

PETER HOLLAND (1766-1855)
Knutsford Surgeon

1. Family Background

Samuel Holland,¹ the fourth son of John Holland of Mobberley, was born on 25 March 1734. Samuel Holland had estates at Sandlebridge,² a property of about 30 acres some three miles from Knutsford, and at Dogholes near Great Warford. He was married at Knutsford on 10 October 1763 to Anne Swinton, the daughter of Peter and Hannah Swinton of Nether Knutsford.

The couple had three sons and six daughters. The eldest son was Peter Holland, born on 3 June 1766, who became a medical practitioner. Peter's two younger brothers were Samuel Holland, who established a business trading between Liverpool and South America and Swinton Colthurst Holland, who became a partner in Barings. Peter Holland's sister, Elizabeth, married William Stevenson and her daughter, Elizabeth Cleghorn Stevenson, became Mrs. Gaskell³ on her marriage to the Revd. William Gaskell. Elizabeth Cleghorn Stevenson⁴ was born on 29 September 1810; her mother, Elizabeth Stevenson died on 29 October 1811.

Robert Murray⁵ notes that Elizabeth Gaskell was brought up in Knutsford by another of Peter's sisters, Hannah Lumb. Elizabeth spent much time with her uncle and it seems likely that he was the model for her Mr. Gibson, the country doctor in *Wives and Daughters*.

Samuel Holland died on 26 May 1816, aged 82 and was buried at Knutsford Chapel. His wife had been buried there in 1814. Peter Holland succeeded his father to the Sandlebridge estate. Peter married Mary, the daughter of the Revd. William Willetts of Newcastle in Staffordshire. Mary's mother was a sister of Josiah Wedgwood. Peter and Mary had seven children: Henry, who succeeded his father was born 27 October 1788; Mary and Lucy, who never married; Elizabeth who married the Revd. Franklin Howorth of Bury; and three who died in infancy. Peter Holland's wife, Mary, died in 1803.

The records of the Old Dissenting Chapel⁶ at Nether Knutsford, later known as Brooke Street, were examined on microfilm at the Chester County Record Office. There is a baptism record for Mary, daughter of Mr. Peter and Mary Holland of Lower Knutsford born 16 October and baptised on 18 November 1792. The records prior to 1792 are very sparse.

Peter's second marriage, on 21 January 1809 at Walcot in Somerset, was to Mary Whittaker,⁷ the daughter of Daniel⁸ and his wife Esther formerly Boardman. Daniel, a Manchester merchant, and Esther were married at Manchester Parish Church on 1 November 1756. Mary was one of fourteen children, and she was baptised on 25 January 1769 at St. Mary's Manchester. Another daughter, Frances, married Thomas Broadhurst, sometime Dissenting Minister in Bath. A further daughter, Martha was the mother of Marianne Sharp, the first wife of

¹ *A History of the Family of Holland of Mobberley and Knutsford in the County of Cheshire, with some account of the family of Holland of Upholland and Denton in the County of Lancaster*, edited by Wm. Fergusson Irvine, from material collected by the late Edgar Swinton Holland. Privately Printed at the Ballantyne Press, Edinburgh, 1902.

² *The Lancashire Hollands* by Bernard Holland, published by John Murray, London, 1917.

³ There is a record in the register of the Old Dissenting Chapel in Knutsford of the baptism of Marianne, the daughter of the Revd. William Gaskell, Minister at Cross Street Chapel and his wife, Elizabeth Cleghorn (her middle name), born 12 September 1834 and baptised 26 November 1834, by Henry Green.

⁴ These dates were kindly supplied by Richard Renold. This point is discussed in *Elizabeth Gaskell, the Early Years*, by Prof. John Chapple, Manchester, 1997, page 112.

⁵ *Peter Holland: a pioneer of occupational medicine*, by Robert Murray, British Journal of Industrial Medicine, 1992; **49**: 377.

⁶ Reference RG 4/190 on film MF 1/4

⁷ Richard Renold reports that this event is discussed in Professor Chapples book and the entry has been confirmed in the parish register. It is also recorded in a family bible.

⁸ Richard Renold reports that Mary Whitaker's father was incorrectly reported to be Jememiah Whitaker in Hunter's *Familiae Minorum Gentium*, Harleian Society, Volume 37, MS 133, page 301 and this name has been perpetuated in Burke's Peerage and elsewhere.

