

# THE PHYSICIANS OF BATTLE TO 1945



## INTRODUCTION

We know little that is specific about the provision of medical services after the dissolution of the monasteries, and even less about what happened in Battle and its surroundings. Medical knowledge was slow to progress: as to anatomy the circulation of the blood was not established until late in the sixteenth century, and the purposes of the various organs were unknown for a very long time. There were few hospitals in England, left over from Catholic times, and only after 1700 were more built; towards the end of the seventeenth century local dispensaries appeared but no record has survived of any in the Battle area.

While external injuries were evident and could sometimes be treated, for example by amputation, there were no anaesthetics except alcoholic spirits and no proved antiseptics. Common diseases such as tuberculosis and smallpox were treated by ancient 'remedies' and prayer. Indeed it was not until the late eighteenth century that a reliable preventative for smallpox was found (and many years after that before vaccination became compulsory), and tuberculosis remained a major cause of premature death well into the twentieth century. The causes of disease were generally unknown, most people attributing them to bad air (*malaria* in Italian; and what we know as malaria was also common in marshy parts of southern England). As an example of medical conservatism, a disbelieving medical establishment took time to accept the finding of 1858 that cholera was caused by contaminated water, but the agent causing the contamination, and therefore the disease, was not found for another thirty years. Bloodletting and opium were common attempts at remedies. Hospitals paid little attention to ventilation and cleanliness, and the nursing profession was more or less untrained and ineffectual until the second half the nineteenth century.

Moreover the medical profession was largely unregulated. Such medical services as existed were performed by trained medics (the College of Physicians was founded in 1517), by barber-surgeons or apothecaries. The barbers and surgeons did not formally split until 1745. The apothecaries were the body that had the later distinction (in 1862) of licensing the first woman doctor to qualify in England and indeed still have a role in governing the profession of physician. Their descendants, the modern pharmacists, still have an advisory role for those visiting them.

The two English universities up to the 1830s were reserved for Anglicans and were essentially class-based. Many English medics, Anglican or otherwise, trained in Scotland, which could boast first-class medical schools of the day – and still does. Some went abroad, and three of Battle's early medics had doctorates from Leyden in the Netherlands. This left the field open for amateurs, swindlers, religious extremists and indeed anyone else who could persuade patients to come to them. There were trained doctors in London, though small in number for the population; elsewhere there were very few. And by 'doctors' one must mean those who were careful in their diagnosis and treatment of patients, even if their own knowledge was necessarily limited by today's standards.

Although all the nineteenth century doctors at Battle appear to have been appropriately qualified, it was not until the later 1850s that the profession took on its modern look, with proper regulation and an expansion of training. From that time, too, the terms physician and surgeon began to take their separate meanings. Up to then a country doctor often described himself as a surgeon. Surgery was indeed part of his job, and it was only later that the term surgeon attracted its present meaning of consultant surgeon and much later still that minor surgery in general practices became rare.

In the Battle area early data are thin to non-existent, and one can conclude only that too often a patient had to make the journey to Hastings or call out a doctor from there, in both cases of course at a cost.

## THE EARLIEST KNOWN PHYSICIANS

Parish records sometimes identified the profession of a father registering a birth, and at the beginning of the eighteenth century there were two apothecaries: John French and Richard Gower. In the next very few years there were other apothecaries: James Relfe and Henry Jones. Unfortunately, after 1714 the routine naming of paternal professions ceases and did not return until 1813.

Edmund Langdon wrote from Battle in 1610 that he was a 'general practitioner in astronomie and physicke', but further evidence is lacking.<sup>1</sup> The first *known* doctor in Battle appears to have been one John Easton, who appears in records as a surgeon of Battle in 1663, when he was witness to a legal document, in 1665 (when an apothecary named Thomas Manhood was recorded) and in 1684, when his wife died. It is possible that he was the father of William Easton, recorded as a barber surgeon in 1703 and 1704. At the later time there were apothecaries.

## THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

The next known doctor was John Martin, whose will was proved in 1709 and describes him as 'of Battell, licentiate in physic', which means that he was a trained practitioner. There must have been others. It is possible that Martin was the John Martin who had been born at Berkhamsted and had obtained his MB from St John's College, Cambridge, in 1673,<sup>2</sup> but this is not certain. However, his living at Battle was the beginning of a much better recorded collection of medics in the eighteenth century. The records for 1725 show a William Martin at Battle, who may have been John's son, taking an apprentice, but nothing else is known of him. John Martin had left money to his nephew John Smith to enable him to be trained in 'physic and chirurgery' but trace of his practising in Battle has yet to be found. There was, however, *Charles* Smith, surgeon of Battle, whose will was proved in 1739. And there is a record of a Dr William Martin being buried at Battle on 25 January 1726.

These doctors often displayed an active interest in forwarding their profession and improving the lot of the patient. They would have subscribed to, and sometimes contributed to, the journals that circulated among them, in the process learning of new opportunities and new dangers. For a local doctor, Giles Watts, for example, (1725-1792), who practised at Battle from at least 1753, was clearly at the top of his profession. His death was recorded thus:

May 1. At Battle, in Sussex, Dr. Giles Watts. He had been engaged in the practice of physic near 40 years; was educated at the University of Edinburgh and took his degree at Leyden in 1752. He was a gentleman of solid erudition, extensive reading, and eminent in his profession. He lived in honour and respect with his numerous friends; and the death of so useful and valuable member of society is justly lamented by his relatives and acquaintance (sic).<sup>3</sup>

His articles included:

Dissert. Inaug. De Epileptia. Bat. 1753.  
Case of an Hæmorrhage from the Uterus. Gent. Mag. 1752.  
Observations on the cause of Respiration in Infants. Ibid. 1754.  
A Dissertation on the ancient and noted Doctrine of Revulsion and Derivation. 8vo. London, 1754. 1s.  
A Letter to Dr. Frewen on Blood-letting. 8vo. ibid. 1755. 6d.  
Reflections on slow and painful Labours. 8vo. ibid. 1755.  
A Vindication of the new Mode of Inoculation from the attacks of Dr. Langton and Mr. Bromfeild. 8vo. ibid.<sup>4</sup>

The Watts family was explored by the late John Springford:

In the north aisle of St Mary's Church, Battle, a clear-glass window bears the inscription, 'This window was restored in 1990 by the Whistler family and descendants of the benefactor Giles Watts to mark 300 years of worship in this church.' The family has in fact not only lived through nearly four and a half centuries in the town of Battle but has also contributed much to its history. Such a contribution, notably in the fields of medicine and surgery, is from the 18th century onward well documented, and may be read in articles from such diverse sources as the St Thomas's Hospital, London, Gazette of July 1902 and the Battle Shopping Gazette of 1929....

Descended from a commercial family of Battle, Giles Watts began a medical family that practised there and elsewhere and his descendants still live in the town. His interest in inoculation may have been what led the local vestry (then the only council the town had) to declare in 1796 that everyone should be inoculated against smallpox.

Records for the eighteenth century give us a few other names – almost certainly not all of them – but tantalisingly few details of the men concerned. Apart from those apprentices who may or may not have stayed with medicine and in Battle, the doctors known from the records were mainly called Botting, Young, Chambers and Duke.

A Jeremy Botting was practising at Battle from at least 1726 and a Jeremiah in 1766 (though this may be the first of them, dead by then: Jeremy died in 1743 and the later reference is for a land conveyance). Botting was well-connected: he married Lucy Plummer, sister of Jane, the wife of Richard Nairn, Dean of Battle. In 1728 one Stephen Robinson was apprenticed to Botting, but does not have a further Battle record; in 1740 he is reported as 'the surgeon of Sedlescombe' and living in that village.<sup>5</sup>

John Young is first recorded in 1730, and Robert Young from 1760. He may well have been John's son. A further John appears in the 1791 directory, presumably a son of Robert.

In 1740 a will was made, later to be changed and so never proved, for William Hammond, apothecary of Battle; and from at least 1759 to at least 1791 a John Hammond was practising at Battle. These may have been father and son – the records are not conclusive – and William being of the gunpowder family. A John Hammond was buried at St Mary's in May 1794.

