

BERWICK DISPENSARY AND INFIRMARY

1814-1898

Dr. G. A. C. Binnie

The origin of Berwick Infirmary is to be found in a petition to the mayor of Berwick which was published in the "British Gazette and Berwick Advertiser" of December 11th 1813, signed by 22 gentlemen of the Town and reading:

9.12.1813

We the undersigned being deeply impressed with gratitude to Almighty God for the signal downfall of the great enemy to humanity and thinking that the most proper way to evince that gratitude is by doing good to our fellow creatures do request you would as early as possible have the goodness to call a general meeting of the inhabitants of this Town and the vicinity to consider of the propriety of commencing a subscription for the support of a Public Dispensary for distributing medicines and medical advice gratuitously to the industrious poor of this town and vicinity.

D. Stow,
Rev. J. Barnes,
Capt. M Forster,
* R. Stevenson,
George Hogarth,
William Grieve,
W. Bailey,
James Bell,

Wm. Pattison,
* A. Kellock, M.D.,
Jas. R. Forster,
W. Jeffreys,
Wm. Barry,
John Clay,
* W. Robertson, M.D.,

R. Romer,
* John Hall M.D.
T. R. Batson,
* Ralph Patterson,
* Thos. Gilchrist,
James Cockburn,
Thos. Gilchrist,

*First medical attendants at Berwick Dispensary.

No time was wasted and in the newspaper's issue of December 18th the following advertisement was published:

Convened by Mr Mayor in consequence of a requisition for that purpose signed by several respectable persons to consider of the propriety of commencing a subscription for the support of a Public Dispensary for distributing medicines and medical advice gratuitously to the industrious poor of this town and vicinity.

Committee

Mr Mayor.
D. Stow.
Wm. Pattison.
R. Romer.
Rev. J. Barnes.
A. Kellock. M.D.,

John Hall, M.D.
Capt. M. Forster.
Jas. Forster.
T. R. Batson.
Messrs Graham, R. Stevenson,
Scott & McDougle.

To report to a meeting on 23.12.1813 at the Kings Arms.

Signed
G. F. Ord.
Mayor. At Noon.

Even less time was wasted in convening the first committee for managing the affairs of Berwick Dispensary which was held later on December 18th at the Kings Arms Inn (sic) with R. Romer, as Chairman and T. R. Batson of the Tweed Bank as Treasurer with the rest of the committee composed of the 2 Forsters and the medical

attendants with the exception of Dr Robertson. Dr. R. Stevenson was elected secretary and his first duty was to compose the following letter to the Duke of Northumberland:

My Lord Duke,

There has been instituted here by public subscription a Dispensary for the relief of the sick poor of this town and neighbourhood to the extent of 12 miles in to the country in every direction. I beg leave, by direction of a general meeting of subscribers, to acquaint your Grace of the measure and as they are fully assured of your Grace's philanthropic and benevolent disposition and your wish to promote every institution that may be beneficial to society they hope your Grace will excuse the liberty they have taken in nominating you Patron of the charity believing that under the protection of the Duke of Northumberland the Institution must have every instrument of success.

I am also directed by the meeting to take this opportunity of congratulating your Grace on the coming of age of Lord Algernon Percy.

I have the honour to be, My Lord,
Your Grace's most obedient servant,
Signed
R. Stevenson, secretary.

The letter of acceptance of the position of Patron included a donation of £20.

Copies of a similar letter were sent to 48 potential presidents and vice presidents. The four invited Presidents (Earl Grey, the Earl of Glasgow, and the Borough's Members of Parliament A. Allan and H.H. St Paul) had all accepted by January 11th (with donations of 10 guineas) as had 12 Vice Presidents.

At a further meeting on December 30th, the secretary and Mr John Dickson were asked to examine a house belonging to Mr Chartres and occupied by a Mrs Sands. They were empowered to negotiate a rental and compensation for the remainder of Mrs Sands' tenancy. By January 11th it was reported to the Committee that an annual rental of £18.00 had been agreed and that Mrs Sands had accepted £5.00 to quit the premises, so enabling an advertisement to be inserted in the local papers stating that the Dispensary would be opened to the public for the first time at noon on Sunday March 6th 1814. The first Dispensary house was described as being situated in a "large yard off Church Street; opposite the end of Shaw's Lane" (now Chapel Street): this is shown on John Wood's 1822 map of Berwick and appears to occupy the whole of what is now 46 A, B and C Church Street. These were the dispensary premises from 1814 to 1826 and they were used for out patients only, until on May 16th 1815 the medical attendants made a request for one of the rooms to be furnished for operations and for lodgings for patients operated

upon. The dispensary depended on the instruments of its surgeons until 1834 when a set of surgical instruments including cupping instruments was acquired for £32 - 5 - 6.

