 1896 to 1960.

1938 by the Earl of Athlone, the Nurses' Home in 1938 by Queen Mary, and finally the Hospital was declared open by the Hospital Patron, H.M. George VI, accompanied by Queen Elizabeth, in May 1939.

Westminster Hospital, 1966.

The Hospital had hardly been opened when the second world war began. During this period the building, though struck by bombs on two occasions in 1940 and heavily blasted by a land mine in April 1941, continued to serve its functions throughout. So, too, the School functioned vigorously during the war, even though the preclinical students had been evacuated in the early years, at first to Glasgow and later to Birmingham.

Post-war Period

Westminster's post-war history continued steadily until 1948, when, after the inauguration of the National Health Act, certain hospitals were "designated" to form part of the West-

minster Group of Hospitals. This now comprised Westminster Hospital, the Gordon Hospital, Westminster Children's Hospital, and All Saints' Hospital, Lambeth.

In 1960 Queen Mary's Hospital, Roehampton, was added to the Group, which now comprises 1,090 beds—a far cry from the original 12.

A most poignant moment in the history of the Hospital occurred in late 1951. This was the operation on the Hospital Patron, George VI, which was carried out by Sir Clement Price Thomas and a team of surgeons, anaesthetists, and nurses from the Hospital. The beautiful memorial window to His Majesty's memory in the Hospital Chapel bears their names.

In 1958 the Wolfson Trust advanced £250,000 to build a Nurses' Training School in Vincent Square, and this magnificent building was opened on 23 March 1960 by the Queen Mother. A feature of this building is the beautiful library named in memory of the late Edwina Lady Mountbatten, who had served as a V.A.D. nurse in the Hospital during the war.

At the present time the completion of a new wing to be linked to the main Hospital by a multi-story bridge is eagerly awaited. This building will contain space for the professorial units of medicine, surgery, chemical pathology, anaesthesia, and the projected unit in obstetrics and gynaecology. There will also be housed there certain special departments. It is felt that completion of this building will enable the Hospital and School to maintain their place in the forefront as a centre for research, the teaching of students and nurses, and last, but not least, the purpose for which it was founded—the treatment of patients.

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The original source material for this article will be found in a book entitled *Westminster Hospital 1716-1966*, written by the author and illustrated by Dr. Hansell. This book, produced under the auspices of the Board of Governors, will be published shortly by Pitman Medical Publishing Company.

Mountain Accidents and Mountain Rescue in Great Britain

N. F. KIRKMAN,* M.D., F.R.C.S.

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In these days of increasing leisure many more people than formerly are going to the hills for recreation and exercise. This is especially true of the young. Courses and expeditions organized by schools, climbing schools, Outward Bound schools, the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, Rover and Scout groups, and other youth groups are now being held daily throughout most months of the year. In addition, the number of walking, rambling, and mountaineering clubs continues to grow. The access to mountainous areas has been made easier by the advent of the motorways and improved transport facilities. As a result of these changes the number of people visiting the Lake District, Snowdonia, the Pennines, and Scotland has probably increased tenfold in the last 20 years.

This increase in numbers has brought an increase in the number of accidents and acute illness taking place in the hills. There are now probably nearly 200 cases in England and Wales and 60 in Scotland (excluding skiing accidents) occurring annually.

Many of the public who frequent the hills and many doctors are unaware of the facilities which already exist to deal with these emergencies (*B.M.J.*, 1964).

The police are basically responsible for the care of injured persons, but they are not as a rule equipped or trained for mountain rescue, though they have rendered great help on occasions. They have been especially helpful in organizing rescues, calling out rescue teams, and assisting with transport and telecommunications. In some of the climbing centres in Wales and Scotland mountain-rescue teams have recently included a few policemen in their ranks.

Mountain-rescue Services

The problem of first aid for mountain casualties has long been recognized by the mountaineering clubs of Great Britain.

* Issuing Officer for Morphine and Equipment Officer of the Mountain Rescue Committee.