Thomas Chambers was an apprentice in 1741, to John Young, and was to have a connection to the Watts family in that he married Giles's sister Benedicta before moving to East Grinstead; he was there by 1761. She died in 1759, and he in 1764. His will does not make clear his relationship to a second Thomas Chambers, born about 1752, who practised at Battle up to his death in 1829, but the younger man's will indicates strongly that he was the elder Thomas's son.

As to Duke, the evidence is hard to unpick. The nonconformist registers record a John Duke of Battle having been baptised in November 1714. His father was presumably the Solomon Duke who witnessed a document at Battle in 1712. There is no evidence of John's profession, if any. A Solomon was certainly a surgeon at Battle in 1751, and this may have been the father of the nonconformist. On reasonable assumptions he would have been something like 65 at that point. It is also reasonable to conclude that he was the father of William Duke, who was himself a surgeon and was to die at Battle in 1765; presumably it was his son, another Solomon, born about 1742, who was taken into apprenticeship by Robert Young in 1760.

From then on we are on surer ground. Solomon's son William, born in 1776, practised at Battle. He married one of the Worge family of Rose Green; they were the parents of another William, born at Battle in about 1805 who had a distinguished medical career based at Hastings.<sup>6</sup> Roger Duke, who was later in practice at Battle, was one of the family (see below).

Another name appears for which further evidence would be helpful: Thomas Slatter, who buried his daughter at Battle in 1765. He is described as a surgeon.

As with so many other areas of interest it is not until well into the nineteenth century, with the arrival of censuses in which people are named and of the regulation of the professions, that the medical profession of Battle can be correctly identified, though even there one meets omissions and other difficulties.

Giles Watts's son John (1759-1817) first appears in about 1785. His brother Robert (1759-1833) is named in the 1832 directory but it is John that led to the next generation.

## **THE NINETEENTH CENTURY**

The 1841 census reports James Watts and Edward Holland as doctors, both in the High Street (as all subsequent doctors have been up to the end of this account,). Springford again:

It was James (1790-1880) who seems to have had the most notable career of all the Watts family. Apprenticed to his father John at Senlac House, Battle, he trained in London as a surgeon/physician from 1808, emerging in 1811 as MRCS and LSA (the London Society of Apothecaries represented one of the usual routes to medical practice.) Returning to Battle as civil surgeon, as a good horseman he found himself detailed off as the man who would bring to London the news of any French invasion, a test to which of course he was never put. In purely

civilian life the real problem of the time were the smugglers, who would do anything to protect their trade and routinely threatened anyone likely to tell the authorities anything of what they had seen. This was so as late as 1828, though smuggling was then a dying trade. Earlier he had himself been caught in a fight and had wounded his assailant – who shortly afterwards came to him unknowingly for medical treatment. Watts complied, and advised him to leave the area because, if asked, he (Watts) would have to identify him for what was then a hanging offence. It appears that once he treated Louis Napoleon, future Napoleon III of France and nephew of the man that he detested....<sup>7</sup>

James Watts ... was a particular character of major proportion. He thought nothing of mounting his horse 'Resolution' for Eastbourne and back to see a patient. He was civil surgeon to the troops in Battle awaiting Napoleon, and retired on the late 1860s. His practice covered the area from Rye to Hailsham.

Doctors still travel to their patients, of course, though nowadays much shorter distances. The daughter of one in this account (see Edward Smith below) is thought to have gathered much of her knowledge of and affection for rural Sussex from accompanying her father round the villages in his pony and trap and used it in her best-selling novels.

Nineteenth century records before 1841 are sparse. Robert Muter practised at Battle at least in 1815-20; there is no further definitive identification. He seems to have been born in Lanarkshire in 1780, being described in 1811 as a surgeon and apothecary (MD, MRCP) of Holbeach in Lincolnshire; an article on eye surgery in the name of Robert Muter of Holbeach appeared that year. He married Sarah Brook at Westham in 1808. Five of their children were baptised at St Mary's, Battle. There is a hint in the records that he may have emigrated to the United States.