Quay Walls

Even as early as 1819 the committee was requesting the grant of a piece of land from the Board of Ordnance to build a new dispensary, and interest was also expressed in a site in Palace Green in 1822. However, at a special meeting of the committee on 31.8.1826, Mr Dickson was authorised to bid that afternoon for the purchase of the house in the Quay Walls and Palace Street formerly occupied by Col. Hall. A bid of £800 secured a permanent home for the dispensary; £300 of the purchase price was borrowed from Dr A. Cahill and by April 1828 the dispensary was overdrawn to the tune of £356 - 1 - 1. This was reduced a year later by borrowing £200 on the basis of an annuity for £8 - 13 - 2 paid 6 monthly for June Graham then aged 42; the last record of payment of an annuity was 1855, when she would have been 67. These premises, which are now the Customs House at 18, Quay Walls, were used by the Charity until sold in 1873 and must have been quite modern, for when a subcommittee reported on the buildings in 1827 it was noted to have a water closet.

The principal work of the charity was for patients attending the consulting sessions, living accommodation being used largely by surgical patients. It was hoped that the dispenser would live in the dispensary, and rooms were set aside for his use, and a nurse was engaged but she only resided in the house when patients were actually in the wards, when her sleeping apartment was the room set apart for operations. The 1827 subcommittee recommended that the previous nurse be offered £5.00 on quitting the premises in Church Street, this being considered ample compensation for any inconvenience that she might have sustained as a consequence of losing her job! She was allowed to occupy the old Dispensary House for a further week which it was hoped would afford her sufficient time to secure a residence for herself and her family somewhere else. If this proved impossible the dispensary was prepared to pay her rent until the following Lammas tide but with a gratuity of only £1 - 1 - 0.: this was put to the nurse but not surprisingly she was not prepared to say which she preferred and was given a week to make up her mind! The emphasis throughout much of the time in the Quay Walls Dispensary was very much on becoming an Infirmary, and when for example in 1834 a John Burn left £100 to the dispensary (£90 after deducting tax) the committee commented that they were trying "to make provision for rendering this institution to almost every probably needful extent an Infirmary" . . . this was in the context of seeking increased annual contributions from various Churches in the district. The same sort of plea was repeated in 1854 when it was said that the want of an Infirmary had long been felt.

Berwick Infirmary

Finally in 1870 the medical attendants proposed that the dispensary be sold and be replaced by a new dispensary and possibly a hospital. The Guardians of Berwick Poor Law wanted a fever hospital at this time and there were some abortive discussions between the two concerning the possibility of a joint venture. The old dispensary was sold in 1872 for £1,000 and a temporary dispensary in Eastern Lane took its place, while a site was secured in the Greenses for £159 - 12 - 6. A public meeting was held on 26th November 1872 to promote the completion of the new Dispensary and Infirmary at that time being erected to plans prepared by John Starforth of Edinburgh. One point made in favour of having an Infirmary was that "injured patients requiring operation had up until then to go by train to Edinburgh and then by cab to the Infirmary for isolation or infection or operation"; and it was further hoped that the new hospital would be available to "persons above the condition of paupers" as well as affording medical and surgical aid to the indigent. The estimate for building the new premises was stated to be £3,186 at the public meeting and that after allowing for investments and the price of the old dispensary, approximately £1,200 would still be needed. The meeting itself was a great success in that £770 was raised there and then; later Mrs Jerningham of Longridge (who had previously been Mrs Mather) donated £2,000 and the Mather Ward was named after her late husband, and £500 was given by Dr Kellock's daughter in memory of her father. By the time of the completion of the Infirmary in 1874 the total cost of the site, erection and furnishing had come to £3,320 - 13 - 3 which left £1 - 2 - 2 in hand over and above the costs. A nest egg of investments was left which continued to provided the Infirmary with an annual income towards its running costs for the future. As an aid to income by rentals and to possible expansion of facilities buildings were erected in Infirmary Square and completed in 1881.

In 1896 it was recorded that the medical attendants had complained about the coldness of the wards, and provision was made for modern grates to be put in the wards to improve the heating. To celebrate Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1897 central heating was installed and this is commemorated by a plaque in the entrance to the present Infirmary buildings. In 1898 it was moved by one of the medical attendants that enquiries should be made with a view to having the telephone installed in the new dispensary, perhaps a suitable way to enter the twentieth century.

Medical Staff

The medical staff of the dispensary in 1814 consisted of 3 physicians (Drs Kellock, Robertson and Hall) and 3 surgeons (Messrs Patterson, Gilchrist and Stevenson) and although initially the physicians had the M.D. qualification, new members of the medical staff were always classified as surgeons and promoted to physicians when senior members were replaced. This anachronism was abolished in 1886 and until then a physician and a surgeon were in attendance in

rotation for 3 months at a time; they consulted at the dispensary for an hour twice weekly, attended to in-patients and emergencies, and visited "country" or ill cases on request. The services of the medical gentlemen were given gratuitously apart from a mileage payment of 1/6 per mile for patients residing outside "Berwick, Castlegate, Tweedmouth and Spittal" (Spittal was omitted after 1830), and the last record of payment for medical attendance was in 1894. In 1850 Thomas Swinney of Spittal had 26 visits and the medical attendants were asked to enquire about this, and similarly in 1852 when the medical attendants were allowed to recommend as many patients as they wished, it was cannily added that mileage patients were to be agreed to by the rest of the medical gentlemen.

