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**Cirencester Grammar School, the Revd. Dr. John Washbourn,
and some Medical Pupils**

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By F.E. JAMES

The latter half of the eighteenth century was, in general, not a happy one for education. The grammar school curriculum of the time consisted virtually of Latin, Greek and Divinity, to which they were bound by their ancient statutes. Some did teach additional subjects such as mathematics, French, German and music, but at an extra charge. This however suffered a severe setback following an attempt to change the curriculum by the Leeds Grammar School. A dispute on this issue was referred to the Lord Chancellor, Lord Elton, who in 1805 stated 'instruction should not be on the grounds of expediency but on the intentions of the founder for the teaching grammatically of the learned languages'. Where boarding facilities existed, food was often inadequate, as was supervision after school hours, so that bullying was very common.¹

Cirencester Grammar School

The Grammar School at Cirencester dated from the thirteenth century; but after an unfortunate series of events rules for the conduct of the school were drawn up in the latter part of the seventeenth century. These are repeated by Mocral:²

Now to the end the same may remain ever hereafter and continue according to the first institution there of, a seminary and seed plot for the education of youth in virtue and learning, and for training them to do some service to the Church and State, to the honour of God and public good we the inhabitants of the said town – have made these ordinances for the government of the school That no women children shall be admitted – nor men children except those who at the time of their admittance can read the English Testament.

And every scholar at his first admittance who is the son of a townsman, shall pay 2*s.* 6*d.* and every scholar who is not the son of an inhabitant – shall pay 5*s.* to the schoolmaster.

And the schoolmaster for the time being shall not take by way of covenant or bargain above 12*d.* per quarter for teaching the children of townsmen that pay payments to the poor, unless any of the townsmen be or shall be content to give and pay more –: and those children whose parents are poor shall be taught freely without paying anything at all either for admission or otherwise.

That such scholars as can speak Latin shall with in the school use no other language than Latin in their familiar discourse. –

That the bailiff, treasurer and churchwardens of the Parish Church shall nominate an honest and learned man, of good disposition and name to be the sole master of the said Free Grammar School.

In the second half of the eighteenth century further problems beset the Cirencester Grammar School. Because of local political rivalries, two men were nominated for the post of master, and the county auditor reported the situation to the Exchequer, saying that in the circumstances he was unable to make payment to either. Eventually the dispute reached the

Lord Chancellor who decided, probably because of local circumstances, that appointments should be by the Crown. More detailed accounts are given by Ireland³ and Fuller.⁴ The old school building in Park Street has been very appropriately restored by the present owner, and although modernized it is possible to visualize the situation as it would have been in Dr. Washbourn's time.

Such information as can be obtained about activities in Cirencester's Grammar School at this time is indirect, as registers of pupils, dates of admission and leaving, and documents giving the curriculum followed or the employment of ushers have not been found. However, there was a remarkable period about the time of the appointment of John Washbourn as master in 1764, when five or probably six boys, some of whom were contemporaries, entered the medical profession, three becoming Fellows of the Royal Society.

John Washbourn (1745–1805)

