

AN EARLY 19TH-CENTURY FAMILY OF STAFFORD SURGEONS

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Whilst researching the Haughton Overseers Accounts Book 1815–1848, a collection of documents in a conserved book at Staffordshire Record Office, mostly relating to settlement and bastardy cases,¹ I came across a loose single sheet of Accounts, relating to health care, covering a 5-year period, of which the following is a transcription. Although the sheet is not headed 'Haughton', all the names mentioned can be found in the Haughton parish registers for the period.

TRANSCRIPTION

By order of Mr Fowler to Fran[ci]s Hughes

1815

June 17	Liniment – Kate Hodson	1s
Aug 7	A visit to Booth	5s

1816

Feb 14	A visit to Horobin	5s
Feb 14	Blister Ointment	3s
Feb 14	Box of Pills	3s 6d
March 16	Digestive Ointment ½ Pound	3s
March 16	Liniment ditto	3s 6d
June 4	A visit to J. Addison	5s
June 4	Mixture pint bottle	4s 6d
June 6	A visit	5s
June 6	Mixture rept. J. Addison	4s 6d
June 9	Packet of Powders (12 doses)	
	Addison's Daughter	3s
June 9	Four Powders Addison's Daughter	2s
June 10	Saline Mixture	4s 6d
June 10	Introducing a Catheter in the night	[struck through]
June 10	Pair lines – Butler	[struck through]
June 13	Introducing Catheter Butler	[struck through]
June 21	Introducing Catheter Butler	[struck through]

1817

July 14	A visit	5s
July 15	A visit	5s
July 15	Mixture	2s 6d
Aug 14	A visit to Hale, Long Lane	5s
Aug 14	Bleeding	2s 6d
Aug 14	Mixture	2s
Aug 15	A visit	5s

1818

Jan 31	Ointment, Gutton's child	1s
Jan 31	Three Powders	6d
Feb 23	A Pill — Lees	1s
Feb 23	Powders, 12 doses	3s 1d
March 2	A visit	1s
Carried over		£4 11s 0d

[Dorse]

Mar 2	Powder rept. Lees	3s
Mar 7	Powder rept.	3s
Mar 13	Powder rept.	3s
Mar 13	Box of pills	2s 6d
Nov 16	A visit – Day's wife	5s
Nov 16	Pills	1s
Nov 17	Blister & Ointment	2s 6d
Nov 17	A Pint Mixture	4s 6d
Nov 17	A Powder	6d
Nov 21	A visit	5s
Nov 21	Pills	1s
Nov 23	Mixture rept.	4s 6d
Nov 23	Pills	1s
Nov 23	Mixture	3s
Nov 28	Mixture rept.	4s 6d

1819

Aug 10	Powders 12 doses, Turner's Child	3s 6d
Aug 10	Pills	2s
Sept 21	A visit – Eliz. Day	5s
Sept 21	A Mixture	3s
Sept 21	Blister & Ointment	2s 6d
Nov 27	Powders 18 doses, Turner's Child	4s 6d
Nov 27	Powders	1s
Nov 27	Ointment for the Family	3s 6d

£8 0s 0d

Settled 17 April 17 1820

R[ichard]d Hughes

END of TRANSCRIPTION

Francis Hughes's background

Firstly, I wondered if Francis Hughes was an apothecary or a doctor, so I looked up the 'Professions' on the Internet and found that 1815 was a significant year with the introduction of the Apothecaries Act which regulated the practice of Apothecaries in England and Wales by introducing compulsory apprenticeship and formal qualifications for apothecaries (in modern terms general practitioners), under the licence of the Society of Apothecaries. This was the beginning of the regulation of the medical profession in the country.

The Royal College of Surgeons had begun life in 1540 as the Company of Barber-Surgeons before splitting in 1745 to form the Company of Surgeons, (*the Barbers retained the Hall and many of the treasures*) getting a Royal charter in 1800 and then changing its name again in 1843 when a new Royal Charter changed its name to 'The Royal College of Surgeons of England'.

For a long time disputes had occurred between physicians, apothecaries, chemists, and druggists in relation to their respective rights to practise pharmacy and to provide medical advice, leading to the introduction of legislation which placed controls upon medical and pharmaceutical practitioners. During the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries the number of members of the Royal College of Physicians was relatively small (around 100) and they generally concentrated on the treatment of wealthy patients, with some *pro bono* work amongst the poor. However, by this date there was a growing middle class which was able to pay for consultations and treatments, and this group most often sought advice and help from apothecaries and surgeon-apothecaries.

Despite the control exercised by both the College of Physicians and the Society of Apothecaries, by the nineteenth century there were such large numbers of either unqualified or poorly qualified practising individuals, so that the legal reform of the education and registration procedures was necessary. Eventually the Apothecaries Act was passed in 1815, under which the Society of Apothecaries (originally founded in 1617) was made responsible for education and registration of apothecaries.² The Act required instruction in anatomy, botany, chemistry, *materia medica*, and 'physic', in addition to six months' practical experience in a hospital experience. Subsequent research indicates to me that the Hughes family were all 'properly trained' practitioners.