Richard Timothy Deane, mentioned below. At St. John's in Knutsford there was or is a monument inscribed as follows:

Esther Whittaker, widow of the late Daniel Whittaker of Manchester, died Janry 26th 1813 aged 80.
Mary wife of Peter Holland, Surgeon, died Augst 5th 1840 aged 71 and Catharine, daughter of Daniel and Hester Whittaker, died August 30th 1844 aged 85 years.⁹

Peter Holland and Mary had three children: Charles Aiken, Susan and Arthur. Susan Holland became the second wife of Richard Timothy Dean, a surgeon of Knutsford, as described in a later section. Holland and Dean was the name given to the medical practice in the 1834 edition of Pigot's Directory of Cheshire.

Arthur Holland was born 3 March 1813 and the event¹⁰ is recorded at Hanover Square Chapel, Newcastle upon Tyne on 13 September 1813. The minister at Hanover Square Chapel was the Revd. William Turner. His first wife was Mary Holland and his second wife was Jane Willets, sister of Peter Holland's first wife. William Turner's daughter, Mary, married the Revd. John Gooch Robberds, who was the senior colleague of the Revd. William Gaskell at Cross Street Chapel in Manchester. This shows the closely intertwined nature of this group of Dissenting families. Arthur Holland, described as the son of P. Holland, Esq., surgeon of Knutsford, was buried on 30 August 1833, aged 20, at Brooke Street in Knutsford.

In the 1851 census, Peter Holland was living in Princess Street and was described as a retired medical practitioner aged 84, born in Mobberley. Mary and Lucy, unmarried daughters born in Knutsford were living with him and were then aged 58 and 50 respectively. The servants at this time are of interest because of the mention of servants in Peter Holland's will as shown below. They were all unmarried women: Elizabeth Birchinall, 29, cook, born in Sutton; Mary Toft, 26, maid, born in Knutsford; Lucy Leighton, 19, waiter, born in Tytherington; Maria Murray, 29, nursemaid, born in Staffordshire; and Mary Harman, 16, kitchen girl, born in Knutsford.

2. Peter Holland's Medical Career

The Royal College of Physicians had been founded by Henry VIII in 1528 to organise and control teaching in London. In 1800 membership consisted of only 50 associates and 50 licentiates. This exclusivity made these physicians, who were almost entirely based in London, very rich. To counter competition from Scottish doctors it became a requirement that members must graduate from Oxford or Cambridge. However at these institutions medical education was far behind that available in Scotland. It consisted mainly of learning the works of Galen, a Greek physician who lived in the second century AD. Qualification was by oral examination, in Latin, on three questions known in advance, about the works of Galen and Hippocrates. Contact with patients was not required and indeed neither town had a significant hospital. Oxford and Cambridge required students to be Anglicans. The monopoly which the Established Church had on grammar schools and universities produced a conservatism and complacency which did not serve the nation well at a time when the industrial revolution required education in mathematics, natural science, navigation and engineering.

Dissenters such as Peter Holland had to pursue other options. In the early part of the 18th century they may have gone to Leyden in Holland, where there were no religious barriers and where teaching was in Latin. However, during the 18th century, Edinburgh University developed the premier school of medicine in the British Isles and many Dissenters went there to train. The school had been set up by four Scots who had trained in Holland. Under the physician Boerhaave, they learned by looking both at patients in hospital and by dissections post-mortem. This was in stark contrast to the reliance on the writing of the ancients at Oxford and Cambridge.

The Guild of Barber Surgeons, dating from 1540, split into two groups, Barbers and Surgeons in 1745. In 1800 the Royal College of Surgeons received its charter. Most of the medical practitioners in England were surgeons and they qualified by apprenticeship. Many surgeons also qualified as apothecaries. Apothecaries provided most of the medical service outside London especially for the middle and lower classes. The profession was initially recognised by Henry VIII as able to treat "simple diseases". Later the Apothecaries Company was formed. The apothecaries trained as apprentices and obtained legal regulation of their trade and qualifications in 1815. Until 1815, anyone could practice medicine without a recognised qualification or any legal control.

⁹ Information from Richard Renold.

¹⁰ Information from Richard Renold.

