

Winter
2022

The Medical Society of London Library Newsletter

Issue No: 1

Dear Fellows

I am learning so much about the history of our Library and about the remarkable volumes that we still possess. Here is my first stab at a periodic Library newsletter that I have been thinking about for some time. I have devoted this inaugural issue entirely to Dr Nathaniel Hulme, the Society's first Librarian, a quite remarkable man.

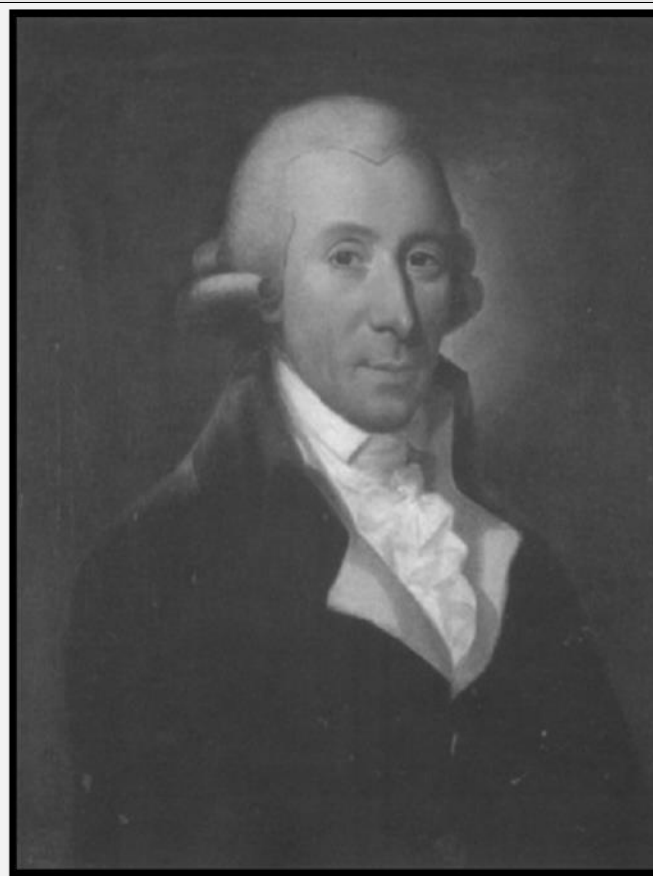
Please note that this newsletter is only for private circulation within the Society. Any opinions expressed are entirely mine and do not necessarily reflect the Society's views. Also, I assume responsibility for any inadvertent omissions and inaccuracies.

Colonel (Retd) S Jagdish
Honorary Librarian



The Audrey Tucker Library
(Courtesy of Medical Society of London)

Nathaniel Hulme was born in Holme Thorpe, near Halifax, Yorkshire in 1732. After serving his medical apprenticeship under his brother, Dr Joseph Hulme, a local physician, the young Nathaniel travelled south to become a pupil at Guy's Hospital. In 1755, he entered the Navy as a surgeon's mate. During a draft to Leith in Scotland, he attended medical classes in Edinburgh and graduated MD in 1765. He was admitted a Licentiate of the College of Physicians 28th March 1774, and appointed physician to the Charterhouse. He was also physician to the London Lying-in hospital. Dr. Hulme was admitted a fellow of the Royal Society 10th July 1794.



NATHANIEL HULME
MD LRCP FRS

b.17 June 1732 d.28 March 1807

Portrait by James Scott Stewart
(1791-1863)

"He practiced medicine during a long course of years with advantage to his patients and honour to himself"

