

The history of a medical practice established at St Elyns in 1779

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Medicine is both a social function and a social requirement. Society therefore puts the practitioner it elects as a professional in a paradoxical position, determinedly set apart in order to fulfil the mystical aspect of health cure and yet still expected to actively participate, even lead, in open community activities. Fortunately many doctors have been able to straddle the gap and be, as it were, both sacred and secular. The history of the long-established medical practice of which Dr Hugh-Jones was latterly a member, to the extent that it can be reconstructed over the last two hundred years, illustrates just this.

I shall attempt to show how each of the earlier doctors of my practice, which began in 1779, was involved with some of the issues of his time, not least in relation to the local changes which produced the modern town of St Helens. Coalmining in the district is recorded from the 1540s and the use of coal was accelerated with the cheaper transport brought about by the cutting of the first English canal in 1757. Furnace industries, producing glass, copperware and chemicals, within a century changed the small hamlet of St Elyns and its neighbouring rural townships into the prosperous but smoke-covered and chemical-ridden town of St Helens.¹ Professional medicine, in the person of the doctors, responded in several ways to the new industrialism.

The starting point of my research was the sight of a 'Doctors' Account Book' which began in the 1740s.² The manuscript volume was discovered in 1913, in an oak chest at the 'Bulls Head' inn at Parr, formerly an outlying township and now a constituent part of St Helens, among a large quantity of records of the local Overseers of the Poor. I listed the doctors noted in the book and their successors up to the present day and searched for public, practice, and private records on these men and on the society they operated in. The records of the past are inevitably fragmentary, often supplying little more than keyhole glimpses. Nevertheless, from these glimpses impressions can be obtained which are of some value in assessing past times. In this paper I offer impressions of my predecessors in the eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, in their role as social actors.

The first entry in the book precedes the first doctor of my practice by almost forty years but it testifies to the earlier practice of professional medicine within the district. Dated 1 April 1741, it relates to an apothecary, one Fran. Lancaster, who charged 2s for a box of pills. 1s 6d for a 'quieting lotion'. 1s for a bottle of drops, 8d for linament, and 2s 6d for an electuary (a medical confection containing as a base honey or syrup and forming a paste-like mass easily licked up). A later account from the same man in respect of five attendances on the wife of Robert Jackson indicates a charge of 4s 6d per visit, and the total bill for one year, paid nine months later, was £2 10s 8d. But these large sums probably included medicines.

William Fildes: rural physician (fl. c. 1780-1789)

My first doctor, Dr William Fildes, was described contemporaneously as a 'St Helens Apothecary of Hardshaw'.³ More is known about his topographical setting than about himself. In 1770 the village of Hardshaw had consisted of thirty houses. According to a map of 1785, Dr Fildes' house and 'Apothecary's Shop' in Chapel Lane, Hardshaw, was adjacent to St Elyns Chapel, where four townships of the future St Helens met - Parr, Eccleston, Windle and Hardshaw. Chapel Lane, part of the turnpike road from Liverpool to Ashton-in-Makerfield, was so named because three chapels were sited there. Apart from St Elyns, which presumably Dr Fildes, an Anglican, attended, there was an Independent chapel, built in 1710 by protesting Anglicans who left St Elyns, and a Friends' Meeting House, a building registered as a place of worship in 1689. In fact, the Quakers owned much of the area which became St Helens and the map of 1785 was made for them.⁴ This map shows Dr Fildes as a tenant of a considerable amount of land, three fields stretching southwards beyond the garden of his house to the Sankey Canal. The earliest coal-carrying canal in the country, completed in 1757 to fuel Liverpool and Warrington, the Sankey had been built by a local man who worshipped in the Independent chapel, which drew rent from the canal as well as from a coalmine on land it owned. Another coalmine, or at least a coal pit, located on the edge of one of Dr Fildes's fields, belonged to the Quakers and was operating with a Newcomen engine in the 1760s and probably 1770s.⁵ Thus religion, technology, industry and medicine were already beginning to overlap. Dr Fildes's son Richard, born at Hardshaw in 1780 (a daughter died at the age of three in 1785), witnessed in childhood a lively proto-industrial scene.⁶ Yet as late as 1805 a pencil drawing of the view from Dr Fildes's house and apothecary's shop across Chapel Lane shows what was still a village: terraced cottages, with steps leading up to front doors to avoid street sewerage, a pump on the lane outside the cottages and a stocks in the market square.⁷

