

JAMES HULLEY OF FRODSHAM

Eighteenth century surgeon and apothecary

Sue Lorimer

On Monday 5th March, following the A.G.M. Ms Claire Moores spoke on *Physick, Pothercary and Chirurgeon*, explaining the origin of these professions.

In the late 18th century, James Hulley was the surgeon and apothecary in Frodsham and is listed in Cowdrey's Directory of Chester 1789. He was born in Macclesfield in 1752 and was an apothecary there when he married Betty Ridley in Prestbury in 1773. A son, Thomas Boydell Hulley was born in 1776 and their daughter Betty, born in Frodsham was christened at St Lawrence's on 28th December 1785.

Betty sometimes accompanied her father on his home visits and on one of these to tend James, son of John Pickering, corn dealer of Frodsham Bridge, she met his youngest brother Peter. They were the same age and a friendship developed which turned affectionate. The pair became betrothed. Betty was keen to marry quickly, but Peter wished to get the approval of his brother William, on whom he was financially dependent before embarking on matrimony. William was away on business and unable to give his assent quickly, so Betty, hurt and offended, broke off their engagement and returned his gifts. Betty never married and lived with two spinster cousins in Liverpool. She died there in March 1876 aged 90.

James Hulley died in 1799 after a long illness. An obituary in the Chester Chronicle listed his virtues: *his attachments to his friends were uniform and sincere: to his children he was a tender and affectionate parent; to the poor he was humane and charitable; and of society he was an upright and valuable member.* James's son Thomas Boydell Hulley took over his father's practice adding "man-midwife" to his list of qualifications. He is listed in Pigot's Directory of 1828/9 and 1834. Perhaps he was too generous to the poor as he was declared bankrupt in 1812 and again in 1834. His partnership with the surgeon W. M. Lightfoot of Frodsham was dissolved in 1837 and Thomas moved to Lymm, where he died. He was buried in St Lawrence Frodsham on 20th August 1839.

Thomas had married Elizabeth Nevitt Bennett of Saughall in 1802. They had three sons and a daughter, all christened in Frodsham. Their youngest son, James Ridley Hulley b.1818 was a chemist and druggist. He died at his father's home in Lymm in 1837, aged 20. He too was buried in Frodsham.

Sarah, b.1810, never married and lived with her brother, Robert Churchman Hulley, b 1809, a surgeon in Manchester. Sarah died in Manchester in 1845 and was buried in Frodsham on 28th February 1845.

Robert trained as a doctor in Glasgow and set up his practice in Manchester. He was a well-known free-trade agitator who was declared bankrupt in 1851, blaming his insolvency on railway speculations, bad debts and ill health. In 1855 he was

taken to court by his nephew John, for failure to comply with the wishes of his aunt Sarah as stated in her will. The case was heard in Chancery but the outcome is not known. It is said that Robert died penniless in Australia in 1862.

The eldest son of Thomas and Elizabeth, John Nevitt Hulley, b 1803, trained at St. Thomas's and Guy's Hospital and was admitted to the Honorable Company of Apothecaries in August 1825 and the Royal College of Surgeons in May 1826. He practised in Liverpool where he married Elizabeth Speed in 1831. They had two children, John born in 1833 and Sarah born in 1834. John Nevitt died at his brother's home in Manchester in 1840, leaving his wife with two young children. Elizabeth ran a lodging house in Liverpool where her daughter, Sarah died in 1867 aged 32.

Their son, John, is probably the most well-known. He too died young at the age of 42 of emphysema and bronchitis but is remembered as being the professor of gymnastics and Gymnasiarch (an Athenian officer who superintended the gymnasia) of Liverpool. He was a strong advocate of gymnastics for health and well-being, lecturing on the subject to large audiences. He introduced Olympic Festivals to Liverpool in 1862 which ran for a number of years. In 1866 he was presented with an illuminated testimonial from the people of Llandudno for the work he had done in the town, for the welfare of the inhabitants and the enjoyment of thousands of visitors. He had established "Olympic Games", aquatic sports, water illuminations, torchlight fetes and amusements as well as improving the sea bathing facilities.

John was the originator and promotor of the first public gymnasium in Liverpool in Myrtle Street the foundation stone for which was laid in 1864. In 1869 he introduced the velocipede to Liverpool establishing a Velocipede Club. John was a co-founder, together with Dr William Penny Brooke of Much Wenlock, of the National Olympian Society, set up in 1865 to encourage participation in physical education through Olympian Festivals across Britain. This was the for-runner of the British Olympic Association founded in 1905. (Dr William Penny Brooke staged the first Wenlock Olympic Games in 1850.)

It is ironic that in a family of doctors so many of the family died young. They achieved so much that one wonders what more they could have done had they had better health.

More details of the life of John Hulley can be found on a number of on-line websites.