

OSLER LIBRARY NEWSLETTER

McGill University Montreal, Canada

No. 85-June 1997

"Stir Up the Brethren":
A Frank and Forthright Osler Letter.



r. Lewis Hersey of London, Ontario, recently presented to the Osler Library a two-page manuscript letter written by

William Osler to Dr. Hersey's great-grandfather, Dr. George Wilkins, then Professor of Medical Jurisprudence at McGill. The letter is dated 1 November, 1884: Osler had just left Montreal to take up his new post on the faculty of the University of Pennsylvania. Osler's warm and constant friendships with his former McGill colleagues, and his concern for the well-being of his old university, are well known. So is his penchant for crisp and informal letters. This letter, however, raised a few eyebrows amongst staff and researchers alike. The following transcription explains why:

131 South 15th Street

1/11/84

Dear Old Histolog

Wie gehts? Well I hope - Wish I was with you all You are such a decent lot. Fellows here are very kind but they don't come up to the Northern (Canadian) standard. How is John Stuart Mills getting on? It will break my heart if he does not succeed. Do what you can for him. Stir up the brethren about the additions to the buildings. You must make matters lively for them. Get Roddick interested. Craik is the only drag - he has no notion of the needs of anything but a stud horse & a brood mare. How is the missus? Keeping well I hope. I shall have a missus too before long. These Yankee girls give a chap no option Its come on whether you want to or not.

Love to Gardner & Alloway. Do attend the Society - you have been a sinner in that matter. Repent before it is too late.

Yours ever

Wm Osler

To place this letter in context, it would be helpful to identify the cast of characters to whom Osler alludes. First, there is the recipient himself.



George Wilkins, 1842-1916, was born in Ireland and came to Canada with his parents. He attended the

Toronto Grammar School and graduated in medicine from the University of Toronto in 1866. He did post-graduate work in London, England and was elected member of the Royal College of Surgeons in 1871. That year he returned to Canada to practise in Montreal, becoming Professor of Pathology and later Practical Physiology at the University of Bishop's College. In 1882 he became Professor of Medical Jurisprudence and Lecturer in Osteology at McGill University. In 1876 he was appointed physician to the Montreal General Hospital, a position he held until 1900 when he was placed on the consulting staff of the hospital. His other tasks included that of medical examiner for the Sun Life Assurance Company of which from 1880 he was medical director. In 1911 he became president of the Association of Medical Directors of Life Insurance. Dr. Wilkins was a member of the Montreal Medico-Chirurgical Society, becoming its president in 1897.

"John Stuart Mills" was Osler's nickname for his own demonstrator in physiology at McGill, T. Wesley Mills. The playful identification of Wesley

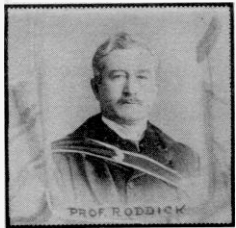
This issue of the Newsletter introduces a new part-time casual member of the Osler Library staff, Mrs. Pam Miller, (whose work is supported entirely out of the Library's endowed funds). Mrs. Miller, a" archivist with considerable experience in Canadian historical documents, has brought unprecedented order and fresh ideas to our rich, but chaotic archives and manuscripts collections. She has also revealed a talent for exhibitions and research. Both are featured in this issue. In the lead article, she describes a" unusual manuscript Osler letter recently acquired by the Library; later, she reports on an exhibit she and Mrs. June Schachter prepared to honour McGill University's 175th anniversary.

Mills with the famous British philosopher perhaps alludes to Wesley Mills' devotion to pure science, and his philosophical rigour and reserve. Indeed, Osler seems to worry that Mills' somewhat brittle personality and lack of sympathy with the medical applications of physiology might hinder his career. In 1884 Mills became Lecturer and in 1886 Professor of Physiology at McGill. Born in Canada, he received his B.A. from the University of Toronto, and his M.D. from McGill in 1878.



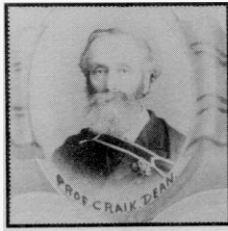
He studied at University College, London, with Sir John Burdon Sanderson (as had Osler) and Sir E.A. Schafer. According to Osler, who published his obituary in the *British Medical Journal* in 1915, Mills organized his teaching on modern lines and was the first teacher of the subject to have a thoroughly up-to-date and well-equipped laboratory. Interested in comparative physiology, Mills published, i.a., *Textbook of Animal Physiology, 1889*, and *Textbook of Comparative Physiology, 1890*. He retired to London, England in 1910 and died there in 1915.

“Roddick” is Thomas George Roddick, 1846-1923, later Sir Thomas Roddick.