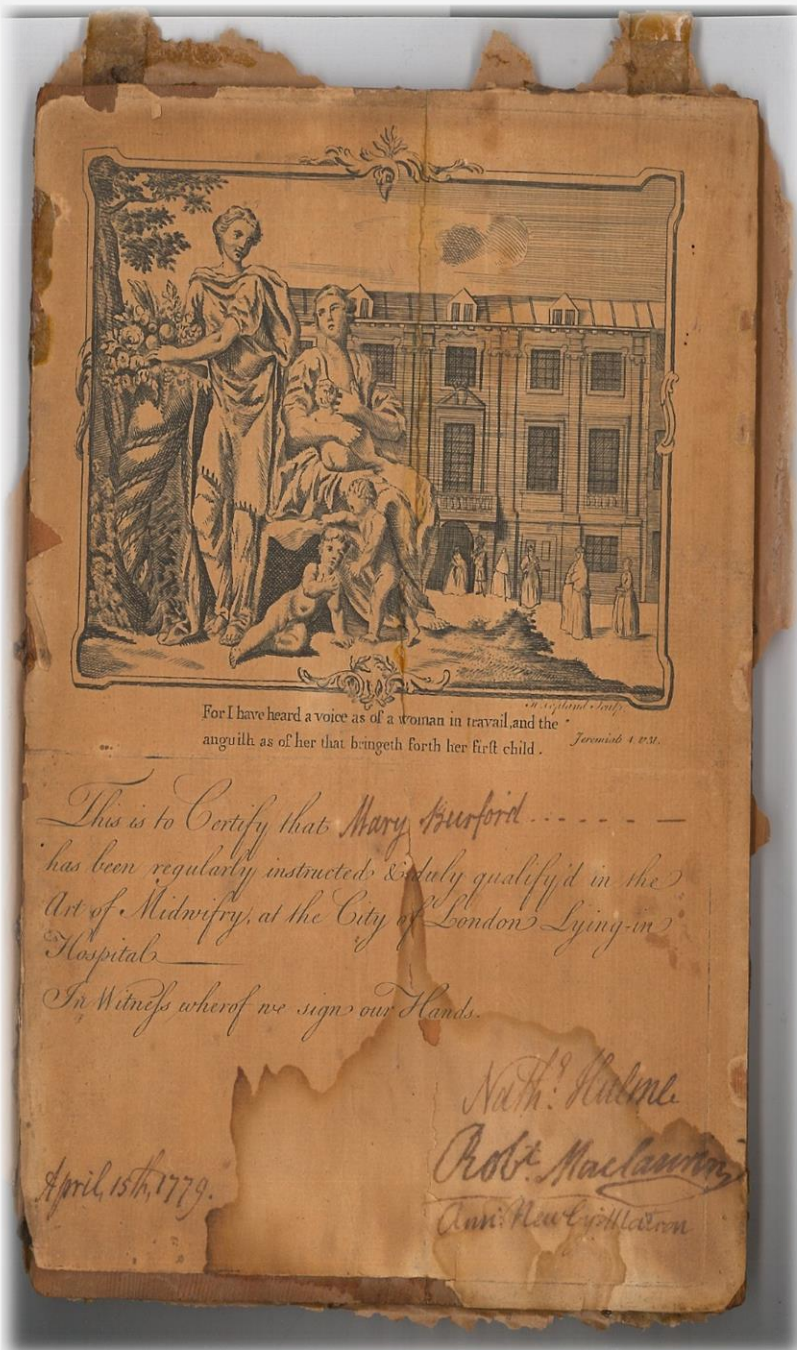
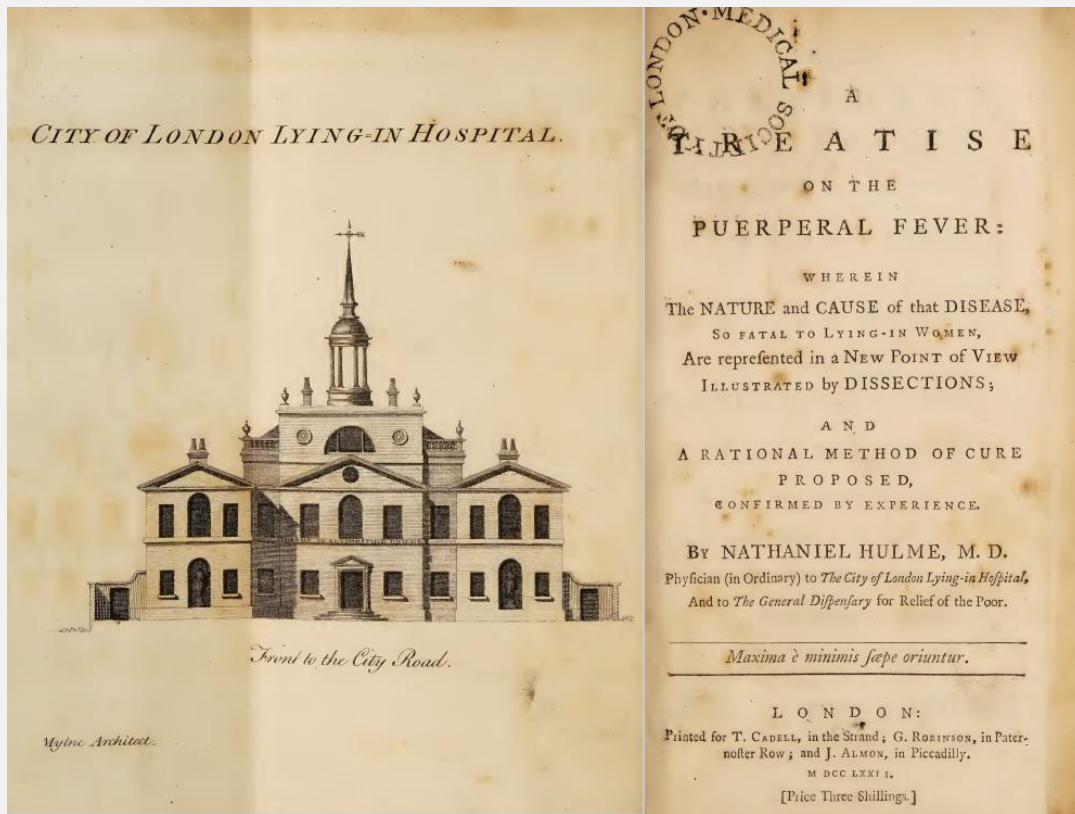
Hulme's Epitaph in Charterhouse Chapel