The hours of attendance of the medical gentlemen were initially from 12.30 to 2.30 on Sundays, but by 1830 this had become 11.0—12.0 on Wednesdays and Saturdays, and this was amended to 9.0—10.0 on Wednesdays and Saturdays. Patients could be visited at home but the recommendation had to be given to the doctor before 10 a.m. or otherwise the patient might not be seen until the next day: a similar exhortation is to be found on N.H.S. medical cards in 1982, and presumably it was as ineffective then as now. Compliance was also as likely with the regulation that the medical attendants were to keep full notes.

When the surgeons in attendance thought that a "capital" operation might be necessary (amended to "difficult or important" in 1828), a consultation of all the medical staff had to be called and a majority had to agree to the propriety of the operation: this regulation was still in force in 1896.

Initially candidates to the medical staff had to be "regularly educated having attended some public hospital lectures on Anatomy and Surgery", but by 1828 this had been modified to be testimonials of having passed an examination before one of the Colleges of Surgeons; with the passing of the Medical Act of 1858 a position on the staff was open only to a registered medical practitioner. Before this date apprentices of the medical attendants could attend the dispensary free but other medical students had to pay 3 guineas annually. The only student who appears to have taken advantage of the latter was Robert Fluker in 1833, who was a member of the medical staff from 1849 to 1855; but there were several apprentices, including Dr John Paxton of Norham and Dr William Lilley apprenticed to Dr A. Cahill and Dr George Johnston respectively.

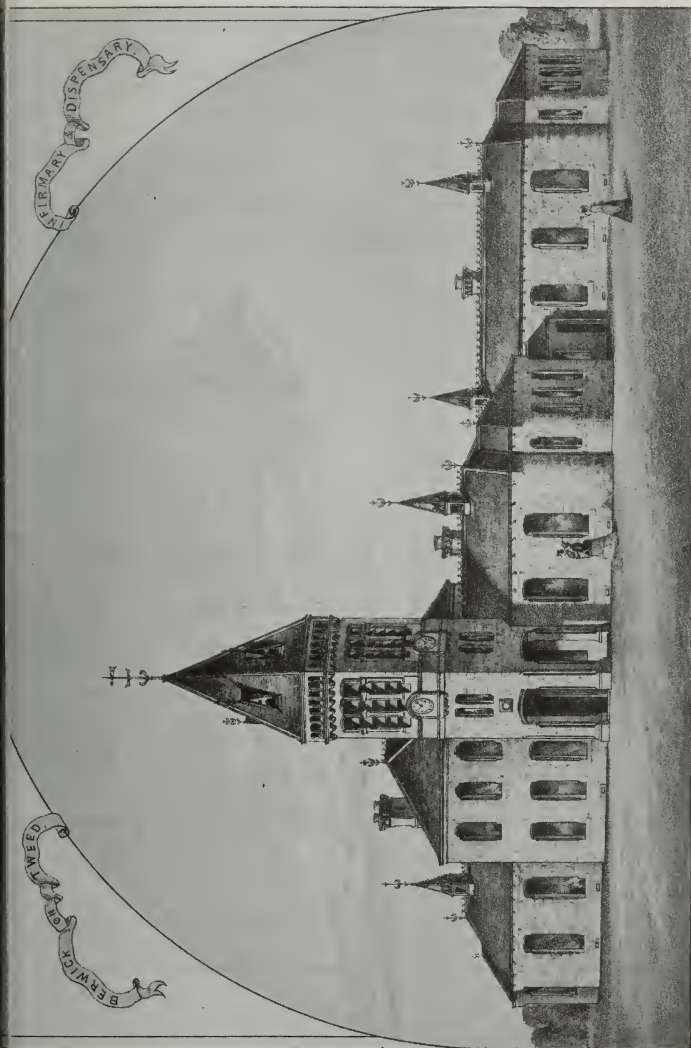
The restriction of the size of the medical staff to 6 members was applied very rigidly, as Dr George Johnston found out in March 1854 when the committee received a letter from him requesting permission to depute Dr Philip W. Maclagan to attend the dispensary at such times as it might be inconvenient or impossible for him to give personal attention. Dr Johnston's application was turned down as it was thought it might prove an unfortunate precedent. The secretary obviously found the letter very hard to write and it ended "I am not much gratified at being the necessary medium of communicating to you this resolution . . . but believe me, my dear sir, very sincerely and

affectionately yours, R. Home, Secretary". This seemed a harsh decision as Dr Johnston was already unwell and died in July 1855, when the successor to his practice and his position at the dispensary was his son-in-law the same Dr Maclagan.