A major reform came with the Medical Act of 1858, which established the General Council of Medical Education and Registration and the approved book of drug treatments, known as the British Pharmacopoeia. The London and Provincial Medical Directory,¹¹ first produced in 1847 showed that the vast majority of medical men at this date were surgeons and apothecaries. Most were Members of the Royal College of Surgeons (MRCS) a few were Fellows. Apothecaries were mainly Licentiates of the Society of Apothecaries (LSA). Those with university education were less common, mainly with the degree of MD from Edinburgh, Glasgow or St. Andrews; a small number of surgeons had the degree of BA or MA in addition to MRCS. A very small number were Licentiates or Fellows of the Royal College of Physicians.

*Eighteenth Century Medics*¹² shows that Peter Holland of Nether Knutsford was apprenticed to Charles White of Manchester on 5 December 1783, when he was 17. The fee was £31 for three sessions. Charles White was an eminent surgeon and obstetrician.

Robert Murray mentions that Peter Holland, having studied with White, moved to Knutsford, which was just outside the ten mile radius of Manchester specified in his apprenticeship. Later Charles White accused Peter Holland of poaching on his territory and demanded from him a forfeit of £1000. The matter was settled by the intervention of the Earl of Stamford and Warrington of Dunham Hall, where Peter Holland had treated the countess. Pamela Sambrooke of Keele University has made an extensive study of the Dunham papers for her book *A Country House at Work: Three Centuries of Dunham Massey*,¹³ including some of the medical bills.¹⁴ The Dunham estate papers are at the John Rylands Library in Manchester.

In 1793, Peter Holland took on an apprentice, Charles Worthington, for three years. Further apprentices followed with Samuel Dean in 1796 and John Harrison in 1802. James Edge Partington,¹⁵ connected with a number of Manchester Charities, and a lecturer at Pine Street was another a pupil.

Peter Holland developed a large practice in the Knutsford area and became the family medical practitioner to the Leicesters at Tabley, the Stanleys at Alderley and the Egertons at Tatton. In addition, he attended the Gregs at home and at the Apprentice House at Quarry Bank Mill, Styal as mentioned below.

Peter Holland's connection with the Stanleys is mentioned in the letters¹⁶ of Maria Josepha Lady Stanley (1771-1862), the wife of Sir John Stanley of Alderley. She was the daughter of John Holroyd, the 1st Earl of Sheffield. She¹⁷ and her father had visited Edward Gibbon, the author of *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* in Lausanne. In 1795, after Gibbon's death they arranged his papers. Gibbon had a high opinion of her intellect and Lord Sheffield reported "Gibbon used to lament that Maria Josepha was not a boy, saying she would maintain a contest well with Charles James Fox." Maria had nine children, twin sons Edward and William and seven daughters. She maintained a regular correspondence with her aunt, Sarah Holroyd (1739-1820) whom she called Serena, and with her sister, Louisa, who was the wife of General Clinton. Some extracts of the correspondence that relate to Peter Holland are quoted below:

Letter of 1 June 1799 from London: Maria to Serena.

"We left the babies in perfect health ...and I have begged Mr. Holland to visit them as often as he can."

¹¹ *London and Provincial Medical Directory: 1847*, published by John Churchill, London 1847. Microfiche version from the Society of Genealogists.

¹² *Eighteenth Century Medics*, by P.J. Wallis and R. V. Wallis, 2nd Edition, Project for Historical Bibliography, Newcastle upon Tyne, 1988.

¹³ Published by the National Trust, in hardcover, 224 pages, September 2003, ISBN: 0707803446.

¹⁴ Bills of 1819 have reference number EGR 11/2/8/62/2.

¹⁵ *Manchester School Register* Vol. III part 2, 1802-1837, Chetham Soc. Vol. XCIV p. 277, 1874.

¹⁶ *The Early Married Life of Maria Josepha Lady Stanley, with extracts from Sir John Stanley's Praeterita*, edited by one of their grandchildren, Jane H Adeane, Longmans, Green and Co. London, 1899.

¹⁷ *The Ladies of Alderley, correspondence of Maria Josepha Stanley and her daughter in law, Henrietta Maria Stanley, 1841-1850*, edited by Nancy Mitford, Chapman Hall, London 1938.

Letter of 6 April 1800 from London: Maria to Serena.