There was also James Church, at Battle in 1821 when his daughter Emily Waterman Church was baptised. Born at Norwich in 1793 or 1794, according to the Medical Register he was practising before 1 August 1815, which seems unlikely given his age at the time. He is recorded in the censuses as practising at Sittingbourne. He died at Faversham in 1868.

The records include (1823) John Worge, one of the family that built Rose Green just off the Hastings Road, who had the dates (from baptism at St Mary's) 1792-1860. He was a surgeon of London at the time of his marriage in Islington in 1818. By 1832 he is described as *gentleman*, which *may* mean that he had retired. They also include (1831) John Blackman, but only by reference to his being subject to a bastardy order – the process by which the mother of an illegitimate child could have its paternity confirmed and arrangements made for its support. Blackman agreed to pay. The name Blackman is common in Battle, but he might have been unconnected to these others. His will, drawn up in 1834, states that he was then of Emsworth in Hampshire. Last of these strays is Henry Hewson, recorded in 1840. He was almost certainly the doctor who moved to Hawkhurst by 1851 and in 1855 was the workhouse medical officer there. He was a Lincolnshire man with MRCS (England) in 1832 and LSA 1835. He had had medical experience in Dublin. He appears to have died at Woolwich in 1869.

In 1841 Edward Holland was reported as a surgeon, 29 years of age, born in Sussex. He was still there in 1850 because he was a signatory to the petition that was to bring Edward Cresy to Battle for his survey of the town's non-existent public health provision. He is more difficult to find after that. He is not in the 1851 census for Battle, though a directory includes

him; this suggests a very recent departure. An Edward Christopher Holland appears in the 1851 census and medical register at Honiton; he has MRCS and MD. He is of the right age to be the Battle man but is reported as having been born at Lambeth; this is also so for 1861. Given the absence of such a birth (or of his first marriage) in the available records, one must conclude that the 1841 report of his birthplace is one of those regrettable mistakes made in censuses. He died at Bath in 1886.

Apart from Holland, in the 1851 census three doctors were listed alongside James Watts, all of them with appropriate qualifications. One was William Weston of Mount Street, also a farmer born at Sedlescombe in about 1814; he was there in 1861 but died at Battle in 1869, unmarried. His address is given as Mount Street, which suggests that he took over from Holland. The other was John Underwood, born of a dissenting family in rural Northamptonshire late in 1817. The census shows his wife, from Mountfield, and two very young daughters. Underwood obtained his MD from Edinburgh. His London qualifications were LSA (1841) and MRCS (1842). His marriage does not appear to have been in Sussex. Underwood had moved on to Hastings before the 1861 census, where he continued to practise and where he died in 1900. The third was James Watts's son Charles John Robert (1827-61), who does not appear in the census of the year of his death but was mistakenly recorded as a doctor later.

By 1861 the three are Weston, James Watts and James's son William Edward Monckton (1829-99). The censuses list James as a local surgeon up to 1861; by 1871 he has retired. William seems to have given up his practice when his father died, for he too is listed as retired in 1871. They probably sold their practice, but William remained in the Medical Register until his death. He died unmarried.

Later in 1861 it is clear that James has retired and in his place, in October, has arrived Charles West Roberts. Very soon he was involved in a case that made local headlines. He had a wife and two children, one very recently born; his wife fell ill at their house at 5 St Mary's Villas. He administered opium, followed by brandy. His wife remained ill; other doctors were called, but she died. At the inquest in December 1861 all the other doctors gave evidence that Roberts was drunk throughout their attendance, and that the quantity of brandy administered to his wife, which seemed to be at least half a pint and according to Mrs Roberts's sister was a pint, was likely to be lethal when combined with the opium. Roberts claimed that his wife had died of a heart defect, for which the other doctors could find no evidence. When the coroner's jury gave a verdict of accidental death they added that the conduct of Mr Roberts had been "extremely censurable". One observer shouted that there was not much chance of his Battle practice continuing – and it didn't. Clearly his part in the respected Watts practice could not continue.

Roberts was a Bristol man, born in 1827, who had been in practice in Kent since before 1859. Clearly his association with Battle would not survive the publicity and he soon left. He did not live long: he died at Radstock in Somerset in 1866, having remarried.