The Rev. Dr. Washbourn came from a Gloucestershire family of clock-makers living in Westgate Street. His father married firstly Elizabeth Fownes in 1732, and secondly Anne Farmer on 7 August, 1743. He had three children before he died in June, 1749, John being baptized on 7 August 1745.⁵ A notice appeared in the *Gloucester Journal* in 1750, stating that Anne was disposing of the clock-making side of her business, but was continuing the watch trade with some jewellery, as well as starting as a milliner.⁶ In July, 1755, she married the Rev. Mr. William Mathews, B.A., of Brasenose College, at St. Nicholas' church, Gloucester,⁷ and in the following year Mr. Mathews was appointed master of the Cirencester Grammar School, taking with him his wife and, presumably, her three children by the first marriage. The eldest child, 10 years of age at the time of his move to Cirencester, was the future Rev. Dr. Washbourn, who was himself probably a pupil at the Grammar School until he matriculated at Pembroke College, Oxford, at the age of fifteen.⁸ His mother and stepfather produced a son, William Mathews junior, in 1761,⁹ and in 1764, the year of his stepfather's death, John Washbourn graduated B.A., and at eighteen was appointed master of the school in his stepfather's place.¹⁰ He may well have proved himself already as a very able assistant master; because of the wide range of the boys' ages, it was common practice at the time to employ older pupils for teaching, and he would thus have been appointed as a sitting tenant. With John Washbourn in residence, together with his mother, the other two children of her first marriage, and the son from the second at the master's accommodation, his claim, on his appointment, for enlargement of his quarters seems reasonable; and if he was also having to provide for the children, or some of them, extension of the provision for boarders to provide extra income becomes understandable. During his early period as master, he became an M.A. in 1768, and a B.D. in 1799. Because of his expansion of the number of boarders, the Vestry considered the town boys neglected, and they retaliated by charging for the pews occupied by Grammar School boys, as they did for pupils of private schools.¹¹ Relations with the Vestry continued to deteriorate, and in 1783 Washbourn dismissed all his paying pupils and devoted himself to life at Magdalen College, Oxford. There he became Vice-President in 1786, Dean of Divinity in 1787 (when he received his D.D.), and Bursar in 1797. He continued as master of the Grammar School, presumably employing an usher to teach the free boys, until his death in 1805; he continued, too, as Rector of Siddington, to which he had been instituted in 1775.^{11A} He was buried in Cirencester churchyard; a memorial tablet in the church, high on the west wall, is transcribed at the end of this paper.

Reflecting on the financial situation, one can see that it was impossible to expect John Washbourn to pay an usher and also maintain the fabric of the school on a basic salary from that

institution of £28 p.a.; and with such a restricted curriculum one wonders how Washbourn, from such a small school, produced six medical men, three of whom gained considerable fame. The eighteenth century was the age of the amateur scientist, especially the natural historian, and many clergy did have such interests; but there is no evidence that John Washbourn's were similar to those of Gilbert White. Washbourn's personal papers have not been located, and the only information relating to him at Magdalen College, Oxford is in College Registers. It may well be, however, that as Ireland suggests,¹² in addition to teaching the mandatory subjects he fostered the pupils' own interests: if so, he was a remarkably successful and able master, in spite of being a difficult character from the Vestry's point of view.

The pupils

The six boys were Edward Jenner, Caleb Parry, Charles Trye, John Clinch, James Dallaway and John Hickers.

Edward Jenner (1749–1823) is extremely well-known for his work on vaccination, and many biographies have been written. He also made many other important contributions to medicine and natural history; but an insufficiently appreciated aspect of his character has been his lifelong relationship with school-friends who entered medicine. There are two conflicting accounts of Jenner's early education: firstly, that of Fosbroke who, in a brief biography at the end of his book on the *Berkeley Manuscripts* writes¹³ 'He [Jenner] was a fine ruddy boy and at eight years of age was with many others put under a preparatory process for inoculation with the Small Pox by the late Mr. Holbrow of Wotton-under-Edge. This preparation lasted six weeks. He was bled to ascertain his blood was fine, was purged repeatedly till he became emaciated and feeble; was kept on a very low diet, small in quantity and dosed with a diet drink to sweeten his blood. After this barbarism of human-veterinary practice he was removed to one of the then usual inoculation stables and haltered up with others in a terrible state of disease, although none died. With good fortune the Doctor escaped with a mild exhibition of the disease. After this he went to Cirencester to school at which he stayed half a year; and upon his return home at the expiration of that term, he had arrived at the end of the Latin Accidence. His health not being quite reinstated he was consigned to the tuition of the Rev. Mr. Clissold at Wotton-under-Edge and at the same time put under the care of an eminent physician, the late Dr. Capell.'