“Since I wrote my mind has been a good deal engaged and good deal anxious about my poor little baby. She has been inoculated a fortnight ago, and the place seemed to die away, so Mr. Holland thought it advisable to try the other arm. On the eleventh day after the first inoculation, fever and inflammation had increased so considerably that Mr. Holland applied five leeches to the poor little arm, which in a very few hours gave great relief. Last night she had fever, and the other arm is very much inflamed in the usual way, so that I am puzzled to know whether she had the disorder last week or is going to have it in this. I hope in a few days the dear thing will be quite herself again, and all her arms restored to the convalescent state.”

Letter of 3 January 1802 from Alderley Park: Maria to Serena.

“You and Lady S are two ninnies to insist on Baby Lou’s being twice cowpocked. I have had thirty six children of all ages inoculated in Alderley within the last month, and all are doing well.”

The following illustrates Maria’s interest in the science of the day as well as her wit:

Letter of January 30 1803 from Alderley Park: Maria to Louisa.

“I wish I knew how to make a battery and try some experiments on the ox’s and sheep’s heads, and I wish I could hear what the wise folk say about it. Mr. Holland does not seem disposed to think it different from the electric fluid, and he is the only person I have seen who knows the difference between Galvanism and Calvinism.”

Peter Holland was appointed¹⁸ surgeon to the Earl of Chester’s Yeomanry Cavalry in 1803.

3 Peter Holland and the Apprentice House at Quarry Bank Mill

In his article in the *British Journal of Industrial Medicine*,¹⁹ Robert Murray described Peter Holland as a pioneer of occupational medicine. Murray stated that the earliest recorded occupation health service in England was at Samuel Greg’s Quarry Bank Mill. Greg employed Peter Holland to examine apprentices before they were taken on. Greg had first obtained apprentices from the workhouse in Newcastle under Lyme in 1785 as shown by a surviving indenture. It stated that Thomas Royle, aged 11, was apprenticed to Samuel Greg Esq., of Manchester, Cotton Manufacturer, by Thomas Payne, churchwarden, and Thomas Barratt, Overseer of the Poor of the Parish of Newcastle. Subsequently Greg took apprentices from as far afield as Norfolk and Somerset but an Act of Parliament in 1816 restricted the catchment area. After 1830, many of the apprentices were Irish immigrants from Liverpool.

The first record of a medical practitioner being employed at Quarry Bank Mill is in the accounts for 1789 when a fee of £10 was mentioned for an apothecary and surgeon. It is not known if this refers to Peter Holland. However by 1795 Peter Holland was treating the Greg family and was retained with an annual fee of 12 guineas for the care of the apprentices.

From 1804 to 1845 each visit of the surgeon was entered in a daybook. This may have been in response to Sir Robert Peel’s Health and Morals of Apprentices Act of 1802. The suitability of the apprentice for work or the treatment prescribed was noted. The records, now kept at Manchester Central Library, fill two hardback foolscap notebooks. The first volume deals with the period from 1804 to 1827 and the second from 1827 to 1845, by which time an Act of Parliament had required the appointment of factory surgeon.

The records are not easy to understand as Peter Holland made notes on the cases in shorthand and left instruction for the treatment in long hand. Robert Murray was able to discover the nature of the shorthand. It was a system published by Jeremiah Rich in 1642 and adapted by Philip Doddridge, the writer of the hymn *Christians Awake*. Doddridge was associated with the founding of the Warrington Academy and Robert

¹⁸ *The Earl of Chester’s Yeomanry Cavalry, 1797-1897*, Ballantyne Press, 1898.

¹⁹ *Peter Holland: a pioneer of occupational medicine*, by Robert Murray, *British Journal of Industrial Medicine*, 1992; **49**: 377..

Murray suggests that Peter Holland may have been a pupil at the academy. I quote from Murray's article two of the entries which he was able to decipher.

March 26, 1804: Mary Chadwick, pain in chest, cough and fever.

Let the Blister be applied to the painful part of the breast. Let it remain on 24 hours and when removed, let the part be dressed with the healing salve. Let her take two tablespoonfuls of the Mixture three times each day. Let her keep in bed and take milk and broth as her food.