One of the doctors attending Mrs Roberts was also in practice at Battle for a short time: Bransby Cooper Peile. He was the same age as Roberts. By 1867 he had moved on to Ramsgate. He then developed an overseas practice and it was presumably while attending to this that when he died in 1881 it was at sea.

The Watts family medical tradition did not last. The family moved towards its sons taking holy orders, starting with James's son Percival James (1825-1891). He was accepted into Worcester College, Oxford, but did not graduate. When the Crimean War broke out he decided to enlist and in due course was invalided out, back to England. After the war ended in 1856 he resumed his academic career, graduating from New Inn Hall (later absorbed into Balliol College), Oxford, in 1861, and immediately took holy orders.

The 1871 census lists both surviving Watts as not practising. In their place are four newcomers.

One represented another Battle dynasty. He was Roger Duke (c1825-1920), born at Hastings where his father William and uncle Walter followed the same calling. William was a surgeon born in about 1776 whose first wife Jane had died in 1813. In 1818 he married Sarah Barham at Lambeth, and Roger was their son. Roger, however, never married, so any thoughts of a continuing family line would be mistaken. He was LSA 1855 and MRCS (London) 1857; he is reported as practising at Battle as early as 1863 and as being Medical Officer of Health for the Battle Union. He remained in the town until after 1891, when he moved to Hastings, where he appears to have been practising as late as 1903. He is buried at Netherfield, where his brother Robert had been the first vicar (though his later career was fraught with difficulty).

The second new arrival was Edward Smith, later Kaye-Smith. We know more about him because of researches into the life of his daughter, the writer Sheila Kaye-Smith. His father was a surgeon in India, where Smith was born in 1839/40. Educated at Marischal College, Aberdeen (then one of the two universities in that city, later merged), he came to Battle in 1867/68 and took a house at 22 Upper Lake – the property next to the set-back Victorian creation Cleveland House. He and his wife had their daughter Dulcie there, but his wife died two weeks later, in June 1869. Smith was very active at Battle, being among other things the first medical officer of health (1873), a trustee of the Battle charities, surgeon to the workhouse and a churchwarden. In 1881/82 he moved to St Leonards, where he married again and remained for the rest of his life. He died in March 1922.<sup>8</sup>

The third newcomer was listed in the 1871 census as Herbert Ernest Hudson, aged 34 and born at Cranbrook. The Medical Register and other sources, however, name him Hubert. He had only just registered as a doctor, so this was his first practice; he had LSA 1869 and MRCS (England) 1870. He was still at Battle in 1881 and then drops out of the records until his death at Darwell Bank in 1897.

The fourth was Charles Nottidge. He had been born at Streatham (baptised 1833) but his subsequent career is hard to trace, thanks to his usual absence from censuses and the Medical Register. He was in Battle by 1871, living in Mount Street, and died in the town early in 1887, but does not appear in the 1881 census. It seems likely that he succeeded William Weston in his practice.

The 1881 census shows one addition. This was Rashell Thomas Davison, a Northumberland man who practised from Langton House in the High Street. He had obtained his MB from Aberdeen in 1874, and at once his MRCS (England); he registered as a physician in the same year and his first practice was in Highgate, Middlesex. He had arrived at Battle by at least 1880 and all his six children were born in the town, including a son, also Rashell, who was

seriously wounded in the First World War and taken prisoner; freed at the armistice, he died in January 1919. The elder Rashell was medical officer to the workhouse and medical officer of health from 1881 to his leaving the town. The latter appointment was not very welcome to the Local Government Board in London, which complained that he was not fully qualified although he seems to have been no less so than his predecessor. The local board insisted on keeping and reappointing him.

In 1895/96 the Davison family left Battle for New Malden and their contact with the town then ended. Rashell was in general practice at New Malden and later became medical officer of health for the Urban District of Malden and Coombe. He died in London in 1936.

By 1891 things had changed again, but at least we now have recorded house numbers in the town itself. Roger Duke is there at 5 High Street; George Kendall has arrived, succeeding Hubert Hudson. 22 Upper Lake is no longer a doctor's house cum surgery.