In 1779, when Dr Fildes was described as 'a Surgeon of Blackrod' (a parish a dozen miles north of St Helens — did he have two practices or did he move to Hardshaw after 1779?), he took as an apprentice, at £80 a year for seven years, one William Pilkington aged fourteen, who on 3 August 3 1781 received payment of a bill on behalf of his master.⁸ Six years later, as Pilkington neared the completion of his apprenticeship, Fildes took another apprentice at £40 a year for five years.⁹ In 1780, when treating patients at Parr and therefore by now presumably resident at neighbouring Hardshaw, he charged 3d for 'Dressing Boys Hand', 9d for three 'Large Cathartic [laxative] Powders', and 2s for a large 'Antiseptic Electuary'. Did Dr Fildes keep bees in his garden, to produce honey for his electuary? Honey, charged at 1s per pound, appears several times in his 1783 and 1784 accounts. In 1787 he charged 10s 6d for a journey of two miles to Parr, to reduce a compound arm fracture and provide a bandage; 7s 6d for delivering Thomas Houghton's wife; and 1s 6d for a journey and extracting a tooth. A man 'hurt in a coal pit' received two ounces of embrocation costing 6d and eight powders costing 1s.¹⁰

In 1789 Dr Fildes died. His former apprentice, William Pilkington, took over the practice and the apothecary's shop in Chapel Lane, in partnership until 1813 with Dr John Walker, the two listing themselves as 'Surgeons and Man Midwives'. Pilkington is discussed at length below. Little is known about Walker, but c. 1800 he was also in partnership with Dr Joseph Churton. Churton was a surgeon practising at Mount Pleasant, Liverpool and from 1790 also at Chapel Lane, St Helens.¹¹ He had interests in Greenall's Hardshaw colliery and a Liverpool glassworks.¹² In 1808 Dr Churton's daughter married

the deceased Dr Filde's son, presumably indicating a degree of friendship among the local medical families. Between November 1799 and the end of 1806 'Mr Churton and other professional gentlemen of the town' vaccinated 3,000 subjects of all ages.¹³ In 1819 Churton went into partnership with a younger St Helens doctor, Joseph Casey, whose earlier experience was in the Royal Navy and who continued to practice until 1859.¹⁴

William Pilkington: doctor (fl. 1789-1813), trader, industrialist

Pilkington was brought up at Horwich, near Blackrod where Fildes appears to have practised at one time, although there is no positive evidence that Fildes knew the Pilkingtons before taking on William as an apprentice in 1779. William's grandfather had acquired the manor of Allerton, near Liverpool; William's father, Richard Pilkington, collected the rents, travelling from Horwich along the turnpike road and hence Chapel Lane; but it was William who finally installed the Pilkington dynasty at St Helens. After his apprenticeship he went to London to walk the wards, and in 1786 was certified as having for six months 'attended the Practice of Surgery' at St George's, one of the signatories to the certificate being John Hunter.¹⁵ Back in St Helens and from 1789 in practice with Dr Walker, on 27 March of that year he started a book of 'Recipes and Preparations selected from Various Authors', one of the first prescriptions - for venereal-type skin conditions - being taken from a treatise by Hunter.¹⁶ On the third page occurs 'Bardsey's Embrocation for the Rheumatism', which contained soap linament as a rubifacient base, then tinctures of cantharis (the Spanish blistering beetle) and of thebiaca (known as Opium Wine). It is doubtful whether opium would be an effective analgesic under these conditions, although the old practitioners did believe that soap linament improved opium's soothing effect. Jenner's 'golden rules' for vaccine inoculation were carefully copied into the 'Recipes and Preparations' book. An 1811 entry in the 'Doctors' Account Book' records 10s 6d as the charge for delivery and other attendance on the mother.¹⁷ In 1800 Pilkington and Walker became a teaching practice. Apprentices were charged between £20 a year for seven years and £80 a year for four years.¹⁸ However, as Pilkington's domestic expenses increased, he found sources of income outside medicine.

In 1794 William Pilkington married Ann Hatton and they had thirteen children, eight of whom survived childhood. In 1790, after he had reported to this father that 'money is verry scarce' and the latter had advised economy, he sacked his housekeeper and replaced her with his elder sister, Elizabeth (born 1761).¹⁹ But just before his own marriage, she married too, her husband being a local draper and weaver, Joseph Rylands. Their son, John, moved from weaving to factory textiles, and the fortune he then made was posthumously used by his widow to found the Rylands Library in Manchester. But William Pilkington himself was also a business man. In trading partnership as well as medical partnership with Dr Walker up to 1808, at Chapel Lane he sold wine and spirits, together with other goods. Since at the time doctors dispensed their own medicines and many contained alcohol, the combination of doctor and alcohol purveyor is less surprising. As early as 1790 Pilkington's father had acknowledged the receipt of 'Licquors from St Hellin'.²⁰ By 1813 the rising turnover of this business (which was producing an annual profit of around £5,000 — no doubt largely due to the rapid growth of local population) led Pilkington to retire from the medical partnership with Walker, in order to concentrate on the wine and spirits trade.²¹ In 1824 his second daughter Eleanor married Peter Greenall, owner of the Greenall brewery (today naughtily selling its product as

'Grünhalle'), and in 1826 he retired and went to live at nearby Windle Hall, which is still a Pilkington seat. His two sons, Richard born 1795 and William born 1800, had entered the glass trade as Pilkington Brothers, and Dr Pilkington spent his latter years up to his death in 1831 assisting them to expand their business - soon to become a major employer in St Helens and today world-famous.²²