At this time the main theory of medicine was that to treat disease one had to expel "morbid matter". There were several approaches: purging, emetics, bleeding with leeches or by venesection, and blistering. The latter was generally accomplished by noxious agents such as acids or alkalis or with naturally occurring blistering agents such as Spanish Fly, obtained from crushed beetles. The blister was burst to release the 'morbid matter' and treated with a salve, often known as a cerate. On 18th April, Mary Chadwick was prescribed another blister on her right side.

April 18, 1804: Betty Knight, ? worms of the taenia kind.

Let her take the powders marked (i) at bedtime and the following morning a small cupful of Senna tea. Let the powder and the Senna be repeated in the same manner every four days or twice a week.

Robert Murray states that the second volume is easier to understand but less interesting as Peter Holland makes fewer contributions. At Quarry Bank Mill there is a display on Peter Holland's role at the mill.

Keith Robinson²⁰ in *What Became of the Quarry Bank Mill Apprentices?* traced the origins of many of the apprentices and examined the medical records for information on illness and death. Among the treatments listed are blisters, purges, poultices, laudanum (an alcoholic solution of opium), bleeding with leeches, powdered chalk with cinnamon, green mixture, antimonial wine (possibly tartar emetic) anodyne pills, and that standby of the Georgian Period, Dr. James' powders.

Of particular interest is the use of fox-glove tea. The foxglove, *Digitalis purpurea* was first studied systematically in 1775 by William Withering,²¹ a medical practitioner and botanist. It was used for the treatment of dropsy, an accumulation of fluid in the tissues, usually caused by a weak heart. Digitalis is still used to strengthen heartbeat in some cases of heart failure. However, even from Withering's early work, it was known that very careful dosing was needed. The concentration of the active ingredients in the leaves was very variable depending on the season of the year and preparation of the medicine. There were no analytical methods to assess the strength of the preparation and overdose was frequently fatal. The apprentice in this case, one William Wyatt, received the foxglove tea on 2 October 1823 but died on the 16 October aged 19.

One of the other doctors practising at Quarry Bank Mill was Joseph Nightingale, who became the certifying factory surgeon in 1844. There was also Dr. Joseph Edward Dean, who in addition to his medical practice was postmaster at Wilmslow until 1840. Murray states that it was Joseph Edward Dean who married one of Peter Holland's daughters. However, examination of the registers for St. John's Church in Knutsford,²² shows that Susan Holland, daughter of Peter Holland, married **Richard Timothy** Dean, a widower and a surgeon, on 10 April 1844.

²⁰ *What became of the Quarry Bank Mill Apprentices? The Origins, Childhood and Adult Lives of 200 Cotton Workers*, by Keith Robinson, published by Quarry Bank Mill Enterprises, 1996.

²¹ *An Account of the Foxglove and some of its Medical Uses: with Practical Remarks on Dropsy and Other Diseases*, by William Withering, published by Robinsons, London, 1785 and reprinted in *Medical Classics*, 1937, 2, 305-443.

²² Microfilm at Knutsford Library.

4 Peter Holland and the Leicesters of Tabley

Peter Holland's connection with the Leicester family is known from accounts which survive at the Cheshire County Record Office.²³ A bill is known from as early as 1794 for Messrs. Howard and Holland, surgeons.²⁴ In addition there are accounts for Peter Holland from 1811 at the record office including a full set from 1821 to 1826 inclusive. Those for 1821, 1825 and 1826 have been examined in detail.

For 1821 the account is headed "Sir J F Leicester Bart. to P. Holland. It lists several items a week from January to March and then from June to December, amounting to £59-4-4. There was still £31-17-10 outstanding from 1820. For each item there is a brief description, the name of the patient, and the cost. The flavour of the account is given by the following few items.

June 9	Gargle	Lady L	0-3-0
June 11	Embrocation	Lady L	0-3-0
June 11	Pills	Tomlin	0-2-6
June 11	Draughts	Sir J F L	0-3-0
June 12	Blister and ointment	ditto	0-1-10

Most of the prescriptions were for unspecified emetics, mixtures, plasters, elixirs, embrocations, draughts, lotions, juleps, powders, gargles and pills. The few items that can be identified with more certainty are camphor juleps, laudanum, magnesia, and tincture of myrrh. There is also mention of extraction of teeth, opening an abscess, and bleeding.