Having found all this out, I turned my attention to the identification of Fran[ci]s Hughes, and concluded that the most likely candidate was a *surgeon* working in Stafford as I found no one around of that name working as an apothecary. Looking to see if he was mentioned in the Census returns, I discovered a whole *family* of surgeons, and when checking the Stafford parish records I found not only Francis' baptism, as the son of Richard and Dorothy Hughes, but also the parents' marriage, Francis's own marriage and the baptisms of all except one of his children. The exception in respect of the baptisms was that of William Whittingham Hughes, who was baptised at nearby Ellenhall, perhaps his mother's home parish.

I found no evidence of Francis's training but I would expect that he was trained by his father *Richard Hughes*, recorded as a Stafford surgeon in 1779 and 1788 when he was listed as a Master taking two apprentices and paying duty on their indentures; if Richard trained his own son, no duty would have been payable as it was only on formal indentures that a Master received money that duty was paid.³ Interestingly the Apprentice Duty registers in the National Archives contains an entry for the apprenticing of a milliner to Richard Hughes in Stafford in 1776, perhaps indicating that Richard's wife Dorothy was a milliner: the partnership of Hughes and Layton in Stafford in 1784 were listed as Haberdashers and milliners.⁴ In 1778 Richard Hughes, then an Apothecary to the Staffordshire General Infirmary (opened in 1766), was appointed surgeon to Stafford Gaol.⁵

Francis Hughes was evidently already in practice in 1795, when he is recorded as having taken on an apprentice (with another one in 1801), and he presumably also trained his own sons Richard and Robert. He was originally in partnership with J. Ward, as Surgeons and Apothecaries, but that partnership was dissolved by mutual consent in 1809, according to a notice in the *Staffordshire Advertiser* for 20 May 1809, and Francis continued on his own account.

Francis was the surgeon at Stafford gaol, having taken his father's place when Richard died of gaol fever in 1793.⁶ When Richard had been appointed in 1778 his salary as surgeon was set £8 p.a., with a further sum of £12 to the Infirmary for drugs and medicines. When Francis Hughes was appointed as surgeon in May 1793 his salary was increased to £15 p.a., with a further £15 payable to the Staffordshire General Infirmary for a supply of drugs and medicines. It was his duty to visit the sick ward every day and to see all prisoners once per week, reporting any problems to the governor and also reporting to the JPs at the Quarter Sessions on the state of the prisoners' health⁷. In 1827 his salary was again increased to £20 p.a. and then in 1831 to £100 p.a.

Nevertheless, the post at Stafford gaol was obviously a part-time job. His accounts for Haughton indicate that he may have had a private practice, and he was also Surgeon Extraordinary to the Staffordshire General Infirmary.⁸

Francis served as a councillor on Stafford Borough Council and was Mayor three times from 1816, albeit one election being disputed.⁹ In 1827 his right to act as Mayor was disputed when the New Charter granted 6 September 1827 was rejected by the Freemen, who felt that they should have been consulted.

Although Francis Hughes died in Stafford, he was buried on 18 September 1837 at St Mary's church at Ellenhall, possibly in a family vault. His Stafford property was sold at auction in 1839:

As the very desirable Freehold MESSUAGE, PREMISES, and LAND, most eligible for building sites, belonging to the late Francis Hughes, Esq. deceased and situate in the most advantageous and pleasant part of the Foregate Street, Stafford, being opposite to Christ Church, WILL BE SUBMITTED TO SALE BY AUCTION, By Mr. JAMES DAVISON, in the month of April next. Particulars, and place of sale, will appear in next week's paper.¹⁰

Francis Hughes's family

Francis Hughes' four daughters remained unmarried and ran a young ladies' seminary, which they may have started in Stafford¹¹ but which by the 1841 Census they had moved to Torkington Lodge, near Stockport (Ches.);¹² they were still there in 1851, when they had 12 residential pupils. Although the 1851 Census recorded only the residential pupils, the sisters may also have had day pupils, and the school was evidently a successful venture to judge by the monies they left at their deaths: **Sarah** Hughes (d. 1852), no entry in the Probate Calendar but a will is available at Cheshire Record Office; **Isabella** Leighton Hughes (d. 20 January 1865), leaving, under £600; **Dorothy** Hughes (d. 4 October 1878), leaving under £2,000; and **Mercy Ann** Hughes (d. 26 November 1881), leaving under £6,989. Even if the sisters each left their estate to the others, the cumulative amount was nearly £7,000 which using the National Archives currency converter would be worth about £315,000 in 2005 (latest date available).