Meanwhile the Pilkingtons served the community socially. In 1788 the Independent Chapel in Chapel Lane appealed for funds and received a donation of six guineas (the largest received) from Drs Pilkington and Walker.²³ The Pilkingtons appear to have been regular supporter of the chapel since William and both his sons were signatories to a loan bond in 1827.²⁴ A Sunday School was started in 1806 and Dr Pilkington became a teacher. From this he rose to be treasurer of the chapel and eventually president of its trustees.²⁵ On the secular side of community activities, he helped to found the 'St Helens Book Club' in 1813, an institution with a limited membership of twenty. At first the purchase of any 'novel or professional book' required a resolution at the annual meeting but later this provision was dropped in respect of any novel by Sir Walter Scott.²⁶

Thomas Gaskell: doctor (fl. 1813-1855), equestrian, property-owner

When Dr Pilkington retired from medical practice in 1813, Dr Thomas Gaskell, aged twenty, who had trained at Guy's Hospital under Sir Astley Cooper, took his place, at first in partnership with Dr Walker. According to Gaskell's great-great-grandson, Sir Richard Gaskell, the family connection with the district dated back to at least 1691, when Gaskells are found as the tenants (at later dates the owners) of Red House Farm at Burtonwood.²⁷ The Pilkington and Gaskell families were already acquaintances, and were supporters of the same chapel.²⁸ Gaskell joined the Pilkingtons as a signatory of the 1827 chapel bond - one ancestor of his had been a dissenting preacher - and he and his son eventually became trustees. Gaskell added prescriptions to the 'Recipes and Preparations' book, while the 'Doctors' Account Book' records that in 1814 he charged 1s for opening an abscess and the same for one visit and bleeding, and in 1819 2s 10d for a pectoral emulsion, 7s 6d for reducing a fracture of the collar bone, and 10s 6d for midwifery. These were his early days - he retired from full-time practice only in 1855 and then continued to help his son in the practice up to his death in 1868.

An unusual happening in the county during his career was in 1839, when six 'Medical Practitioners of St Helens, practicing in or adjacent to Church Street' [the renamed Chapel Lane], agreed on standard fees (or at least minimum charges). The six, none of whom were in professional partnership, were Drs Gaskell, Casey, Thomas Mercer, John Blundell, Will Garton and Henry Greenup.²⁹ Each town visit was to be charged 1s, with a mileage rate addition for out-of-town visits, and also a night visit rate (after 10 p.m. and before 6 a.m.). Charges were also fixed for 'Draughts, Mixtures, Bolus, Pills and Powders'.³⁰ Despite being of considerable bodily proportions, Dr Gaskell was passionately fond of equestrianism and conducted his rounds on horseback until into his fifties.³¹

He had three children, one of whom succeeded him in the practice, which was by then conducted from 69 and 71 Church Street, opposite Dr Fildes's house and apothecary's shop.³² He bought properties in the town, including one in nearby Market Street from which another son conducted a legal practice. He also bought two country

estates, one in Burtonwood where there were prospects of coal mining, and the Delves estate in Parr ('Delf is the name of a local seam of coal').³³ Gaskell was among the 123 subscribers in 1830 to the St Helens and Runcorn Gap Railway — and so were three other doctors, Pilkington, Churton and Casey, and the son of the late Dr Fildes.³⁴ As had been the case with his predecessor, Gaskell's medical practice generated prosperity for his descendants.

He was another original member of the 'St Helens Book Club', and succeeded the first president, Dr Mercer, in 1819. In 1828 the members presented Gaskell with a book as a token of their gratitude for his presidential services, somewhat prematurely, since he retained the post for another thirty years, up to his death.³⁵ The select members of the book club included four doctors - Casey, Pilkington, Gaskell, Mercer - as well as Richard Fildes, son of Dr Fildes.³⁶ In 1826 a more specialised book club was founded, the 'St Helens and Prescott Medical Book Club', in whose activities Gaskell also played a part.³⁷

Richard Gaskell: works doctor (fl. 1855-1891), soldier, benefactor

Thomas Gaskell's doctor son, Richard Allanson Gaskell, born 1828, was at first apprenticed to his father, then did medical training at Manchester Royal School of Medicine and Surgery, at Chetham's Hospital, Manchester, where he acted as clinical clerk, and finally at St Bartholomew's Hospital in London, as 'Dresser for a period of twelve months in the Surgical Wards'. He became M.R.C.S. England and took the licence of the Society of Apothecaries on 14 November 1849, but did not become a member of the Society. For some years he acted as assistant to his father, then gradually took over the practice, living at and working from 69 and 71 Church Street.