Hulme's key publications

Proposal for preventing the Scurvy in the British Navy, 1768.

A Treatise on the Puerperal Fever, 1772.

A Safe and Efficacious Remedy, proposed for the Relief of the Stone and Gravel, the Scurvy, Gout, &c., and for the Destruction of Worms in the Human Body, 1778.



A midwifery certificate, dated 1779 signed by Hulme

(From Heritage Collections of the Royal College of Midwives)

Puerperal Fever

In the of the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century, the nature of puerperal fever or 'child-bed fever' was hotly debated by two diametrically opposed traditions, the inflammationists and the putrefactionists leading to much uncertainty as to causation and treatment. This conflict would not be resolved till the emergence of "germ theory" towards the end of the nineteenth century typified by the work of Oliver Wendell Holmes and Ignaz Semmelweis.

Hulme, an avowed proponent of the inflammatory theory, declared that the inflammation arose, not in the uterus itself, but in other viscera, especially the omentum and the intestines. He attributed this to interruption of blood flow caused by pressure from the gravid uterus saying, "The vessels become completely filled with blood, and are ripe for inflammation". Hulme relied heavily on dissections for evidence to support his hypothesis that the inflammation of puerperal fever originated in the omentum. Despite cautionary warnings from others regarding placing undue reliance on morbid anatomy, the late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century writers on puerperal fever such as Hulme persisted with evidence from dissections.

The City of London 'Lying in Hospital for married women and sick and lame Outpatients.' opened in 1750 at London House in Aldersgate Street. Hulme was appointed physician to the City of London Lying-in Hospital in 1768 and his *Treatise on the Puerperal Fever* was written based on his experiences there.

Medical Society
or
LONDON.