## **THE TWENTIETH CENTURY up to the Second World War**

Kendall was at 69/70 High Street; after the First World War he moved to 36 High Street, where he would remain until his retirement in 1928. Kendall was born in 1860; his father, a Yorkshireman, was a pharmaceutical chemist living at Kennington, in the vestry (later borough), of Lambeth. He qualified as a physician in 1884 – MRCS (England) and LRCP (London); Battle may have been both his first and last practices. He was also surgeon to the workhouse for a time, when the two doctors concerned joined up in the war.

He was highly regarded by the population, and the Museum has a certificate attesting to this: one source (which in at least one other respect is inaccurate) states:

Before the introduction of the National Health Service patients paid their GP for any necessary treatment. Many could not afford it but Dr Kendall, who was uniting in his devotion to his patients, refused to charge anyone who, he thought, would have difficulty paying.

He would come out at any time of day or night in his pony and trap, driven by his coachman Mr Charles Turner (later his chauffeur). Any medicines he prescribed he either brought himself, or sent, often by an old man called Edwards, who would walk with his basket from the High Street in Battle, sometimes miles to an outlying village.

He was not a rich man when he retired: the fund collected for him was enough to purchase a freehold residence in King's Drive, Eastbourne. He died, aged 73, in 1932.<sup>9</sup>

Kendall's wife Ada died at Battle in 1911 and his mother also at Battle in 1914; his nephew Robert, who had been living at Battle, died of wounds received in action in 1916. Perhaps understandably, when the war ended George Kendall was one of those prominent in seeking a constructive war memorial for the town rather than just a carved list, and the local council agreed to support his proposal for a nursing home; but the money could not be raised and enthusiasm fell away after the Dean erected his own memorial in the churchyard of St Mary's.<sup>10</sup> Kendall returned to Battle to be buried in the town cemetery. His surviving daughters inherited his Eastbourne house, and neither married. Two infants had died shortly after birth many years before.



In 1901 there were only two doctors listed. One was Kendall; the other was William Haig Brodie, living at 2 Upper Lake with his wife and two sons. Brodie succeeded Davison in 1896 not only in his practice but also in his offices of medical officer to the workhouse and Medical Officer of Health. He was certainly well-qualified: MB and Master of Surgery in 1881 (the year he registered) and MD (Edinburgh) 1889, followed by a Diploma in Public Health in 1891 and FRCS (England) 1895. Brodie was popular in the town, and joined various organisations, being president of the golf club for a while. He survived a row in 1902 that led to questions in the House of Commons: he had charged three female inmates of the workhouse for their vaccinations without knowing that the workhouse was also charging them. He survived; but not for very long. In 1905 there are newspaper reports of Daniel Brough being about to succeed him, and it is likely that he left that year or early in 1906. Brodie died at Ealing in March 1910. There is a newspaper report of 1898 stating that at one incident Brodie was assisted by Robert Sheppard, surgeon. No reference can be found of him in the relevant records, and he does not appear to be a close relation of the solicitor Charles Sheppard. He may have been merely a visitor.

Daniel Brough was a native of Dunbar. He was well qualified: MB and MS (Edin) CM (Edin) MRCS (Eng) LRCP and DPH (Cambridge). He registered as a physician in 1896, at the age of about 24, and in 1903 he was at Devonport. He was medical superintendent of the workhouse until he enlisted in the RAMC in January 1915; he survived the war, apparently without wounds, but lost his wife in a divorce case in which he was the injured party. He practised at Battle until at least 1938, being Medical Officer of Health for the town until 1934, and died at his home (Marloes, Marley Lane) in 1942. He appears to be the only practising medic at Battle at the time of the 1911 census.

The next doctor to join Battle, at the workhouse, was Ernest Dudley Richardson, in 1911 but at some point after the census was taken. He was not in the town very long. He joined up in August 1916, aged 30, becoming a Captain in the RAMC, but was invalided out two years later. He spent the rest of his life on the coast, dying at St Leonards in 1964.

We are now into an era in which census records are useful only as a past record and living memories are scarce.