In the 'Recipes and Preparations' book is an 1876 memorandum from Dr Gaskell to Messers Baiss & Co, London:

Send me the following lozenges as quickly as possible

R Hydrochlorate of Morphine gr 100
 Ipecacuanha in a fine powder gr 150
 Extract of liquorice four ounces
 Tincture of Tolu two fluid ounces
 Refined sugar in powder 84 ounces
 Gum acacia powder four ounces³⁸

Lozenges of morphia and ipecacuanha were principally used to allay irritating coughs in chronic pectoral infections. Since coalmining was now a common St Helens employment it is likely that many of Gaskell's patients suffered in some degree from pneumoconiosis or other bronchial disorders. Despite a large staff at Church Street, this prescription was sent to London probably because special machines were required.³⁹ As 2,842 lozenges were to be prepared the dose of morphia per lozenge was small. Like his father, Dr Gaskell did his medical rounds on horseback for many years, before buying a coach and employing a coachman (whose diary survives).⁴⁰ In the early twentieth century he owned two steam cars, with monogrammed rugs.

When the Volunteers movement smarted at St Helens, Gaskell joined the 47th Lancashire Regiment and was appointed captain, eventually retiring in 1893 as Surgeon Lieutenant-Colonel, with the Volunteers officers' decoration.⁴¹ But his services as a group doctor were also in a more profitable direction. The Pilkington archives show that he was engaged to tend accident cases in the glass works and colliery, first on an individual basis

and then from 1868 on contract - at £90 in 1868, and a further £70 in 1876 for the extended business at sheet and plate glass works, provided that he 'see the cases himself and not leave so much to his assistant'. In 1884 Pilkingtons preferred Dr Knowles, the assistant, who was about to set up on his own, and considered terminating the existing arrangement with Gaskell and opening the contract to competition.⁴² In 1883 a group of workmen, the Blowers Sick Club, asked six doctors, including Gaskell and his then partner Dr Hay, to tender for doctoring the club members and their families, and it was reported of the doctors that '2d per head would be the scale they would charge'.⁴³ The management however complained that 'men came here in bad health to get work for the real sake of being doctored through the Club and in the Yard men got on two clubs (this and another) and really got more money than if they had been at their work. Much more sickness now than there was before the Club existed! and no doubt some rascality exists.' These glimpses of the provision of health care at the business founded by a doctor's sons indicate changing community relations for the medical profession but also new tensions. However, these slightly fraught business relations do not seem to have caused any break in the friendship between the Pilkingtons and the Gaskells.

Wider communal action, reflecting civic responsibility, is represented by a letter of 1874 sent by Gaskell and seven other local doctors to the Chairman of the municipal Health Committee.

As the health Committee is about to consider the report of the Medical Officer of Health, we desire to add our testimony to the hurtful consequences of three causes of disease which are peculiar to St Helens, in addition to the other causes usually existing in towns. They are:-

1st - The escape of sulphurated hydrogen from the brook and waste heaps.

2nd - The unnecessary escape of irritating vapours from works, particularly at night.

3rd - The enormous amount of coal smoke which in damp and foggy weather, falls in the town charged with acids.⁴⁴

The makers of this pollution were of course some of the principal employers in the town and the source of its prosperity: lead-smelting and chemical firms were specified, Pilkingtons was not. In 1882 Gaskell was made a J.P.. In local government he served for three terms as representative of Parr Ward, but he declined the mayoralty and retired from politics in 1896.⁴⁵

In 1878 a Temperance Society in connection with the Congregational Chapel was founded 'to succour the tempted and the fallen'. Gaskell was among six members of the Chapel who organised the establishment of Temperance Rooms, that is, cafes where tea, coffee, cocoa and mineral waters could be bought and newspapers read. This was a business venture with share-holders: since it proved profitable it must have met a local need. However in 1888 a letter to a local newspaper complained that 'the £700 amassed by the St Helens Cafe and Recreation Company' was not being used for the purported purpose of recreation, and the establishment of a Gymnasium was suggested. Moreover — 'A branch at Parr was closed because it did not pay. The Liverpool Road branch even now is spoken of as not paying and nothing said of any blessing it may be conferring on the poor around.'⁴⁶

In 1891 Gaskell retired from his St Helens practice and moved near to his sister's home at Huyton (near Liverpool), where he also had a lucrative practice and where he died in 1913 (leaving £107,825 18s 9d). But in 1900 he had presented the town of St Helens with 'Gaskell Park'.⁴⁷ This was the Delves estate that had been the home of his

parents from 1855. The turnpike road outside the gates had been used by the stage coaches from St Helens to Bolton — no doubt a century earlier Richard Pilkington would have paid his dues at the toll gates nearby — but by 1900 an electric tramway ran alongside the old road. The park was subsequently laid out as a large recreation ground, including a bowling green, with a walk round the entire length, and a narrow boundary plantation of trees. In the present year 1994, I attended the official opening of a residential home for the frail elderly, built overlooking the park.