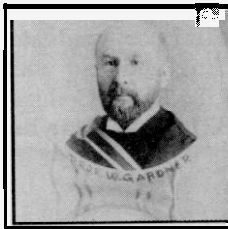


Roddick was born in Newfoundland, graduated from the Normal School in Truro, Nova Scotia, and in 1868 obtained his medical degree from McGill, where he won the Holmes Gold Medal. He became a member of the resident staff at the Montreal General Hospital and was appointed Demonstrator in Anatomy in 1874 at McGill University. In 1876 he became Professor of Clinical Surgery and Surgeon to the Montreal General Hospital. In 1877, after three months spent in Edinburgh learning Lister’s antiseptic methods, he returned to Montreal where he introduced and promoted Lister’s procedures. In 1885, during the North West Rebellion, Roddick was appointed Deputy Surgeon General and became the first Canadian director of medical services in a military campaign. An inspired teacher, in 1890 Roddick was appointed Professor of Surgery at McGill and later the first chief surgeon of the Royal Victoria Hospital. From 1901-1908, he served as Dean of the Faculty of Medicine. In 1912 he founded the Medical Council of Canada which provided for a common system of examinations for medical students across Canada and he became its first president. In 1914 he received a knighthood. For eight years he was a member of parliament. As president of the British Medical Association, he organized the first

meeting of that association outside Britain, in Montreal in 1897.



“Craik” refers to Dr. Robert Craik, 1829-1906. When Osler arrived at McGill in 1870, Robert Craik held the Chair in Chemistry. Craik had graduated from McGill’s medical school in 1854 with high honours. His thesis was on infectious diseases. Before holding the Chair in Chemistry, he held the positions of House Surgeon at the Montreal General Hospital, Demonstrator in Anatomy, and Professor of Clinical Surgery. In the 1880s he was elected Dean and was named Professor of Hygiene and Public Health. In 1895 Craik was granted an Honorary LL.D. He was also a Governor of the University. His obituary in the *British Medical Journal* states that he did little writing, his reputation being based on his teaching.



“Gardner” refers to William Gardner, 1842-1926, who obtained his M.D.C.M. from McGill in 1866. He became Professor of Medical Jurisprudence at McGill, the first Professor of Diseases of Women and Gynaecologist-in-Chief of the Royal Victoria Hospital.



“Alloway” refers to T.J. Alloway, a close friend of Osler and fellow young professor at the Faculty of Medicine at McGill.

This letter has been assessed by the current biographer of Sir William Osler as being of unusual importance since few letters of this period of his life survive, and almost none of this degree of frankness and intimacy. This is borne out by the Cushing biography of Osler, the Cushing fonds assembled for the biography and by the holdings of the Osler library where this type of forthright assessment is rare. For this

reason, the letter has been deemed by the Canadian Cultural Property Board to be of outstanding significance and national importance. It provides a rare example of Osler at work, planning, pleading, cajoling colleagues into action. “How is John Stuart Mills [Wesley Mills] getting on? It will break my heart if he does not succeed. Do what you can for him. Stir up the brethren about the additions to the building. You must make matters lively for them. Get Roddick interested”. Throughout his life Osler worked tirelessly for the improvement of the institutions with which he had been associated. Years after he left McGill he continued to press for the appointment of the right man to the right place. He pleaded successfully with the Rockefeller Foundation for funding for the McGill Medical Faculty. This letter is a working example of his methods. Mills was Osler’s assistant and later Professor of Physiology at McGill. Clearly Osler supported Mills’ up-to-date methods of teaching physiology as well as any building requirements to forward the cause of improving medical practice. Osler’s comment about Robert Craik, “Craik is the only drag - he has no notion of the needs of anything but a stud horse & a brood mare.” provides new insight into Osler’s frank judgement of a colleague and his willingness to state plainly what he thought. A staunch supporter of innovative medical scientists, he had no time for others less devoted. At the time, according to Dr. Francis Shepherd, Dr. Craik kept a stud of racing horses in Kentucky. (*Reminiscences of Student Days and Dissecting Room*, Montreal, 1919).

Osler’s comment about “Yankee women” if nothing else, testifies to his eligibility among the female members of Philadelphia society. His claim that he “shall have a missus too before long”, may be only a general reflection on their assertiveness, as there is no record of any serious courtship at this time.

Osler’s comparison of his new friends to his former Montreal colleagues, “Fellows here are very kind but they don’t come up to the Northern (Canadian) standard”, gives us an interesting insight into his view of himself as a Canadian at a time

when defining Canadian nationalism was a lively issue in Canadian intellectual life.

Finally, the admonition, "Do attend the society - you have been a sinner in that matter. Repent before it is too late." probably refers to the Montreal Medico-Chirurgical Society, an early Montreal society for the discussion of medical matters and advancement of medical and scientific knowledge, which Osler had revitalized on his arrival in Montreal. This is another example of his continued interest in the improvement of medical knowledge through professional organizations, something he worked for until the end of his days.