The dispensary was asked by the medical attendants in 1840 for aid to form a medical library and anatomical museum and an estimate of £2 for the initial cost was made by the doctors. In fact they were granted £3 plus the expense of glass and spirits for pickling specimens, and an annual payment of £4 or £5 was made to the medical library for many years: the 1982 Berwick Infirmary still has a small medical library which is occasionally strengthened by a small grant from the treasurer. Unfortunately the whereabouts of the first library and museum specimens is unknown.

In 1841, Dr Alexander Kellock last survivor of the original medical attendants was made an honorary physician of the Infirmary on his retirement, and this privilege (perhaps made because they survived to retirement) was later granted to Dr Samuel Edgar, Dr Robert Fluker and Dr Frank Cahill, whose family made a gift of £60 to the Infirmary on his death in 1893. Dr Kellock's connection with the Infirmary was continued by his daughter Mrs Brown Grieve who gave £500 in 1875 to the new Infirmary, and the Kellock Ward commemorated his memory; this was probably between Maclagan and Weddell Wards and has now been made into various offices in the present Infirmary, the Verandah Ward having been added in 1911. When Dr P.W. Maclagan died in 1892 the fourth ward in the new Infirmary was named after him. A final medical vignette was recorded on 2nd April 1865 when it was stated that Dr Alexander Kirkwood had died "from fever taken while attending one of the patients of the Dispensary".

While the medical attendants were usually the recipients of thanks and praise from the committee, Dr Wm. Dunbar How M.D. caused the committee much difficulty. On March 1831 a complaint had been made to the dispensary concerning the neglect of Robert Wilson who had had a fractured thigh on 16th February, and had been duly attended by Dr George Johnston until the end of his spell of duty on 28th February. Dr How had visited only once in the succeeding 10 days and this was the cause of the complaint. A second complaint was made in October of the same year regarding Edward Dover of Bowsden who had a "dislocation of the tibia". Dr How was said to have been confined to the house by indisposition but that his own apprentice had visited Dover regularly and brought back reports. However, the patient had been constrained to call in Mr Campbell of Wooler and the committee's finding was of culpable neglect. Dr Johnston had to apologise to the committee for misleading them on this incident but it would seem that Dr How was the guilty party; and a minute in the following year recorded that he had refused a deduction from the bill. The dispensary committee was probably relieved at his departure when he did a moonlight flit with no notice or warning to the dispensary or to his brother and sister who lived in the town.



W. Parkes & Brothers, Litho. Edin.

J. Sturges, del.

MEDICAL ATTENDANTS
BERWICK DISPENSARY AND INFIRMARY
1814—1898

John Hall	1814-1826	Frank Cahill	1846-1887
Wm. Robertson	1814-1831	Robert Fluker	1849-1885
Alex. Kellock	1814-1841	Alex. Kirkwood	1849-1865
Robert Stevenson	1814-1818	James Wilson	1851-1864
Ralph Patterson	1814-1815	Philip Maclagan	1856-1892
Thos. Gilchrist	1814-1815	A. Morrison	1858-1862
J. T. Todd	1815-1816	Colville Brown	1862-1882
Alex. Cahill	1815-1851	Thos. Davidson	1865-1878
W. Hood	1816-1818	F. Lockwood Logan	1865-1867
George Johnston	1818-1855	W. Allan Jamieson	1867-1876
John Edgar	1818-1833	Thomas Fraser	1876
Wm. Dunbar How	1825-1834	Daniel Hegarty	1878
John Manners	1831-1851	James Mackay	1882-1888
Andrew Henderson	1834-1846	Chas. G. Maclagan	1884
Charles Trotter	1834-1836	C. L. Fraser	1886
Samuel Edgar	1836-1858	Berty Mackay	1888
Wm. Lilley	1841-1849	Wm. Y. Grant	1896

Dental Surgeons

In 1870 Mr Arthur Baxter Visick offered his services as dentist to the charity and this proved so popular that it was quickly made available to subjects of the charity in the dentist's consulting rooms, rather than in the dispensary.

Dentist to Berwick Dispensary and Infirmary

Mr Arthur Baxter Visick	1870-1875
Mr John Wells	1876-1889
Mr Robert Riddle	1889
Mr Richard J. Atkinson	1889

Dispenser

Mr Johnson How was appointed dispenser (sic) on 30.12.1813 at an "Annual salary of £15.00 and he was allowed £5.00 more at the end of the year if the funds of the charity permitted". He was expected to prepare prescriptions and bleed patients, and to record whether patients were cured, relieved, died or dismissed for irregularity; he was also in charge of the stomach pump and "the apparatus for the recovery of persons apparently drowned within a proper distance of Berwick": by the time a message had reached the dispenser, even at Quay Walls, and then been transmitted to "one of the medical gentlemen to use every means for his recovery", the outcome of the case of drowning would have been certainly resolved by the passage of time rather than by any medical endeavours. The purchase of a slipper bath in October 1814 seemed wise in a bathless world, but the value of a good (or bad) electrifying machine sounds doubtful. The day to day running of the institution was largely in the dispenser's hands; recommended patients brought to him their forms signed by a subscriber, and he then initiated medical contracts. He lived on the premises in Church Street, and then at Quay Walls until 1829, when he was allowed to move out because he complained that the premises "were damp because of the want of fires". The committee contemplated dismissing him but compromised by appointing the first Matron, Mrs Christian Curry, who acted as a housekeeper and nursed "indoor" patients. Johnson How retired on the grounds of age in 1845 and this coincided with the death of Mrs Curry, whose daughter took charge until a successor was appointed. In December 1844 the following advertisement was inserted in the North British Advertiser, the Edinburgh Courant, the Newcastle Courant and the Glasgow Advertiser.