Robert Jackson: works doctor (fl. 1891-1947), inventor

When Dr Gaskell retired in 1891 the practice was bought by his assistant, Dr Robert Jackson, a doctor with a strong personality, clear determined views, and an application of mind in advance of his day. Having graduated M.B.C.M. in Edinburgh in 1884, Jackson came to St Helens five years later. One year after arriving, he helped to found and was immediately appointed secretary of the 'St Helens Medico-Ethical Society' (subscriptions half a guinea).⁴⁸ Its members included four survivors of the earlier 'St Helens and Prescott Medical Book Club' which for twenty years had fallen into abeyance. The objects of the Society were (and are) 'to maintain in every way the honour, dignity, and interests of the profession and to promote good fellowship amongst its members'. Letters were written to doctors who offended against the ethical rules of the Society. Talks were given by members and by consultants from Liverpool on medical subjects and interesting cases. On 16 December 1892, when the subject was empyaemia - pus in a body cavity, usually the chest — and continuous drainage into an antiseptic solution was advocated, Dr Jackson showed his own design of a trochar and a cannular for draining the chest. These well-formed precision instruments are preserved in the Liverpool Medical Institution.

In February 1896 Dr Jackson attended a meeting with some two hundred members of the Liverpool Medical Institution to hear about Roentgen radiographs and see the first successful one taken in Liverpool. A boy had shot himself in the wrist and Professor Oliver Lodge, using 'X-rays', had located the pellet of lead. Dr Jackson and Professor Lodge were seen driving together through Liverpool in a 3½ h.p. Benz car, a man walking in front with a red flag.⁴⁹ By 1897 Dr Jackson had his own X-ray apparatus, nine years before St Helens Hospital acquired one, and it is now preserved in the hospital collection. Fourteen months after seeing the first X-rays in Liverpool Dr Jackson was knocked off his bicycle and his elbow received the full force of the fall. He took X-rays within minutes of accident and having applied to his arm a long anterior splint, contrary to contemporary medical opinion, did not bend the elbow for six weeks. He was insured and received six weeks total and one week partial compensation. His self-treatment achieved a 100% result of perfect movement.⁵⁰

In 1898 a fall of coal in a local mine trapped a man's right foot. Help came quickly, his clogs were cut, he was released, taken to hospital and eventually discharged. Six months later Dr Jackson was asked to treat a suppurating ingrowing toenail and found that the man had been unable to walk since his accident. 'I took him into St Helens Hospital on October 10th and removed the toenail, & strongly urged him to allow me to operate on the ankle. He, however, absolutely refused to have anything done and returned home on 22nd October'.⁵¹ On examining the ankle, a bony mass was easily seen and palpated under tendon Achillis and above the os calcis, and there was little or no

movement in the ankle joint. In February 1899 the man had a change of heart and Jackson operated, removing the fractured piece of bone. Four and a half months after the operation the man was back down the pit, working.⁵²

Dr Jackson achieved a high success rate in treating fractured spines by his own invented method of applying a plaster jacket. The patient was laid face down on a stretcher, the stretcher then suspended between two chairs. To make the plaster lighter but stronger, perforated tin (as used in bread-graters) was incorporated on either side of the spine. In the three years 1930-33, of seventeen cases of fractured spine only one patient died, eleven months later, and he had had fifteen other fractures, while the remainder of the treated miners all subsequently walked and eleven of them found suitable work.⁵³

Complaints examined and reported on in a book containing copies of letters from June 1892 to March 1905 include writer's cramp, hypochondriosis, melancholia, well-marked phthisis ('it is improbable he will be fit for much further work'), spinal spastic paralysis ('a curious condition mentally and I do not think you would be wise in employing him'), and of course fractures. Miners, railwaymen, and other employees of local firms and their families were among those examined.⁵⁴

Like his predecessor Jackson worked on contract to Pilkingtons. In a manuscript book of glass works and mining accidents covering from 1890 to 1894 and giving places and types of injury, Dr Jackson is not mentioned by name.⁵⁵ But miners and glass workers were certainly being referred to his surgery at 69 Church Street and he also attended cases in rooms at the Junction, Sutton. In 1898 Pilkingtons set up a surgery at the Navigation Inn to deal with serious cases within the works and in 1905 appointed the firm's own full-time doctor for some 4,500 employees, although a further 1,500 remained under the care of part-time doctors, including Jackson.⁵⁶ An 1893 letter to the firm, notionally from Gaskell and Jackson, actually from Jackson, gives a useful picture of this side of the practice.