Pam Miller

McGill's Medical People, 1821-1996

A recent exhibition at the Osler Library marked McGill's 175th anniversary by focusing on a few of the outstanding men and women who have contributed to the eventful history of its Faculty of Medicine. The year 1996 was also the 175th anniversary of the Montreal General Hospital. Dr. E.H. Bensley's book *McGill Medical Luminaries*, simplified our selection and copies of his book appeared throughout the exhibition. Manuscripts, photographs, photograph albums, student note-books and printed works formed the core of the exhibition.

The Beginning

Two cases were devoted to the four founders, (all of whom studied medicine at the University of Edinburgh) and to the McGill Medical Faculty's early buildings. The first medical school in Canada, the Montreal Medical Institution, was set up in 1823 and in 1829 it became the McGill Medical Faculty. A photograph of each of the founders, brief biographical information and in the case of John Stephenson, his graduation thesis *De Velosynthesi* - a classic in the literature of plastic surgery - represented these four colourful characters. The original oil paintings of the founders were destroyed in the fire which burned the Medical Building in 1907. Working from photographs, Robert Harris

reproduced the portraits of Andrew Fernando Holmes and William Robertson. Andrew Dickson Patterson painted William Caldwell and John Stephenson.

A photograph of the first drawing of the Montreal General Hospital was provided for the Osler Library by Les Archives du Séminaire du Quebec many years ago. The original water-colour drawing which is part of the Viger **Album** was done in 1826 by John Poad Drake, painter, naval architect and inventor, (believed to be a descendant of Sir Francis Drake) who had been in Montreal in 1820 while touring his large painting of Napoleon on board H.M.S. Bellerophon.(1) He returned to Montreal in 1826 when Jacques Viger, later the first mayor of Montreal, may, as was his custom, have asked Drake for a painting of the hospital to add to his album.

Since teaching began at the Montreal General almost as soon as it opened, a student admission card (Ms 399/1) to the lectures of William Robertson for the year 1823 was displayed. The student was John McNaughton and the subject of the lecture was Midwifery and Diseases of Women and Children. The card carries a red wax seal.

The student notebooks featured in the exhibition are rare archival items. Few medical archives are fortunate enough to possess such documents at all. The Osler Library is especially lucky to own notebooks dating back to the late 18th century, lecture notes taken by students at Edinburgh University and then handed on to other students.

Great Teachers

An enlargement of a small tintype of three great colleagues and characters, Francis J. Shepherd, George Ross and William Osler, done in about 1878, provided the theme for the third case. It is preceded by a copy of a Notman photo, one of many, of Dr. Robert Palmer Howard (1823-1889), taken 1865. Dr. Howard began his distinguished teaching career at McGill in 1852. Through teaching, writing and personal example, he raised the standards of medical education throughout Canada. His renowned pupil, Sir

William Osler, constantly described him as an inspiring teacher.

This photograph is supplemented by *Reminiscences Of Student Days and Dissecting Room*, by Francis J. Shepherd, privately printed, 1919, Osler Library, (ms 364), which is opened at a description of janitor Tom Cook's role in obtaining bodies for the study of anatomy. Fined frequently for securing bodies illegally, Shepherd was instrumental in framing new legislation permitting legal procurement of cadavers for study.

Francis J. Shepherd's "Notes on *Materia Medica*, 1869-70", taken while a student at McGill, Osler Library, (ms 276) and a selection of Tickets of Admission for lectures at McGill College by William Osler, Francis J. Shepherd and George Ross (ms 501, 377) dating about 1877-80, further evoke the influence of these men on McGill's Faculty of Medicine. The lecturer's signature on the back of each card indicated attendance at lectures and successful completion of requirements.

The post-mortem book of the Montreal General Hospital for the Year Ending May 1st, 1877, opened at the case of a patient who had died as a result of an aneurism, described by the pathologist, Dr. Osler, provides tangible evidence of research done at the Montreal General which shaped Osler's subsequent career. The leather-bound volume with lined pages ready for the hand-written reports, recalls Osler's description of the General during his student days. "When I began clinical work in 1870, the Montreal General Hospital was an old coccus- and rat-ridden building, but with two valuable assets for the student - much acute disease and a group of keen teachers."(2)

Student Life, c. 1900

Despite undoubted hard work evident in the display of a selection of exams collected by T.A. Malloch, McGill's medical students found ways to relieve tension, for example, in celebrating the remarkable career of Tom Cook, the famous janitor of the McGill Medical Building, seen in a photograph among the McGill medical students on the steps of the Medical

Building, 1907. Cook's place in the students' hearts may be judged from an item found in Maude Abbott's collection (ms 438/15), a programme for "The Grand 41st Anniversary of the Cook Régime", 15 April, 1908 which features a picture of Cook in regal robes and regalia.