"Wanted for the Berwick Dispensary a man and his wife to act in the capacity as Dispenser and Matron. Salary will be £25.00 per year with apartments in the house and coal and candle. The Matron will be allowed 6d a day additional when patients not exceeding 2 shall be in the wards and 1/- when the numbers shall exceed that, but no other perquisites for baths or otherwise.

A retired serjeant who is married and who has been in the habit of attending a military hospital would be preferred. Application with the testimonials of the candidates and references to be sent to the secretary".

William Wright of Musselburgh (sic) and John Ross of Glasgow were short listed for the appointment and the former was requested to visit Duncan and Flockhart, and the latter Mr Green of Glasgow to be examined in their competency to make up prescriptions. Mr Wright was asked for interview with his wife and he was ordered to

attend the dispensary for a few weeks on probation. This appointment was confirmed on 14th March 1845.

However, a special committee meeting had to be called on 17.7.1846 in consequence of the death of Mr Wright the dispenser. Mr John Ross was invited to appear but not surprisingly he had already got another engagement and Serjeant Cooper residing in Castlegate was requested to attend with his wife until a permanent appointment was made. The post of dispenser was re-advertised and Serjeant James Sullivan late of the 97th Hussars and Librarian at Fort Pitt, Chatham was offered the job providing he could get a certificate from someone in Chatham to say he could make up medical prescriptions correctly, and that he was examined by the medical attendants. He was told he would have an opportunity of doing the journey to Berwick with great ease and comfort by the "Manchester Steamer" belonging to Berwick which would sail from Dublin steam wharf, London for Berwick on Saturday 14th November. Mrs Wright the widow of the previous dispenser was then told to be prepared to leave the house which she should quit with her furniture on or before the following Thursday morning, and that she would be given up to 2 guineas to cover her expenses for her return to Musselburgh.

Mr Sullivan produced his own problems for the dispensary, for it was alleged at a committee meeting on 24.2. 1851 that at the request of Elizabeth Duff he had written to 3 different tradesmen of the town signing with the name of Andrew Duff, the woman's father, requiring the tradesmen to furnish the woman with goods to be placed to Andrew Duff's account; as a result Sullivan handed in his resignation.

Matron and Nursing Staff

It was recommended by the medical gentlemen on 3rd February 1851 that a Matron be in charge of the house instead of a dispenser and that prescriptions be sent to druggists to be made up. The advertisement read:

"Wanted for the Berwick Dispensary a Matron. Her duty will be to take care of the house and bath, to nurse the patients when any are in the house; to summon the committee, to attend to the orders of the medical officers. The salary will be £10.00 with coals, candles and gas; 3d for paid baths, 6d per day for nursing patients when not more than 2 are in the house and 1/- when the number exceeds 2".

(Gas had been installed in late 1844).

Mrs Elizabeth Aird was appointed Matron on 8.3.1851 and the supply of medicines transferred to the druggists in the town but 5 years later the cost of medicines at the dispensary averaged out at 6/- per head, compared with 3/5 at Jedburgh, 1/6 at Coldstream, and 6d at Sandgate. As a result the supply of drugs (except for leeches and trusses) was put out to tender with a reduction of more than half in the cost.

This effectively transferred the day to day management of the dispensary to the Matron.

Matrons of Berwick Dispensary and Infirmary

Mrs Christian Curry	1829-1844
Mrs Wright	1845-1846
Mrs Odillia Sullivan	1846-1851
Mrs Elizabeth Aird	1851-1862
Mrs June Crow	1862-1875
Mrs Ann Wright	1875-1878
Miss Betsy Ross	1878-1889
Miss Ritchie	1889-1894
Miss Grange	1894-1905
Miss Dunn (Mrs Gray)	1905-1909
Miss Kinross	1909-1920
Miss Forsyth	1920-1950

Miss Grange was the first Matron mentioned as having been formally trained, having spent three years at Edinburgh Royal Infirmary, and then coming to Berwick from Glasgow Victoria Infirmary.

In the Spring of 1892 a District Nursing Association was inaugurated in Berwick and a Queen's Nurse, Miss Law, attended Infirmary out patients to such good effect that it was proposed that a nurse would be appointed who would be both a Queen's Nurse and a second hospital nurse with the Infirmary Matron. In the same year the Matron was granted two weeks holiday and by 1896 her salary was £40, with disbursement of £29 - 8 - 1 to nurses who were presumably untrained, as 17/- was spent for nurses, fees for ambulance classes. Reference was also made to nurses as early as the time of the move to Quay Walls, but these would also be untrained.