We enclose our accounts for the year 1892 & shall be glad if you will enter into correspondence over the necessity of increasing this amount as we find this work done in connection with your workers is very great & quite out of proportion to the salary ... During the year 1891 we attended to 1248 accidents & during 1892 to 2351. On an average each of these cases has to attend the surgery 8 or 10 times, representing something like 2000 dressings per annum for which we were having in addition to these attendances to provide bandages, dressings &c. to perform operations, give chloroform & certificates of disablement. A number of more serious cases required frequent visits at their homes. A considerable number of your accidents also occur during the night. As this salary has been the same since the commencement of your works & as you will see the surgical work has grown enormously we think we are fully justified in asking for an alteration in the rate of pay & would suggest that it be on the scale recognised by the various collieries & the works, viz, 2s/6d per annum per employee.⁵⁷

The request for a higher remuneration met with a favourable response and as 'Plate Works Surgeons' the practice's annual fee was increased to £80.00. Fifteen years later Jackson asked for £265 per annum for looking after the 1600 men at the Plate Works and this was increased to £320 to cover the examination of potential recruits to the works.⁵⁸

Dr Jackson was also formally employed by the working men of the locality, as shown by certificates of referral from 'the Lancashire and Cheshire Miners' Permanent

Relief Society'. (A specimen certificate reads — 'Messers Gaskell & Jackson. Please attend who is a Member of the above Society and sustained an Accident at Colliery on 189..')⁵⁹ In six months of 1900, the practice issued 197 certificates of disablement (positive or negative) at the main surgery, 34 at the patient's home, and 134 during 80 thrice-weekly visits to the Sutton rooms at the Junction.⁶⁰

The twentieth century brought novel occurrences to extend the social range of the practice. Dr Jackson was a keen Territorial officer and in 1907, when at camp in Beaumaris, he investigated the possibility of setting off a bomb by remote radio control, using a Yapps coil, the same as the one on his X-ray apparatus. A vivid photograph of the explosion exists, taken by his second wife.⁶¹

After fifty-seven years in general practice, in 1947 Dr Jackson retired to Penmaenmawr. In 1939, on the jubilee of his work in St Helens, his fellow general practitioners had presented him with a silver bowl. In 1925 he had moved from the home of the practice for the last seventy years, 69 and 71 Church Street, to 5 Victoria Square. A red-brick, gabled building in fine Neo-Victorian style, it had been built in 1903 to include houses for two doctors.⁶² In the mid-1940s Dr Jackson was given occasional assistance by a recently qualified doctor with a house job in a London hospital, Patrick Kyle, whenever he visited his father, Dr James Kyle, who was also in practice in St Helens. When Dr Jackson retired, Dr Kyle senior, who had been in partnership with Dr Morris Jones for sixteen years, bought the practice for £3,000, to allow his son to join as an Assistant. 'Kyle, Morris Jones and Kyle' then leased Jackson's house, with its surgery still on the ground floor, while the original dining room on that floor became the waiting room for the increased number of patients. The two Kyles and their wives lived for several years above the surgery in the top two floors, but this was inconvenient once the first grandchild arrived. When the Kyles left to live elsewhere, a caretaker was put in the top flat to take night telephone calls and look after the building. The first floor was then rented, eventually to a dentist, the son of Dr Morris Jones — thus maintaining the long intertwining of practices, families and premises.

In conclusion

The first doctors had an apothecary's shop, and one had his own distillery. Later doctors had their own dispensers and assistants working from their surgery (the last dispenser retired in 1952). The later doctors, working in part for industrial concerns, practiced mass medicine, but also were concerned about public health and the environment. One ingenious doctor made his own precision instruments and experimented with a radio-controlled bomb. The practice, passed down the line in part through family ties and in part through family and personal contacts — and therefore often considered by its members a 'family practice' — has operated for two hundred years from the same vicinity. As proof of a measure of continuity in the practice, for much of the period useful medical notes were made in the same two books. The descendants of these doctors, even when not in professional medicine, have tended to cling to St Helens — a notable aspect of the local history. All the doctors owned property and enlarged their estate; one family which deserted medicine for business has flourished mightily. As responsible members of the community, the doctors founded book clubs and a professional society, played an active role in churches, a temperance society, local government and a local military group: one became a J.P. We can now see that, being human and of their time they had

defects and blindnesses, but this is not the place - nor do I have all the material — for a balanced historical assessment of their role as social actors. Instead, I conclude with the words of Dr Gaskell when in 1904 he presented Gaskell Park to the town/Parks are the lungs of our crowded towns and they also offer counter attractions to the pernicious habits which sap morality and foster vice, by enabling people to spend their leisure in a way that recreates strength, conducive to diligent and conscientious work.⁶³ The language may be outdated, the concepts questionable, but the good spirit is there."