Dr. Holland's bill for 1825 shows that the amounts due for the years of 1820 to 1825 inclusive were due and amounted to £287-6-7. Bearing in mind that the inflation factor since that date is about 100, this represents a sum of about £28,000. As we now know, Sir John's finances were becoming increasingly precarious and after his death in 1827 it was necessary to organise a sale to pay his debts.

The account for 1825 is not much more informative than that for 1821 in terms of the nature of the prescriptions, but the list does allow us to see who was in the household and how many items they received. Specifically mentioned are spirits of lavender, peppermint water, spirits of camphor, Salvolatile, black drops and spirits of hartshorn. The latter was a name for ammonia, used in the same way as smelling salts.

In 1826 the bill was headed "The R^t H^{ble} Lord De Tabley to Holland and Ankers". Holland's partner was probably William Ankers. However, while John Leicester had been elevated to a barony that year, he was in no better position to pay; the bill for the year was £50-5-11 but there was still £201 outstanding from the previous four years.

The declining state of Lord De Tabley's health is shown by the entries for the year. In December alone he received 34 prescription items made up of draughts, mixtures, bleeding, lotion, pills, liniment, black drops, aromatic vinegar, and powders.

Peter Holland was also associated with Mere Hall. On 28 March 1829, Alex Ogilvie, the agent at Mere, wrote²⁵ to his employer Peter Langford-Brooke in Italy mentioning that Peter Holland had been treating him with "the bark", i.e. cinchona bark.

5 Peter Holland's Will

Peter Holland made a will on 2 September 1846 in which we see that he was a wealthy man. He left to each of his servants a pound for each year of their service and to William and Mary Brown, and Samuel Steel, if living with him at the time of his death, £5 each. All his capital, cottages, land, water corn mill in Marthall cum Warford went to his eldest son, Henry who was by this time a very successful physician in London. The land, dwelling houses, outbuildings and gardens in Nether Knutsford, together with his seats in Knutsford church

²³ Cheshire Record Office. Tabley Papers: DLT/D76/1 (Ironmongers' and Medical Bills contains bills for 1821 to 1826. The accounts for 1815, 1816, 1818 and 1819, formerly in Bundle 36 and for 1810 to 1811, formerly in bundle 10 have not yet been identified under the new numbering system.)

²⁴ Cheshire Record Office. Tabley Papers: LE 14. Information from Lesley Edwards.

²⁵ Brooke of Mere Papers, John Rylands Library, Box V.5 bundle 948.

went to his daughter Mary Holland. She also received his plate, furniture and wines together with such books as she might select from his library. His two daughters in law, Saba and Elizabeth were given £19 19 shillings as a small token of his regard. Saba, was the second wife of his son, Henry. His grandchildren, Emily, Mary, Henry, Thurstan, Francis, James, Caroline and Gertrude received £5.

The daughter Mary also received £2000, and three further sums of £2000 were put in trust for his daughters Bessy, Lucy and Susan. The remainder of his estate was to be divided into five parts with one share each to daughters Mary, Bessy, Lucy and Susan and one to his son Charles Aikin Holland. Detailed arrangements were made for the redistribution of the money among the beneficiaries in the event that any had died before him or did not reach the age of 21. He nominated his sons Henry and Charles and his daughter Mary as executors and requested that Mary, who had devoted herself to the management of his personal affairs and was intimately acquainted with them, should be in charge of his account books.

The witnesses to the will seem odd in view of Peter Holland's many connections in the area. It may be that they were neighbours of the solicitor. They were Peter Toft, a joiner and John Leigh, a groom, both of Knutsford. Peter Holland died on 19 January 1855 and on 28 February, Charles Aikin Holland and Mary Holland, spinster, were sworn by the bishop's surrogate to administer the estate, which was said to be under £25,000. At today's value this would be worth over £1 million.

Craig Thornber, January 2005

This article was written originally for an adult education class, *Fine Arts and Society in the Georgian Country House*, run by Leslie Edwards under the aegis of Keele University at Tabley House. An abridged version has been published in *Cheshire Ancestor*, the magazine of the Family History Society of Cheshire, Volume 30, Issue No. 2, page 27, December 1999. I am grateful to Richard Renold of Lichfield for additional information provided since this article has been on the web. He is undertaking research on the family of John Holland of Dam Head, Mobberley.