At a Meeting of the Medical Society of London, viz
(Monday the 19th of May 1773. present,

- Dr. Hulme.*
- Dr. Lettsom.*
- Mr. Hooper.*
- Mr. Shaw.*
- Mr. Cornes.*
- Mr. French.*
- Mr. Ford.*
- Mr. Lane.*
- Mr. Atkinson.*
- Mr. Tait.*

The following Gentlemen were proposed as Members
of the Medical Society, and unanimously accepted.

- Mr. William Pitt*
- Mr. William Wheeler*
- Mr. Samuel Price*
- Gilbert Thompson (M.D.)*
- Mr. Joseph Bradley.*

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The Obligations Book on 19 May 1773

Hunting P, *The Medical Society of London*,
Postgraduate Medical Journal, 2004;80:350-354.

Hulme was, of course, a founding member of the Society with his name appearing before Lettsom's in the Obligations Book at the first meeting. He was also its first Librarian and was its third President in 1776. Watt suggests that not only did the Medical Society of London play a pivotal role in advancing naval medical initiatives, but also that naval surgeons such as Hulme contributed immensely to the Society and may well have rescued it, given that the minutes book in 1776 indicates 'the Society was in disarray, ill-attended, constitutionally lax and in danger of foundering'. Hulme, upon assuming the Presidency, took a firm line and introduced the principles and discipline that had characterized the Association of Navy Surgeons, including the responsibility of each member to read a paper. He led by example himself in this respect. Thereafter, the minutes were neat and well-kept, and the Society began to recover.

Hulme and the Dispensary movement

Around the time of the founding of the Medical Society, there was a cost-of-living crisis in London which had an undoubted effect on health. There was also a societal resignation to the all-pervading poverty. Harston noted, 'during the first half of the century (18th century) burials in London exceeded christenings in the proportion of three to two.....prevailing serious diseases were influenza, phthisis, smallpox, 'fevers' including typhus, and dropsy.' There was no meaningful system of health care for the poor especially for those not requiring hospital admission. Again, Harston notes, 'the establishment of medical dispensaries in London sets a cornerstone to the history of medical care for the sick poor.' Medical personalities of the day such as Lettsom and Fothergill were at the forefront of this Dispensary movement.



Aldersgate Dispensary from an engraving by T.H. Sheppard, 1839.

On Aldersgate Street, the General Dispensary was established on premises that had previously been the City of London Lying-In Hospital. Lettsom, who was much involved with this Dispensary, noted, 'a few benevolent gentlemen who form a little society or club first concerted this useful institution by whose influence the number of subscribers towards its establishment in the year 1770 amounted to about 100 when a physician (Dr Nathaniel Hulme) was chosen.' The Dispensary was noted for treating patients in their own homes and for its work in treating sick children.



Sir Joseph Banks (1743-1820)

by Sir Joshua Reynolds, National Portrait Gallery

A distinguished scientist, explorer and botanist, Banks' vast collection of plants and animals can still be seen in the Natural History Museum. He persuaded the Admiralty to allow him to join James Cook's expedition to the South Pacific in 1768 on HMS Endeavour. A very influential figure in later life, Banks, famously, was President of the Royal Society for a remarkable 40 years.

From Nathaniel Hulme

[10]

Hatton Garden

1 August 1768

Sir,

The vessels containing the orange and lemon juice which were sent you by order of Dr. Fothergill were to be marked, that you might know their contents. But least, in the hurry of sending them, that circumstance should have been neglected, I will take the liberty to explain them. /N^o 1/ The Case contains six gallons of Lemon-juice evaporated down to less than two gallons. /N^o 2./ The large Cask contains seven gallons of Orange-juice and one gallon of Brandy. /N^o 3/ The small Cask contains five Quarts of Lemon-juice and one of Brandy.