The 1927 Kelly's directory reports that Brough was surgeon to the East Sussex Constabulary and the Post Office; public vaccinator; medical officer, Poor Law Institution (ex-workhouse); and MOH (medical officer of health) to the urban district council. These were a lot of tasks, even in a town as small as Battle.

It also reports a John Kendall, with the qualification LMSSA, an apothecaries' qualification short of a licence to practice. This appears to be George Kendall's nephew, son of his brother Alfred, who is reported in the 1901 census to have been living at 5 Abbey Green. He was the brother of Robert, reported as above as dying in the First World War. He does not appear in the on-line Medical Register (but neither do several undoubted physicians) and it is not clear what happened to him.

Kelly's directory includes the MOH for the Rural District, which was based at Watch Oak, though it is unclear where he practised. This is true of subsequent ones, even after 1934, when the Urban District and most of the Rural District were combined and there was only one MOH. In 1927 and 1930 this officer was Hugh Stott. In 1915 he had been recorded as in

charge of the Sussex smallpox hospital at Plumpton (MRCS England, LRCP London, DPH). Although the public records for Stott are confused it is clear that he was born at Friern Barnet in Middlesex and that his father was a doctor called Hugh. He was mayor of Lewes before the First World War and a strong supporter of women's suffrage.<sup>11</sup> He had a particular interest in public health and was an MOH in Sussex before the First World War. He died at Lewes in the summer of 1930. Despite the difficulty in the records it is clear that he lived at Friern Barnet, and his son, also Hugh (1884-1966), became a distinguished medical general in the Second World War. This was a long and unbroken line of doctors: the Lewes Hugh was the fourth.

In 1930 the other doctors were Brough, now with two newcomers, both at 36 High Street. One was Augustus Frederick Perl and the other Tom Nevill-Wood.

Perl was properly August Frederick, born at Hackney late in 1876. His father was a teacher of science. He was qualified by MB and BCh (London) and registered in 1899; he then worked at Barts before going to Yorkshire. He joined up in 1914, serving as a Captain in the RAMC. He must have come to Battle at the end of the 1920s, presumably on Kendall's retirement in 1928, and he died at Watch Oak (his residence) in 1940. His wife Olive, whom he married in 1908, had reached the age of 100 before she died at Hove in 1983. They had no children.

Perl's partner was Tom Nevill-Wood. The directory records him as qualifying through MB BCh (Cambridge), registering on his being awarded the MB in 1909. He had been born at Milton by Gravesend late in 1881, son of a brewer. He was educated at Marlborough College and Pembroke College, Cambridge, then at Guy's Hospital. Before coming to Battle he had practised at Burnley then and at East Bergholt in Suffolk. At Battle he lived at Anderida, in Hastings Road.

Nevill-Wood was to retire in the 1950s and died at Cranbrook in 1966. When in Suffolk he had married Helen Hildebrand, daughter of a man who rose to be Brigadier-General, and thereby hangs what might otherwise be a small mystery. Helen's brother Geoffrey was killed in Palestine in April 1948 – in common terms it was a terrorist murder – and is commemorated in St Mary's at Battle by a small plaque on the blue metal gates to St Catherine's Chapel. He had no connection with the town other than through his sister, who with her husband paid for the gates and plaque. The gates were erected when the Dean was the Rev Alfred Thomas Arthur Naylor, DSO OBE, formerly a Chaplain to the King and with distinguished records in both world wars in which he served as a chaplain. The decision to erect the gates was taken in 1959, the last year of his Deanship.

The only recorded change to the doctors of Battle before the Second World War resulted from the local government reorganisation of 1934 when the Urban District was absorbed into a revised Rural District. The new MOH was Sir Alan Moore of Whatlington (1882-1959), son of the polymath and President of the Royal College of Physicians Sir Norman Moore.<sup>12</sup> He had been educated at Eton and Trinity College, Cambridge and had qualified at Barts Hospital in 1911. After service in the Royal Navy in 1914-19 he was reluctant to return to medical practice and went into medical administration, at Willesden and Lewes, and in the latter place became assistant school medical officer to the county council. Moore was particularly interested – as an MOH should be – in curbing the spread of infectious disease. In 1934 he was appointed MOH not only to the enlarged Battle Rural District but also to the borough of Rye.<sup>13</sup>

The doctors practised in several places throughout the town centre, but one stands out. 36 High Street is still a surgery, the only one in the High Street. It has been so for close on a hundred years.