Notes

1. For the general history of St Helens, see T.C. Barker and J.R. Harris, *A Merseyside town in the Industrial Revolution: St Helens 1750-1900*, Liverpool, 1954.
2. 'Doctors' Account Book rendered to the Overseers of Parr' [1741-1824], PAR/3 pi, St Helens Central Library [hereafter SHCL].
3. P.J. Wallis, R.V. Wallis and J.G.L. Burnaby, *Eighteen century medics: subscriptions, licences, apprenticeships*, 2nd ed., Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 1988, 200.
4. Map of the Society of Friends 1785, M/Q/10, SHCL; see also William Yates, *Map of Lancashire 1786* (reproduced by the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire).
5. Barker and Harris, St Helens, 32.
6. *Registers of St Helens Chapel 1713-1787*, 1968.
7. 'Pencil drawing of Old Market Place by Mr John Knowles', PH/9/1 SHCL.
8. 'Doctors' Account Book', 30. Wallis et al., *Medics*, 200, note the father as Richard Pilkington but wrongly name William.
9. Pilkington's indenture has not been found. As an example of a contemporary indenture, one made in the township of Rainford, three miles to the north of Hardshaw, dated 2 September 1767, between a doctor of Kirkham-in-the-Fylde and his apprentice, stated that the latter 'shall and will faithfully serve his said master, his Secrets keep, his lawful Commands gladly obey and do; Hurt to his said Master he shall not do, nor suffer to be done by others, when it is Power to prevent the same: His Masters Goods he shall not waste or embezzle, the same give or lend without Leave; Day or Night absent himself from the said Master's Service; nor do any other Act, Matter, or Thing whatsoever, to the Prejudice of his said Master's Service': Ronald Dagnall, ed., 'Documents of the Overseers of the Poor in the township of Rainford 1707-1838', typescript, A27 RAI, SHCL, 83.
10. *Doctors' Account Book*, 29.
11. From 1770 on, Churton bought books from the Worshipful Society of Apothecaries of London (p.c. 13.11.1991, Clerk, Worshipful Society).
12. T.C. Barker, *Pilkington Brothers and the glass industry*, London, 1960, 29.
13. Robert Willan, *On vaccine inoculation*, London, 1806, appendix xvii. The 1799 parish register records after an entry relating to a baptism - 'This child on seventeenth of November following was the first in these Parts, that was inoculated with vaccine Matter, by me, W. Finch Min.' William Finch, the

- incumbent 1775-1815, in 1800 wrote an account of 714 inoculations, and in 1802 informed Jenner that whereas, at the beginning of his incumbency, during outbreaks of smallpox he daily buried 'two or three children of a family', since inoculation was introduced he had buried none. *Medical and Physical Journal*, 3, 1800, 415-20; G.C. Jenner, *Dr Jenner's discovery of vaccine inoculation*, London, 1805, 164.
14. Casey was born in Brindle, near Preston, and apprenticed in 1802 to an Ashton-in-Makerfield surgeon. He graduated in London when twenty years old (Wallis et al., *Medics*, 104). On 18 December 1808 he was entered in the Ship's Muster Book of H.M.S. Sirius, as an Acting Assistant Surgeon. He saw action in the Indian Ocean during the Napoleonic Wars. He returned to England as Acting Surgeon on a captured French ship and left the Royal Navy in May 1811 (Public Record Office, ADM 51.2789). Three months later he put up his plate in St Helens. It is curious that in 1826 he was appointed an honorary physician to a hospital 200 miles away from St Helens -the West Herts (*Medical Directory 1847*).
 15. PI 2/2/2, Pilkington Archives, now held by Information Management and Storage, St Helens.
 16. Transcribed from a manuscript in the possession of J.H-J. by W.E. Court, as 'Recipes and preparations 1789 to the early 1900s', typescript, copy in the possession of J. H-J. Another early prescription uses garden leeks, a traditionally valued non-irritant diuretic, for the stone or gravel, the method, translated from the Latin, reads: 'Digest with gentle heat, well stirred, to one and a half to two pounds. Let the patient have one pound daily in divided doses ...'.
 17. 'Doctors' Account Book', 61.
 18. Wallis et al.. *Medics*, 471.
 19. Barker, *Pilkington Brothers*, 29.
 20. *Ibid.*, 30.
 21. PI 2/2/4, Pilkington Archives.
 22. [How capital came to be accumulated to finance post-1750 North-West commerce and industry has been much discussed by historians. Attorneys, it has been suggested, channelled their own and, on their recommendation, their clients' money towards the new business investments. But it would seem that medical men were also in a position to accumulate capital, albeit on a modest scale, and hence to support business enterprise. Editors.]
 23. Barker, *Pilkington Brothers*, 29.
 24. Walter Lazenbv, *Thrice happy place*, St Helens, [719741, 56-57.
 25. *Ibid.*, 47, 82.
 26. *Souvenir of the centenary of the St Helens Book Club*, St Helens, 1913.
 27. Personal communication from Sir Richard Gaskell, great-great-grandson of Thomas Gaskell.
 28. The diary of Richard Pilkington, William's brother, who farmed at Horwich, records an 1807 visit to St Helens which included calling on Thomas Gaskell's father: 'Diary of Richard Pilkington', PI 1/4i, Pilkington Archives. When Thomas Gaskell died, William Pilkington junior, writing to Gaskell's son, described