Domestic Staff

The first mention of domestic servants is a reference at a committee meeting on 25.2.1814 when it was resolved that Elizabeth Carr "be allowed to have the two rooms on the ground floor rent and taxes free on the consideration that she put on the fires in the Committee, Waiting and Shop rooms, and keep them and the furniture clean, carry water and other menial offices for the committee and medical gentlemen of the dispensary, which she agreed to do". A year later the committee ordered that the secretary give a gratuity of 1 guinea to the housekeeper for her attention. In 1820 Robert Clarke and his wife were appointed, and by 1896 £23 - 10 - 0 was being spent annually for servant's wages, but no others were named.

Public Baths

From 1820 until 1871 the dispensary buildings supplied a public bath service, as it was believed that bathing was medically helpful. In August 1829 the proposal was first mooted, and estimates were obtained for £50 for a marble bath, and £40 for a "tyled" bath. It was decided to install a marble bath and a stone bath and on 22nd October 1829 an advert in the Berwick Advertiser read:

"The hot and cold baths in the Berwick Dispensary House are now completed. There is a marble bath and dressing room exclusively for the use of ladies and gentlemen.

	<i>Marble Bath</i>	<i>Stone Bath</i>
Sea water hot	2/6	1/6
Sea water cold	2/-	1/-
Fresh water hot	2/-	1/6
Fresh water cold	1/6	1/-

No gratuity to be paid to the attendant".

The matron was allowed 6d for each marble bath and 3d for each stone bath for preparing the bath and washing the linen etc, but had to render her services gratuitously when used for patients, on which occasions the stone bath alone was used. In 1831 it was agreed to allow each medical attendant to have the use of the bath free except for a payment of 6d to the Matron, with an extra 6d if a sea water bath was taken, to defray the cost of carrying the water.

An overdraft of £70 from the Tweed Bank was sanctioned to pay for the baths, and advertisements for the baths and rates of charges were printed for the use of the principal inn keepers, "permitting copies to be neatly framed to hang in their public rooms" . . . the frames cost 18/-. In 1830 the treasurer purchased a barrel on wheels for conveying sea water for the baths from the sea behind the pier at Meadow Haven, and in 1836 a pipe was laid from the dispensary on the Quay Walls into the river 9 feet below the surface at medium tides; this cost £45 - 11 - 6, and in addition a shower was constructed. In 1837 it was "ordered that a rope be suspended over the bath for the purpose of enabling the party to raise himself". Ten years later the annual report stated that the baths were a healthful luxury and the price was lowered . . . although the use remained about the same. The baths provided a considerable income and something like 10% of the annual running costs of the dispensary were defrayed by the receipts from the baths. The last recorded income from the bath account was in 1871 when the dispensary on the Quay Walls closed down.

Honorary Secretaries

As with any voluntary organisation the most vital person is the honorary secretary and the first was Dr Robert Stevenson (father of Joseph Stevenson, historian and archivist), and it could well be that he was the driving force behind the foundation of the dispensary. When he died in 1818 his place as secretary was taken by Dr Alexander Cahill, who was replaced in 1829 by Thomas Gilchrist a local solicitor; if the former's minutes are typically medically illegible they are brief, while those of the latter are in legal copperplate and very verbose. James C. Weddell became secretary in 1859 and held the position during the formative period of the new Infirmary until he died in 1882. He was joined as secretary by his son Robert in 1881, and as a Robert Weddell joined the committee in 1821, it could be that three generations of Weddells served the Infirmary. Weddell

Ward which is the Casualty ward in today's Berwick Infirmary was so named in recognition of J. C. Weddell's work for the institution.

Secretaries of Berwick Dispensary and Infirmary

Dr Robert Stevenson	1814-1818
Dr Alexander Cahill	1818-1829
Thomas Gilchrist	1829-1846
Robert Home	1846-1859
James C. Weddell	1859-1882
Robert Weddell	1881

Honorary Treasurers

The position of treasurer in voluntary organisations is almost as important as that of secretary and the first treasurer was R. Batson of the Tweed Bank who retired in 1818; it was probably his influence which was responsible for the dispensary's involvement in financial loss when the Tweed Bank failed in 1842, the year in which the dispensary lost further funds through the dishonesty of the collector of subscriptions. Batson was succeeded by James Forster who handed over in 1821 to Mr John M. Dickson who held the post for 26 years. He was a faithful friend of the dispensary and there is pathos in one entry in the committee minute book which reads "January 2nd 1834. This was the stated day for meeting but there was present only John M. Dickson (signed)."