Two of Francis Hughes' sons, Richard and Robert, both became surgeons. Richard worked at Stafford County General Infirmary in Foregate Street;¹³ the 1851 Census gives his address as 43 Greengate Street, Stafford, and also indicates that he was a Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons. It was probably Richard who sorted out his father's bills transcribed here, as they are signed by 'Rd Hughes' in 1820. Richard died in Bristol on 21 May 1861, appointing his brother Robert as executor and leaving under £1,500.¹⁴

Robert Hughes was licensed by the Society of Apothecaries in 1826 and became a Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons in 1857.¹⁵ He took over his father's post as surgeon at Stafford gaol,¹⁶ and requested an increase in salary as he was now spending 4 to 6 hours daily at the prison and providing the medicines out of his salary. He was also attending female patients in childbirth. His salary was duly raised in 1855 to £250 p.a.¹⁷ Robert died 22 November 1879, aged 77 at Lympstone (Devon), where he had retired. In the 1871 Census he appears as a boarder with his sisters in Buxton in what could be a small guest house. So he may have gone to Buxton first. He was buried in the family vault at Ellenhall on 27 November, the coffin having been carried by train to Stafford. He left under £6,000. (Robert's wife Sarah had predeceased him, having died at their home, The Mount, in Stafford, on 18 October 1857 aged 50.)¹⁸

Hughes's son Francis (the younger) proved very elusive. He appears with his brother Richard in the 1841 Census but his occupation was not given. After that it has not possible to identify him; although it can be said that he was not buried in St Mary's church at Stafford before 1851. It is possible that he went to London and had by 1843 commenced business as 'Francis Hughes & Co. truss and surgical instrument maker',¹⁹ or he may have gone overseas as there is the death of a man of that name in the National Probate Calendar at Hospital Devala, South East Wynaad, Malabar, on 2 February 1883 but it is perhaps more likely he was the Francis Hughes who died at Newcastle-under-Lyme in 1881.²⁰

The elder Francis's youngest son William Whittingham Hughes must have been a bit of a rebel as he did not become a medical practitioner but went to work for the Post Office: both the 1851 and 1861 Censuses record him at the Post Office in Corn Street in Bristol, having been appointed there in February 1842 on the recommendation of Henry Broadbent MP.²¹ It seems that William worked his way up, as on 1 May 1837 a William Hughes was appointed as a mail-guard (if fit) at Lichfield. He died in Bristol 15 March 1866 at Didsbury Villa, Woollcott Park, Redland, leaving under £600.²²

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- ¹ Staffordshire Record Office, D. 1207/6/3. Haughton is a small village west of Stafford.
- ² John F. Marriot, *Pharmaceutical Compounding and Dispensing* (2006).
- ³ The National Archives, IR /1/ 36: IR/1/33: IR/1/60: IR/1/62: IR/1/70.(registers of duties paid on Apprentice Indentures, 1700–1811).
- ⁴ *Bailey's British Directory* (1784).
- ⁵ A. J. Standley, 'Stafford Prison' (typescript at the William Salt Library, Stafford).
- ⁶ A.J. Standley, 'Medical Treatment and Prisoners' Health in Stafford Gaol during the Eighteenth Century', in R. Creese, W. F. Bynum, and J. Bearn (eds), *The Health of Prisoners* (Clio Medica: The Wellcome Institute Series in the History of Medicine, vol. 34; Amsterdam, 1995), pp. 27-43 (at p. 34)
- ⁷ A. J. Standley, 'Stafford Prison' (typescript history at the William Salt Library, Stafford).
- ⁸ *Staffordshire Advertiser*, 19 Sept. 1837 (section reporting deaths).
- ⁹ Staffordshire Record Office, D. 1323/5/3/4 (documents relating to a dispute over the election of Francis Hughes as mayor, 1824–27).
- ¹⁰ *Staffordshire Advertiser*, 30 March 1839.
- ¹¹ *Staffordshire General and Commercial Directory* (1818), entry for 'Hughes, Misses, Seminary for Young Ladies, St. Mary's Church Yd.'
- ¹² Torkington Lodge had been the seat of John Leigh, a barrister: *A genealogical and heraldic history of the Commoners of Great Britain and Ireland*.
- ¹³ *Pigot's Directory* (1835).
- ¹⁴ National Probate Calendar (accessed through Ancestry.co.uk,).
- ¹⁵ Medical Registers (accessed through Ancestry.co.uk,).
- ¹⁶ A. J. Standley, 'Stafford Prison' (typescript at the William Salt Library, Stafford).
- ¹⁷ A. J. Standley, 'Stafford Prison' (typescript at the William Salt Library, Stafford).
- ¹⁸ National Probate Calendar (accessed through Ancestry.co.uk,).
- ¹⁹ *Post Office Directory, London* (1843) (accessed through Ancestry.co.uk,).
- ²⁰ <http://www.staffordshirebmd.org.uk/>
- ²¹ British Postal Service Appointment Books, 1737–1969 (accessed through Ancestry.co.uk,).
- ²² National Probate Calendar (accessed through Ancestry.co.uk,).