- Thomas as 'my own now earliest friend, now 60 years since' (personal papers of Sir Richard Gaskell).
29. Blundell practised in Market Street, the rest in Church Street. The document recording the scale of remuneration is in the possession of J. H-J.
 30. Other charges included: 'Introducing a catheter 2s/6d. Injecting an enema 2s/6d. Vaccination 2s/6d. For midwifery 10s/6d in the town & beyond the limits of the Town, mileage. For every consultation visit 5s/0d. For every consultation with a Physician 5s/0d exclusive of visit or journey. For every Midwifery case which is not paid for at the time of attendance 5s/0d over and above the usual charge, if a Midwife had been in previous attendance to charge double.'
 31. Gaskell added to the 'Recipe and Preparation Book' two recipes for harness blacking. A similar recipe appears in the diary of the coachman employed by the Gaskells in 1868 ('Diary of John Skepper', SHCL).
 32. Next door, at no. 65 Mr Cotton combined an apothecary's business with that of a dentist, hence his shop window included a display of extracted molars.
 33. Will of Thomas Gaskell, PRO.
 34. 'List of subscribers 1830', PI24, Pilkington archive; J.M. Tolson, *The St Helens Railway: its rivals and successors*, s.l., 1983, 11-12.
 35. He died on 8 June 1868, aged 75, from 'apoplexy', having collapsed while driving his gig in Market Street: a detailed account of the episode appeared in *St Helens Newspaper and Advertiser*, 9.6.1868.
 36. Souvenir ... St Helens Book Club ...
 37. 'Minutes of the St Helens and Prescot Medical Book Club', held at the Postgraduate Centre, Whiston Hospital. Gaskell bought from the Club copies of the *Dublin Medical Journal* and the *British and Foreign Medical Review*, apparently after their display and cheaply; and from the former journal in 1860 he copied an alleged method for dealing with ringworm, the application of undiluted sulphuric acid to the scalp ('Recipes and preparations', 30).
 38. 'Recipes and Preparations', 64. Tolu is a resin from South America; gum acacia is a sticky substance used as an adhesive-mucilage.
 39. A local firm of 'Pill makers', Mather & Sons, 27 Windle Street, was, however, listed in an 1895 Directory of St Helens.
 40. 'Diary of John Skepper', e.g., 10 October 1871 'Bought brown mare at Chester fair £24:0:0'.
 41. *London Gazette*, 28.1.1893.
 42. Medical Services, General Board Minutes, PB 139, Pilkington Archives.
 43. In 1881 the Club had asked the Pilkington Board if they could 'meet in the Reading Room instead of the Public House'. The Board minuted - 'Will agree to this but think the Club might be extended more generally.'
 44. *St Helens Newspaper and Advertiser*, 21.3.1874.
 45. John David Green, *The history of St Helens magistrates' courts 1838-1982: in celebration of the centenary of the St Helens Borough Magistrates' Court*, s.l., s.d., [1982],51.
 46. *St Helens Lantern*, 16.2.1888.
 47. R.J.B. Morris, 'An outline of the history of the acquisition by the town of its major parks and recreation grounds', 1972, SHCL [published as *A short history of St*

- Helens parks: history of the acquisition by the town of its major parks and recreation grounds*, Grimsby, 1976], 6, 20.
48. 'Minutes of the St Helens Medico-Ethical Society', held at the Postgraduate Centre, Whiston Hospital.
 49. Personal information from Dr David Edwards, Department of Physics, University of Liverpool, and Dr John Ross, retired consultant radiologist.
 50. Letter from R. Jackson, *British Medical Journal* [hereafter BMJ], 17.9.1938.
 51. *Quarterly Medical Journal*, February 1900, [page indecipherable]. Times have changed - ingrowing toenails are now treated in the practice surgery, the patient in and out within the hour, compared to twelve days in a hospital a hundred years ago.
 52. *BMJ*, 4.11.1944, 16.
 53. R. Jackson, 'Preparations on appliances or a simple method of applying a plaster jacket to cases of fractured spines', *BMJ*, 3.3.1934, 381.
 54. Letterbook in possession of J. H-J.
 55. Manuscript in possession of J. H-J.
 56. P.c. from D. Stubbs on early medical services at Pilkington Brothers.
 57. Letter in possession of J. H-J.
 58. 'General Board Minutes', PB139, Pilkington archive.
 59. Certificate in possession of J. H-J.
 60. Certificate in possession of J. H-J.
 61. Photograph in possession of Barbara Jenkins. After bearing him four children, Dr Jackson's first wife left him for his assistant. In 1903 Dr Jackson was granted a decree nisi with costs, the suit being undefended.
 62. *St Helens Newspaper*, 17.6.1904. A description of a doctor's house fifty years ago may be, some day, of interest. Dr Jackson's dining room was a large room on the ground floor with windows on the Town Hall Square. The kitchen, scullery, larder and pantry faced South at the back of the house. The coalman delivered coal down the chute at the rear of the house into one of the cellars, while the clothes-washing facilities, three large sinks, a boiler and a large drying cupboard were in an adjacent cellar. The privies were in corners on the landings. The drawing room was on the second floor with three bedrooms and bathroom. The second floor had two bedrooms, a nursery, a boxroom, linen cupboard, bath and WC.
 63. *St Helens Newspaper*, 17.6.1904.
 64. I am indebted to the editors for encouraging me to indicate the wider significances of my local history.