What student has never scribbled in the margin of his notebook in order to enliven a lecture? Neurologist F.H. McKay was no different when attending lectures by H.A. Lafleur, C.F. Martin and F.G. Finlay, for the years 1910-11. (ms 244). He illustrated Lafleur's lecture on the respiratory system with a buxom lady, scantily clad. Laennec's face (the inventor of the stethoscope) peers out from under his invention. Laennec is said to have rolled up a sheet of paper in order to avoid the embarrassment of auscultating just such a well-endowed female patient.



This theme is completed by an undated photograph of students in the dissecting room. The cadaver is surrounded by students displaying anatomical specimens, including one student playing the flute on a bone. At the end of the exhibition, we will see a somewhat sheepish-looking Wilder Penfield included in the same antics while a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford.

Maude Elizabeth Seymour Abbott,
1869-1940

The Maude Abbott Fonds provides the Library with a huge choice of material, including some of her displays assembled for medical conferences. Maude Abbott graduated from McGill in Arts in 1890, with the third class of women to be admitted to the University. Refused admission to McGill's Medical Faculty, she obtained her medical degree from Bishop's Medical College in 1894. Attracted to

the subject of pathology, she was inspired by Sir William Osler to conduct research into congenital heart disease. In 1936 she published her famous *Atlas Of Congenital Heart Disease*. Her second achievement, again inspired by Osler, was to develop the McGill Medical Museum into an important teaching and research resource and to organize the International Association of Medical Museums. Some of Osler's and Abbott's pathological specimens may

still be seen in the Lyman Duff Medical Sciences Building.

Three items illustrate Maude Abbott's tireless work on the Medical Museum: *Descriptive Catalogue of the Medical Museum of McGill University*, Part IV, Sect. 1, The Haemopoietic Organs, by Oskar C. Grüner, ed. by Maude Abbott, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1915; *An Historical Sketch of the Medical Faculty of McGill University*, Maude Abbott, reprinted from the Montreal Medical Journal, August, 1902. Opened at a photograph of the Pathology Museum; Original pathological drawings in watercolour by John Clarence Webster of an aborted foetus and a normal placenta, done in Chicago about 1890. (Abbott ms 438/147). Dr. John Clarence Webster, 1863-1950, was a noted obstetrician and gynaecologist who illustrated his own publications. He was also a well-known collector of historical material

relating to his province of New Brunswick.

John McCrae, 1872-1918

Pathologist John McCrae is now best known for his poem "In Flanders Fields", first published in Punch magazine in 1915, three years before his death at the No. 3 Canadian General Hospital (McGill). Letters and photographs, including a reproduction of the page on which "In Flanders Fields" first appeared, are displayed. A photograph of John McCrae and his setter Bonneau at Boulogne about 1916, is accompanied by a letter from John McCrae to Mrs. Edward Archibald, No. 3 Canadian General Hospital, Boulogne, 24 May, 1916, (ms 545/1/4) in which McCrae relates how Bonneau came to the Hospital. "Mr. Bonfire (McCrae's horse) is very well, and has a great friend, M. Bonneau, a setter

belonging originally to the concierge, but now belonging to Bonfire. They are very pretty together, and are very fond of one another." In a later letter to Dr. Edward Archibald, No. 3 Canadian General Hospital, Boulogne, 27 May, 1917 (ms 545/1/4) McCrae describes the current situation of the Hospital including games of golf. John McCrae was a good friend of the Archibald family and had lived in a separate apartment in their house from 1908 to 1914.

Boris Babkin, 1877-1950

Expelled from Russia in 1922 for being unsympathetic to the Soviet regime, physiologist Boris Babkin arrived in 1928 at McGill where he became a renowned neurophysiologist. On his retirement from the Department of Physiology he was invited by Dr. Wilder Penfield of the Montreal Neurological Institute to

continue his work there. In Russia, Babkin had been a student of Nobel Prize-winning physiologist Ivan Pavlov and they continued to be friends after Babkin left. In gratitude to McGill, Babkin bequeathed to the Osler Library manuscripts, reprints and photographs relating to Pavlov, (used in his biography of Pavlov), a small selection of which are displayed including a copy of the biography, published by the University of Chicago Press in 1949.

In 1929 Pavlov and his son spent a week with Babkin and his wife after attending the XIII Medical Physiological Congress in Boston. In This letter thanking them for their hospitality, dated Leningrad, 28 Sept., 1929, Pavlov wrote, "Yes, Boris I'etmitch, happily you and I have a mighty talisman which protects us from fate's misfortunes. You in a strange land, and I in my country would find life hard without Science. Now before us we have a goal which lures us on always and allows us either to forget for a time or to be less conscious of life's blows." (ms 390/22/1/17)

Charles R. Drew, 1904-1950

A black student from Washington D.C., Drew received top marks at McGill and also distinguished himself as a track star. He was active in the Medical Undergraduate Society and the *McGill Medical Journal*. He was a pioneer in the development and use of blood plasma in transfusions. During World War II he headed the "Blood for Britain" drive. As Professor and Head of Surgery at Howard University, and as a noted researcher, he struggled against racism by insisting that the American Medical Association admit blacks as members. This finally occurred in 1968, eighteen years after Drew's tragic death in a car accident. A visiting professorship has recently been established to honour Drew's name at McGill.