When you come to make use of the juice which is in the Casks, do not open the bung-hole, but draw it off at the end of the Cask, by means of a wooden-cock and make a vent-hole at the top of the Cask with a peg in it, and always observe this method when you draw off your Juice which you keep in Casks. You may find the proper directions for the preservation of the juice in Casks, in the Proposal, for preventing the Scurvy, p. 67, 82, 83.¹ It would not be amiss, then, if you were to take out with you several *wooden Cocks*, least any should be lost or broken: and perhaps 2 or 3 strong iron-bound Casks, holding ten Gallons apiece might be very useful for taking in a quantity of orange, lemon or lime Juice, when you touch at anyplace abroad where those Fruits grow; for the directions on this head see the Proposal, p. 82. - Besides the Juices, I would recommend to you to carry out a quantity of Molosses, and two or three pounds of the best Chio and Strasburgh Turpentine, in order to brew Beer with, for your daily drink, when your *Water becomes bad*. The rules for brewing this kind of Beer you will find in the Appendix to the Proposal. In this case you will want yeast, and the manner of preserving this at sea, you may also meet with in the Appendix p. 103,4. So small a quantity of Molosses as two Gallons, or two Gallons and an half are said to be sufficient for making an hogshead of tolerably good Beer. And this method of brewing Beer at sea, will be peculiarly useful in case you should have stinking water on board; for I find by Experiments that the smell of stinking water will be entirely destroyed by the process of fermentation. I sincerely wish you and your companions a most prosperous Voyage and a safe return to old England, loaded with all the honours you so justly deserve; and am,

Sir,

Your most humble servant,

N. Hulme

Hulme's letter to Joseph Banks on the eve of the departure of HMS Endeavour

Hulme and scurvy

When he obtained his MD at the University of Edinburgh in 1765, Hulme's thesis was 'De Scorbuto' (Of Scurvy). Given his service in the Royal Navy, it was unsurprising that he would write about a subject that he would have become familiar with. After coming to London, he commenced practice in Hatton Garden, where, in May 1768, he published a Latin essay on scurvy (an expansion of his thesis), with an appendix in English showing that the benefits of lime juice on long voyages had been familiar to the English since the sixteenth century. On Captain James Cook's first voyage of 1768-1771 on the *Endeavour* there were three outbreaks of scurvy, and his scientist Sir Joseph Banks cured his own scurvy with a personal supply of lemon juice that he had been advised by Nathaniel Hulme to bring along from London (see letter above). Interestingly, the military significance of scurvy and Lind's contribution have undergone considerable revision.

Later life

In 1774, by the influence of Lord Sandwich, First Lord of the Admiralty, Hulme was elected physician to the Charterhouse. He joined the College of Physicians, but never became a fellow. On 18 Jan. 1777, he gave an 'Oration de Re Medica' before the Medical Society about the case of a Charterhouse pensioner in whom he had succeeded in dissolving a stone within the bladder by the following prescription: fifteen grains of salt of tartar, in three ounces of pure water, four times a day, followed immediately by a draught of water containing twenty drops of weak spirit of vitriol. The same remedy was advocated by him the following year (1778), also for scurvy, gout, and worms, with an appendix on an extemporaneous method of impregnating water and other liquids with fixed air, by simple mixture only, without the assistance of complicated apparatus. In 1787 he received a gold medal from the Medical Society of Paris for an essay upon a question proposed as to sclerosis of the cellular tissue in the newborn. He was elected F.R.S. in 1794 and contributed two papers to the 'Philosophical Transactions' in 1800 and 1801 on 'Experiments and Observations on the Light which is spontaneously emitted from various Bodies'. He was also a fellow of the Society of Antiquaries and contributed to 'Archæologia' an 'Account of a Brick brought from the site of Ancient Babylon.'

Hulme died on 28 March 1807 from the effects of a fall from the roof of his house, to which he had climbed up to assess the damage done to the chimneys by a storm. He was buried at his request in the pensioners' burial-ground of the Charterhouse. In his will, he had bequeathed £50 to the Medical Society's Library.

Further reading:

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