Treasurers of Berwick Dispensary and Infirmary

Thomas Batson	1814-1818
James Forster	1818-1821
John M. Dickson	1821-1847
G. K. Nicolson	1847-1854
James Marshall	1854-1861
William Alder	1861

Finance

The financial state of the dispensary and the new Infirmary was usually healthy presumably largely due to the efforts of the treasurers. The Presidents and Vice Presidents were expected to give donations which were usually a once in a lifetime affair but subscribers gave donations ranging from 5/- to £10 annually collected by a collector. These formed a substantial basic income for the dispensary and about $\frac{1}{3}$ of the expenditure for many years came from this source. Every subscriber who subscribed one guinea had the privilege of recommending 2 patients annually (later 1 recommendation for each 5/- donated). A further source of income which proved surprisingly fickle was the various Churches in the district; where a clergyman "preached a sermon for the charity" he was able to recommend patients in proportion to the amount of the collection.

On January 12th 1814 a letter was written by the secretary to the clergymen of Berwick reading:

“The Reverend Sir,

I am directed by the committee for the Berwick Dispensary to send you a copy of the rules and regulations of the charity and to request your attention to the 14 articles of section first.

The intention of the institution being purely charitable the committee have little doubt of receiving the assistance of all the ministers of that Saviour whose life upon earth was a scene of benevolence and goodness.

I shall feel myself much obliged to you in being able to report your answer to the committee.

I am reverend sir, your most obedient servant,
R. Stevenson, secretary”.

At a committee meeting on 13th October later that year it was recorded that the Minister of Horndean and 2 Berwick clergymen had promised to preach on the 1st Sunday in November, and it was ordered that the secretary advertise that these sermons were to be preached.

In April 1829 the secretary was ordered to write to the Minister of Coldingham pointing out the expense which had been occasioned to the institution by the case of an individual from his parish and requested that the clergyman preach a sermon and have a collection made in his Church in aid of the dispensary funds. The only consistent Church income seemed to come from Berwick Parish Church, although this got less with the passage of time, and repeatedly the treasurer and the secretary appeared to be contacting the clergymen of the district in general seeking contributions. In 1834 for example the committee resolved “to confer with the other reverend gentlemen who have expressed hesitation in exciting themselves to aid this charity in the way proposed” i.e. by having collections in aid of it. After the new Infirmary was built the Infirmary committee designated a Sunday as Hospital Sunday, usually in May, and this helped to produce a regular income from the collections, although it did appear to be replaced latterly by Hospital Saturday, which was the day when the lady collectors made street collections in aid of the funds.

A further source of income grew from the careful work of the treasurers and committee from renting out parts of the dispensary house to various bodies, and the income from these rents was often as much as 10 or 15% of the needs of the charity. The Savings Bank for example was an early partner with the dispensary in Chapel Street at £1 per annum, and later on Quay Walls. The treasurers' work was also to be seen in the constant income from investments, often $\frac{1}{3}$ of the income coming from this source. Annual donations of 3 guineas from a “well wisher to the institution” were recorded in the committee minutes for several years in the 1830's as coming from Mr Shafto Craster, and from 1881 until at least 1890 Mrs Short and

then Mr Short transmitted annually £2 or £3 "from the inhabitants of Burnmouth".

Other contributions came from strange sources. In 1815 the Rev. James Watkins of Norham remitted 3 guineas "the moiety from a penalty of two carters racing in the high road" . . . that must have been something like 3 weeks wages for the poor carters; and in 1828 Mr Mason of Pallinsburn Cottage gave 7/7½ his half of 2 fines imposed for "furiously driving". In 1863 there was a donation of 10/-, Mr Melrose's proportion of a fine paid by Bruce and Reed for trespass on his farm, and in 1867 a French fisherman paid 7/- for the use of the ward, and a Norwegian fisherman paid 18/-. In the same year a ship's carpenter paid a self imposed fine of £1, and in 1875 there was a similar fine of 5/- for assault. In 1833 when the Reserve 42nd Royal Highlanders left Berwick, the officers gave the dispensary a 6 oared gig, which was sold for £4 - 1 - 0, and the men gave £10 from the proceeds of their concert party.

The committee could show firmness when it thought money was owed to the dispensary. In 1826 Michael Hacking was recommended to the dispensary by Mr Heriott of Whitsome Hill. It seems that he was admitted to the dispensary ward without a proper recommendation and that requests for payment for the patient's diet and nursing were met with silence. The tolerance of the dispensary lasted for at least a year when the committee decided that the patient should be handed over to the guardians of the poor, and a Duns lawyer was consulted about the possibility of suing for the sum owed.

In June 1838 a donation of 12/- was offered subject to an advert appearing in the Berwick Advertiser stating that 12/- had been received from a "passenger in the Ardincaple, the sum allowed him by the General Shipping Company in consequence of the complaint preferred by him against Capt. Thomas Sample of that vessel for violation of the agreement and great incivility, and for which he was reprimanded by the company". This was one gift which was refused by the committee.