The Grammar School at Wotton-under-Edge had the Rev. Thomas Clissold as Master from 1748–1788. Mr. Clissold's predecessor, Samuel Hayward, was unfortunately of unsound mind; the Bishop was asked to enquire into his capacity for duties, and recommended he be paid £20 p.a. in view of his incapacity; so that when Thomas Clissold was appointed, he had to pay to Mr. Hayward £20 of his £40 salary. By the ancient statutes of his school, only two poor boys of Wotton-under-Edge had to be admitted without payment, and it would seem Mr. Clissold made up his salary by suspending exhibition scholars and in some cases increasing fees.¹⁴

A second account of Jenner's education is given by Baron¹⁵ who writes 'When about the age of eight years, Jenner was put to school at Wotton-under-Edge under the Rev. Mr. Clissold. He was next placed under the tuition of the Rev. Dr. Washbourn at Cirencester where he made a respectable proficiency in the classics and laid the foundation of some of those friendships which were to continue throughout life. His taste for natural history began to show itself at a very early period. Before he was nine years of age he had made a collection of the nests of the dormouse; and when at Cirencester he used the hours spent by other boys in play or recreation, to searching for fossils, which abound in the oolitic formation in that neighbourhood.'

Fosbroke, curate at Horsley 1792–1810, was friendly with Jenner and members of the family; he did not however have the close and professional association that Baron had with Jenner from 1809 to 1823, and his interests and prolific writings centre on antiquarian subjects. Although Fosbroke's publication antedates Baron's by some eleven years, Baron received his biographical material on Jenner's death, and would almost certainly have written the first few pages of volume one of his two-volume biography soon afterwards. An early biographer who accepts Baron's version is Joseph Stratford,¹⁶ and there is the evidence from Caleb Parry that he was at school with Jenner. All biographers agree about the lifelong friendships formed by Jenner whilst at school, and six months would have been too short for these to develop, particularly bearing in mind the disparity of their ages in 1764 – Clinch 16, Jenner 15, Hicckes 13, Parry 9 and Trye 7, Dallaway not then being old enough for school.

John Washbourn was appointed master in June 1764, and Jenner was apprenticed to George Hardwick, apothecary of Chipping Sodbury, in 1765 for a period of seven years and a premium of £100.¹⁷ It is possible Jenner later transferred to Daniel Ludlow, a surgeon to whom all biographers say he was apprenticed, to obtain a wider experience. Jenner therefore had one year with John Washbourn whilst he was master, and an unknown period during the mastership of the Rev. Wm. Mathews.

Caleb Parry (1755–1822) was probably the next most important medical person to attend Dr. Washbourn's school. Although Parry was six years younger than Jenner, it is almost certain their paths crossed at the Cirencester Grammar School. Writing in 1814 in a dedication of his work *Cases of Tetanus and Rabies Contagiosa* to Edward Jenner, Parry writes 'I cannot better evince the gratification with which I contemplate our mutual friendship, uninterrupted during nearly fifty years, than by addressing a work closely connected with animal pathology to you'.¹⁸ Fifty years before 1814 Parry would have been some nine years of age and Jenner fifteen and both at the Cirencester Grammar School. This would be the year 1764 when John Washbourn was appointed, and one year preceding Jenner's apprenticeship to George Hardwick of Chipping Sodbury. Their families may also have been acquainted, as Parry's father was a learned divine and minister of the Cirencester Presbyterian Church.¹⁹ When fifteen years of age, Parry transferred to the Warrington Academy, a nonconformist establishment of high academic standards, before proceeding to the University of Edinburgh in 1773 and graduating M.D. in 1778.²⁰

Parry carefully recorded his cases, and can claim originality in the descriptions of many conditions including facial hemiatrophy (1774) and congenital idiopathic dilation of the colon (published posthumously in 1825). His account of exophthalmic goitre was so complete as justly to entitle him to the honour of its discovery.²¹ He was the author of numerous other medical works, and received many marks of distinction, including election to the Fellowship of the Royal Society in 1800. Although well remembered for his medical work, Parry was in his own day also well known as an agriculturist and a breeder of merino sheep, which he crossed with native breeds to improve the wool. This work was noticed by 'Farmer' George III who sent him two merino rams from his own flock.²² His entire professional life was spent at Bath, where he died and is buried in Bath Abbey.