The display includes a small bust of Charles R. Drew in bronze by Inge Hardison, done in 1967 and presented by Dr. W.A. Stewart, and an *Old McGill*, 1931, opened at the photograph of McGill's track team, Charles R. Drew, Captain. The year 1930 had been the team's most successful

season in years with Charlie Drew the individual champion of the Senior Intercollegiate meet, held at Queen's University on October 24, 1930.

Harold N. Segall, 1897-1990

Harold Segall was an outstanding clinical cardiologist and a man with a strong social conscience. A friend of Norman Bethune, he tried to alleviate suffering by working to improve society through social action. He was a founder of the Jewish General Hospital in Montreal and of the Canadian Heart Association. After graduating from McGill in Medicine in 1920, Segall worked with Maude Abbott as an assistant curator at the McGill Medical Museum. This experience led to his life-long interest in cardiology and in the history of cardiology in Canada.

The display shows one of his pads of charts invented and used by Dr. Segall on which to record heart sounds while examining a patient, first produced in 1937. He invented this system in order to provide a quick and effective method of recording sounds at the patient's bedside. This invention was never widely adopted, but the Osler Library possesses a chair, visible from the Francis Wing, the seat of which is covered in needlepoint patterned after the charts. *Collected Reprints, H.N. Segall*, opened at "A Simple Method for Graphic Description of Cardiac Auscultatory Signs", *The American Heart Journal*, April, 1933, explains the purpose of Dr. Segall's standardized system of recording heart sounds.

Wilder G. Penfield, 1891-1976

In 1928, Wilder Penfield was brought to Montreal at the suggestion of Edward Archibald to specialize in neurosurgery. Penfield was accompanied by his associate Dr. William Cone. His work on epilepsy and his direction of the Montreal Neurological Institute, opened in 1934, made him a leader in his field. His insistence on collaborating with colleagues at the Hôtel Dieu and the Hôpital Notre Dame, ensured that the Institute would have the full support of the city and province on its way to establishing an international reputa-

tion. He was adamant in his support of the benefits of learning more than one language at the earliest stage of child development, a belief which was influential in his final decision to settle with his family permanently in Montreal. His publication *Langage et mécanismes cérébraux*, Les Presses Universitaires de France, 1963, represents these views.

Wilder Penfield's photo album covers his Oxford student days, the Hospital at Ris Orangis where he worked during World War I and his travels, 1913-1916. It is opened at a page showing a group of students holding bits of a human skeleton and on the other page, a photograph of Abbotsford, the home of Sir Walter Scott. A photocopy of Wilder Penfield's letter to Edward Archibald, 18 Jan., 1929 contains Penfield's drawing of the neurological institute which he was planning, written on Biltmore Hotel, New York, letterhead.

Finally, the large floor case located inside the Osler mom, was devoted to books about faculty members, some of McGill's female medical graduates, McGill's role in World War I and publications about some of McGill's medical families. No display would have been complete, however, without the copy of Sir William Osler's influential *The Principles and Practice of Medicine*, a second printing made in 1892 after the earlier printing of that same year had completely sold out.

Hopefully, the exhibition has drawn attention to some of the famous characters but lesser-known collections of the Osler Library. In May, the exhibition moved to the McLennan Library to remind another part of the campus of McGill's vigorous medical heritage.

Pam Miller

References

1. *Early Painters and Engravers in Canada*, Russell Harper, University of Toronto Press, 1970, p. 93-94.
2. *The Life of Sir William Osler*, Harvey Cushing, Oxford University Press, 1940, p. 70.

A Pilgrimage to Osler's Oxfordshire.

Despite long familiarity with Oxford and its environs, I had not, until 1996, visited the Osler home at 13 Norham Gardens, and the tiny village of Ewelme, where Osler, as Regius Professor, was ex officio Master of the Almshouse. This omission I rectified in August last year.



Fig. 1

No. 13 Norham Gardens needs no introduction to Oslerians. Just down the road from Lady Margaret Hall and from the little River Cherwell where Revere fished, the house lies directly behind the University Parks, whose fine trees lend a backdrop to the garden, familiar to us from snapshots of the Oslers and their friends. I did not take any photographs inside the house, but reproduced here is a picture of the History of Medicine Librarian clinging to the gatepost (fig.1) (note the absence of gates: the iron from these probably went to the 1939 war effort).