In the late 1840's the railway line was under construction and McKay and Scott of Belford, contractors for the Tweed Bridge, were asked to start a sick fund to help defray the expense of people injured in the works and in 1848 the secretary was directed to write to the railway directors for payment of £2, the cost involved in the "effusion of blood by the amputation of William Dickson's thigh rendered necessary by an accident on the railway near Reston, which destroyed 2 of the mattresses".

In the 1870's payment of "prescription pence" was introduced (there were 1554 in 1894) and at the same time increasing amounts were received for patients "aliment" . . . although this only averaged out at 8½d for each patient in 1894 . . . not too large a sum by any standard. Gifts in kind were also made: a load of firewood was usually donated every year, and there was an annual appeal for bedding and linen for the new Infirmary.

The minutes mention only one incident in which the management of the dispensary was criticised. This was in the Berwick Advertiser

and predictably it was accused of being self elected and self perpetuating with the inference that a considerable body of subscribers and supporters held this opinion. After a series of meetings and letters between the committee, and the Editor and Mr Robson the son of the newspaper proprietor, it turned out that only one subscriber was involved and his name was not revealed by the newspaper's representatives; but the newspaper would appear to have won the bargain, as the committee paid for space in the newspaper to have a reply published.

Patients

And what of the patients? They had to live within 12 miles of the dispensary and had to be recommended to the charity on the prescribed form by a subscriber, with a strict tally kept, so that subscribers did not recommend more patients than their donations covered. Ideally the charity was for the benefit of the "poor sick", but if a parish had none, then industrious sick persons could be referred in proportion to the amount contributed by a Church or Kirk. Domestic servants and indentured apprentices were excluded, unless their masters were too poor to obtain proper medical care for them, and anyone receiving parish relief was also excluded. However, by 1873, patients "who had met with a severe accident" could be admitted at once, but "cases manifestly incurable or women advanced in pregnancy" were not to be recommended or admitted to the hospital. In 1814 one group of patients could be brought to the dispensary without recommendation or fee . . . children of poor people to be inoculated with cowpox; but the parents had to deposit 2/6, returnable when the child was brought for the vaccination to be inspected.

Every patient was to be "as clean as possible both in person and clothes", there was to be "no noise or quarelling in the waiting room, but each was to wait his turn patiently". When called upon "they were to answer every question put to them, modestly and according to the truth; and were to take every medicine according to the direction and not waste or destroy them". "All boxes, phials and gallipots were to be returned clean as soon as they were emptied or the patient dismissed"; and they were to "behave soberly, attend regularly and conform to the rules on pain of dismissal". Finally, when cured they had to thank the subscriber who recommended them . . . or forfeit all claim on the charity in the future.

These rather repressive measures were not only applied to the patients; at the new Infirmary, visitors were allowed on two days each week between the hours of 2 and 4 p.m. . . . unless disapproved by the medical officers. Little else is recorded in the minutes about the patients themselves, only in so far as their illness caused the committee unusual expense.

An average of about 140 patients was treated annually for the first 40 years of the dispensary's existence and of these about 120 would be relieved or cured, about 20 died and 2 would be dismissed for irregularity.

From the mid 1850's and continuing afterwards the numbers of

patients increased to average 400 annually by the 1890's.

As might be expected administrative records say little about conditions which actually brought patients to the dispensary, but some items are worthy of record if only because they are no longer seen in Britain. One such which came in epidemics was cholera, referred to in March 1833 as "the malignant distemper" which had appeared in the last year . . . and which it was hoped would be prevented by better cleanliness and better food . . . comments well ahead of the time. However, an approach by the Berwick Board of Health to use the uppermost floor of the dispensary for cholera patients was turned down because it could not be isolated from the rest of the building. Some 20 years later cholera had once again become epidemic and the Board of Guardians asked if cholera patients could convalesce in the dispensary. A first request in 1849 was rejected but in 1854 permission was granted for one room to be used, but there were so many patients that other rooms were used, as well as the dispensary's bedding and blankets; worst of all a child named Cavanagh had been admitted with cholera and had died the day after. The Savings Bank who were tenants in the dispensary protested about the injury to their interests, but probably the passage of time and the epidemic resolved the problem.

Now that smallpox has been eradicated world wide, it is worthy of record that at the public meeting held on 26.11.1872 to launch the appeal for the new Infirmary, it was remarked that "there had been 100 cases of smallpox in Castlegate a few months ago": It is almost as surprising to learn that "it had been stated in the *Lancet* that among the 3 centres of scarlet fever in England, Berwick was one".

Other items show the wheel of fashion has gone full circle. A "patent water mattress" was purchased in 1867 for £14 - 0 - 7; water mattresses are becoming fashionable in some medical circles in 1982. No doubt there will be similar findings in any future examination of Berwick Infirmary.

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A TALE OF TWO "MOSESSES" (COLDINGHAM COMMON AND DRONE)

C. O. Badenoch

The Scottish and Northumbrian Borderland is well endowed with "mosses" of various kinds. A hundred or more have been identified to date and several are now considered to be of national importance for their vegetation communities as well as for their rare plants and insects.

Most of these Border wetland areas are situated in hollows of