In this account we have not yet mentioned a doctor whose name is still in current use. Anyone researching senior physicians will be familiar with the name Munk, because at some early point they will access Munk's Roll. This archive gives as much useful information as can be found on every Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians, though those not achieving Fellowship cannot be found there. It is updated every year. It owes its name to its initiator, William Munk.

Munk was born at Battle on 24 September 1816. His father William was an ironmonger, no doubt prosperous enough to secure a good education for his son; and his mother was Jane Kenward. They had married at St Mary's All Saints, Hastings, on 24 April 1816. It seems probable that she came from Battle and that the marriage took place elsewhere because she was already pregnant with the younger William. The Kenward family was well-known in the town, owning or leasing considerable property and giving their name to Kenward's Yard and later playing a part in the local board of health created in 1851. Unfortunately we know nothing about father William's origins other than that he had been born at Appledore in Kent. He was to die at Exeter in 1879, leaving the not inconsiderable sum of £12,000. The family had moved to Exeter from Battle, where the younger William married Emma Luke in 1849. They had several children.

Munk went to the recently established University College, London, and then on to Leyden. He took a particular interest in smallpox, then still prevalent, and was a physician at the Smallpox Hospital in London from 1853 to 1893. He was also interested in palliative treatment for incurables, a major matter today but in mid-Victorian times something of a novelty. He was elected FRCP in 1854, and became Harveian Librarian of the College three years later. It was in this position that he was able to begin the work that soon led to Munk's Roll. He was one of an increasing number of converts to Roman Catholicism in his century.<sup>14</sup>

Munk died at his house at 40 Finsbury Square, London, on 20 December 1898.

**George Kiloh**

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*Abbreviations used*

BCh	Bachelor of Surgery
CM	Master of Surgery
DSO	Distinguished Service Order
FRCP	Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons
FRCS	Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians
GP	General Practitioner
LMSSA	Licentiate in Medicine and Surgery of the Society of Apothecaries
LRCP	Licentiate of the Royal College of Physicians
MB	Bachelor of Medicine
MD	Doctor of Medicine
MRCS	Member of the Royal College of Surgeons
OBE	Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire
RAMC	Royal Army Medical Corps

## Sources

Unless given in the end-notes the sources used for this study are:

John Springford: *The Watts family* (unpublished; in the archive of the Battle and District Historical Society)

Data on censuses, births, marriages and deaths and probate; and the Medical Register; all held by [www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk)

The Hastings and St Leonards Observer, various dates

The Sussex Agricultural Express, various dates

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<sup>1</sup> See *Edmund Langdon and his world*, Adrian and Sarah Hall (BDHS 1927)

<sup>2</sup> Cambridge Alumni index, accessed 1 January 2017.

<sup>3</sup> Gentleman's Magazine, vol 71 (1792)

<sup>4</sup> The Medical Register, 1779

<sup>5</sup> Beryl Lucey: *Twenty centuries in Sedlescombe* (Regency Press, 1978)

<sup>6</sup> Munk's Roll (Royal College of Physicians)

<sup>7</sup> St Thomas's Hospital Gazette, July 1902.

<sup>8</sup> George Kiloh: *The brave remembered* (Battle and District Historical Society, 2015).

<sup>9</sup> *Battle in pictures* (YouByYou Books and Battle Museum of Local History, 2012).

<sup>10</sup> Kiloh, op cit.

<sup>11</sup> [http://www.clement-jones.com/ps01/ps01\\_164.htm](http://www.clement-jones.com/ps01/ps01_164.htm)

<sup>12</sup> See Charlotte Moore: *Hancox, a house and a family* (Viking 2010).

<sup>13</sup> For some more brief information on Moore see Charlotte Moore: *George and Sam* (Penguin, 2005)

<sup>14</sup> Leon Fine: *Harveian Librarians through the ages* (Royal College of Physicians)