Ewelme is well worth the detour. Cushing explains the Ewelme connection at the beginning of the second volume of the *Life*, (1) (where he takes up Osler's story in early summer 1905). The income for Osler's Regius Professorship (founded in 1546) was augmented in 1617 by James I when he annexed to the Chair the Mastership of the almshouse at Ewelme.

"Ewelme church, with its low squat tower, stands on the edge of a hill overlooking a valley scooped out of the lower slopes of the Chilterns. Below lies the wee thatched village of some four hundred people, through which runs a brook lined by a watercress farm. To the visitor who may gain access to the

walls is a" old engraving whose legend reads:

This Palace derives its name from the Number of Elmes that grew here and formerly was call'd New Elm. Wm de la Pole duke of Suffolk marrying Alice only daughter of Thos Chaucer had by her large Possessions hereabouts and built this house with Brick -- the Estate became Crown Land. K.H.VIII made this House an Honour by bestowing on it certain Manours..

The story of the Duke of Suffolk is given in Shakespeare's 'Henry VI', and his palace, like the de la Poles themselves, has long since disappeared; but the church, together with the cloistered court into which the Master's rooms lookdown, remains intact and unchanged after nearly five centuries." (2) (and fig. 2).

A letter written by Grace Osler on June 19th, 1905 (quoted by Cushing), (3) describes the Oslers' first visit to Ewelme:

"Saturday Willie and I paid a visit to the much-talked-of Almshouse, at Ewelme. It is a most interesting place -- four-tee" miles from here, two miles back from the Thames. I" 1437 the Countess of Suffolk, who was I believe a granddaughter of Chaucer the Poet, gave three manors, the incomes from the

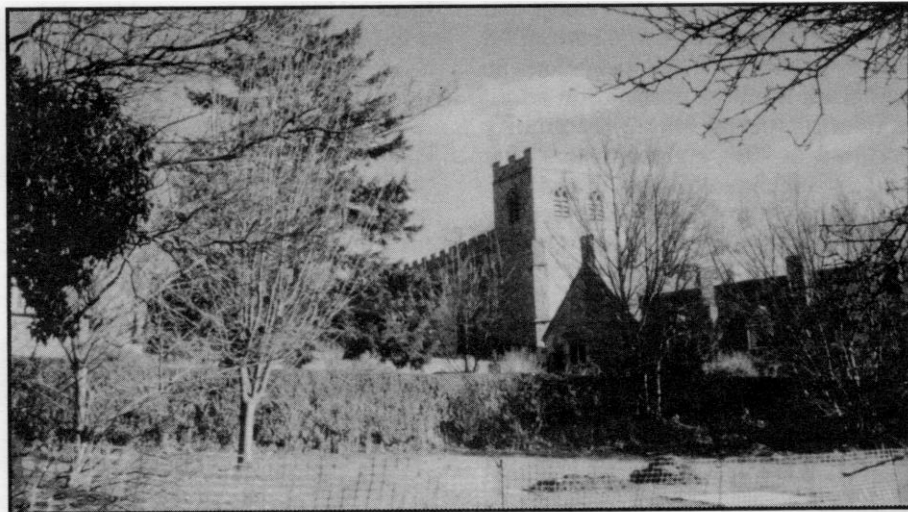


Fig. 2. St. Mary's Church, Ewelme. Photographed by J. Harvey, Feb. 1997

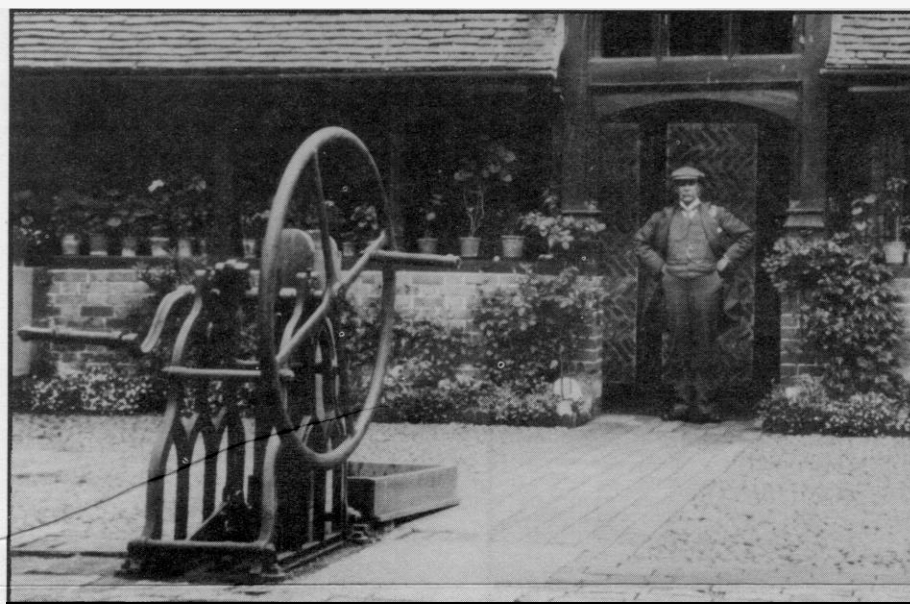


Fig. 3. Osler at the almshouse (from the Osler Library's photographic archive).

farms to support the alms-house and thirteen men occupants — and built a chapel adjoining. We have not discovered when the Regius Professor was made Master, but he has been so a long time. There are rooms for the Master but they have been altered and look painfully modern. The building nearly 500 years old is very picturesque and looks its age. The men have two rooms each and if married can have a wife there or a daughter to care for them. The surgeon who looks after them met us & we visited each member — it was most amusing. We carried tobacco and illustrated papers for each, and they were enchanted. I am sure Willie will make them all fond of him and be good to them. It is a long drive, and we had luncheon at the Inn and tea in our own sitting-room; and got back in time to go out to dine at New College with the Warden and Mrs. Spooner — the name seemed familiar.”

Not surprisingly, Osler took his new responsibilities as Master very seriously. In 1906, Cushing records(4):

“... during the last two weeks of July, for the first time in man's memory the Master's rooms were actually occupied by their rightful owner. That the thirteen aged almsmen were thrilled

needs no saying, even though they must be punctilious about attending prayers while the Master was in residence, for he had once before chided them in regard to what he considered a serious neglect, in view of all they owed to Alice of Suffolk. Heretofore, with the possible exception of Acland, the connexion of the Regius with this ancient house of benevolence, confined to a few hasty visits,

had been of the most formal and perfunctory character. But the 21st Regius in sequence was a man of a new order: he was fascinated with the serene beauty of the place, knew the pains and aches of the old inmates and was generally adored by the villagers, among whom he played the part of antiquarian, physician, country gentleman, and lover of nature; enjoying everything and enjoyed by all. One day a picnic was given for the old men, with all the children of the village invited.”

As Cushing notes later, (5) the acquisition of a motor-car in 1908 made the trips out to the village easier for the Oslers. (fig.4) It is not difficult for a modern visitor to guess how much they must have enjoyed these visits, for even now the village is peaceful and relatively unspoiled. The almshouse courtyard (bright with summer flowers in August 1996) (fig.5) still looks as it does in our archival photograph of the Regius Professor standing there with arms akimbo (fig.3). My wish to carry off a trophy in the shape of a Ewelme tea-towel (an unassuming concession by the locals to the tourist trade) took me



Fig.4. Setting out from Norham Gardens (from the Osler Library's photographic archive).

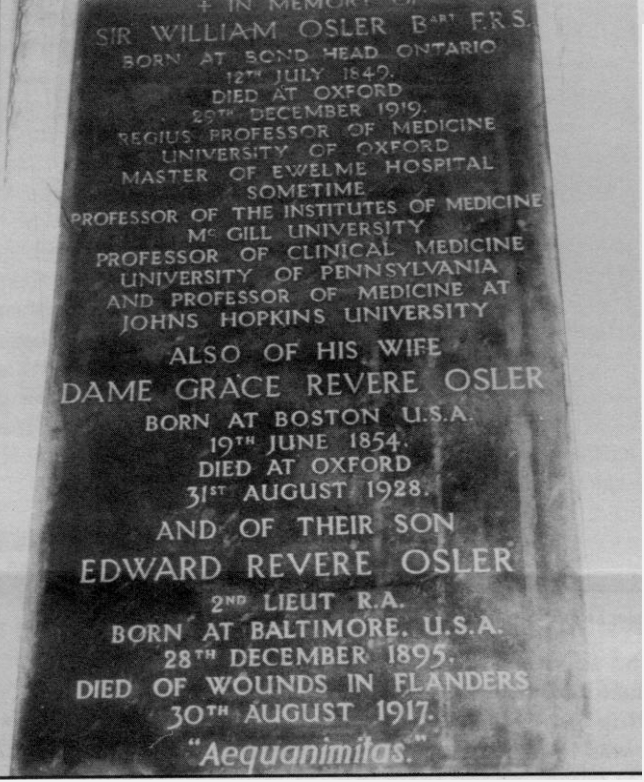


Fig. 6. Plaque in the church at Ewelme. Photographed (with difficulty) by G.M.E. White in 1996

A recent award by the Hannah Institute for the History of Medicine within the framework of its Archives/Museum Studies Medical History Internship Program has enabled us to embark on a long-awaited project. Caroline Cholette, who has recently received her Certificat en Archivistique from the Université de Montréal, is spending 4 months at the Library, creating a computerized inventory of the Cushing papers for Osler's Oxford period (1905-1919). Several C.V.s were submitted, and Caroline was chosen by the Hannah Institute.

Readers will recall Raghu Venugopal's lively article in the June 1996 issue of the Newsletter, in which he describes his own work on and discoveries in the Cushing files.

The materials Harvey Cushing assembled when writing his biography *The Life of Sir William Osler*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1925, subsequently deposited here, have never been "fully indexed. Caroline's project will provide us with ready access to the material covering that important fifteen-year period in Oxford.

into one of the little almshouse apartments, which was as fresh as paint. Inside the church the so" of the present incumbent told me their family is related to the South African branch of the Osler family Swallows were busy around a nest in the church porch. Jerome K. Jerome (author of *Three Men in a Boat*) is buried in the little churchyard. Even the watercress beds mentioned by Cushing were still there in the village, although advertised as being For Sale – victims, it seems, of the strict European Community regulations now governing production..

1. p.4, note 2,
2. p.57.
3. p.6.
4. p.56.
5. p.134.

To round off this late-twentieth-century traveller's tale, I mention in passing that a" excellent tea is to be found at Dorchester Abbey, not far from Ewelme and itself deserving of a visit.

June Schachter,
History of Medicine Librarian

References:

All from Harvey Cushing's *Life of Sir William Osler*. Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1925, v.2:



fig. 5. The almshouse courtyard in 1996. Photographed by G.M.E. White.

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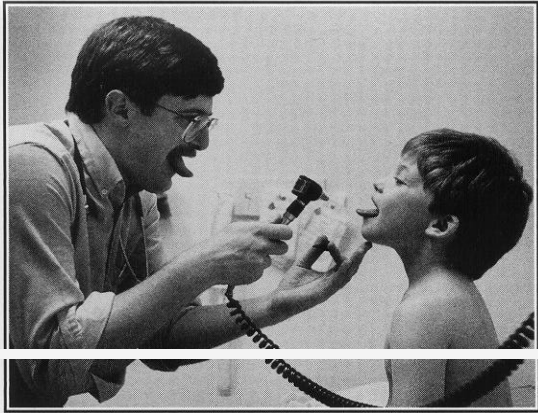
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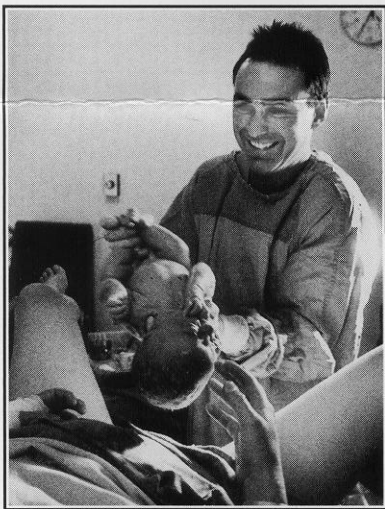
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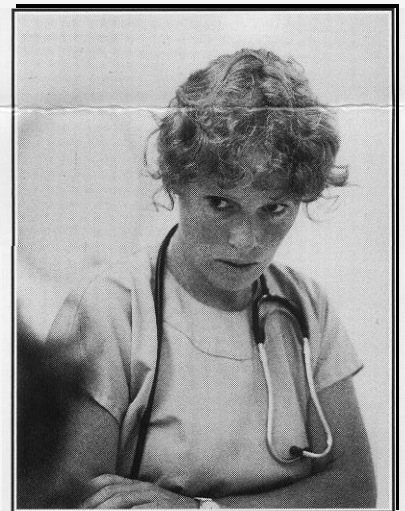
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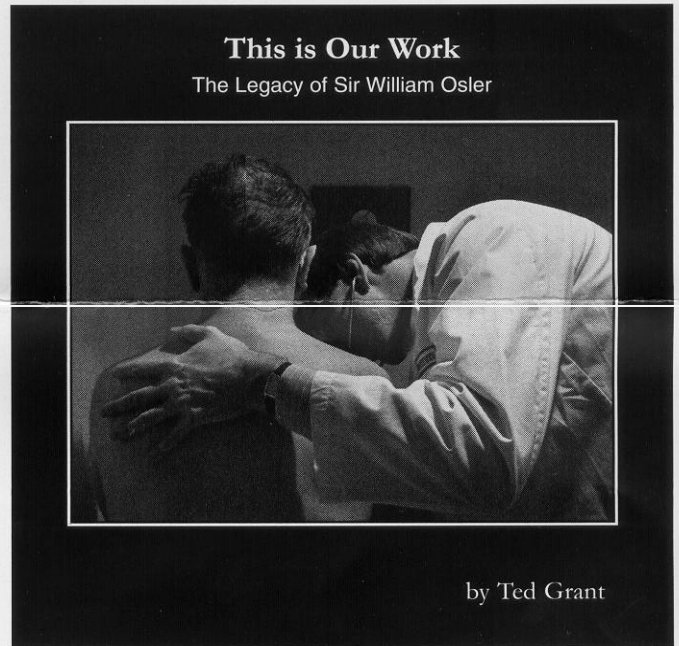
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