A close school-friend of Jenner was *John Clinch (1748–1819)* who was baptized with his twin sister at Cirencester church on January 9th, 1748/9.²³ On leaving school Clinch, like Jenner, studied under the celebrated surgeon, John Hunter.²⁴ Clinch, who was an enthusiastic

low churchman, practised first in Dorset, where he founded a Sunday school after the style of Robert Raikes, whom he had met in Gloucester; and he took children of all denominations to the Congregational chapel. It was at Poole that he met a merchant who had business connections at Trinity, Newfoundland; this led to Clinch moving to Newfoundland, where he was a doctor and lay reader but later became an ordained clergyman. By 1799, he had in addition become a salaried judge, and at other times acted as magistrate, surveyor and collector of taxes. About this time he also had to deal with epidemics of smallpox and typhus, and was almost certainly the first person to practice vaccination in the New World, using cowpox vaccine sent to him on cotton threads by Edward Jenner; this he used in 1789 first on his own children.²⁵ Clinch was not so successful as a clergyman as he was a doctor: his church fell into disrepair, and the majority of his congregation had transferred to a newly-founded Methodist church by 1810. His admiration for Jenner was such that his fourth son was called John; he is thought to have returned to England to be apprenticed to a surgeon and apothecary.²⁶

Charles Brandon Trye (1757–1811) came from Leckhampton where his father was vicar. Stratford records²⁷ 'At the early age of seven years he was sent to the popular grammar school at Cirencester'; this would have been in 1764, the year of Washbourn's appointment. It therefore seems that the school's good reputation was established in the time of the previous master, the Rev. William Mathew, Washbourn's stepfather. On leaving school, Trye was apprenticed to Mr. Hallward, an apothecary of Worcester, and he also studied under Mr. Russel at the Worcester Infirmary: apprenticeship was necessary as Trye's father had died when he was nine years of age, and his mother could not afford to send him to the University of Edinburgh. Trye was appointed apothecary to the Gloucester Infirmary in 1780, but in 1782 resigned to spend a year and a half as house surgeon at Westminster Hospital and to study under John Hunter. John Sheldon, Professor of Anatomy at The Royal Academy was so impressed with Trye's skill as a dissector and his anatomical knowledge, that he engaged him to help at his private anatomy school; but shortly Sheldon became ill and had to retire. Trye returned to Gloucester, and in 1784 became senior surgeon to the Gloucester Infirmary and established a reputation in other directions. With Thomas Stock he founded a lying-in charity at Gloucester. He also opened up the quarries at Leckhampton for which he constructed a branch tramway to convey the stone to the Severn at Gloucester.²⁸ He became a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1807, Edward Jenner, Mathew Baillie and Samuel Lysons the great antiquary²⁹ being among his proposers.³⁰ Trye was suddenly taken ill in 1811 with cholera, and although attended by Jenner and Baron died on October 3rd. He is buried in St. Mary de Crypt, and has a memorial in Gloucester Cathedral by the dean's door on the north wall, opposite the statue of his friend Jenner.

James Dallaway (1763–1834), who was born in Bristol, the son of a Stroud banker, and lived for a time at the Fort at Rodborough, was another of Washbourn's pupils, probably about 1773. He became a foundation scholar at Trinity College, Oxford, but failed to obtain a fellowship, as he was alleged to be the author of some satirical verses about a senior member of the College. After ordination he was curate at Rodborough, and later obtained an Oxford M.B. Dallaway was concerned with Ralph Bigland's son Richard in the publication of the first volume of *Gloucestershire Collections* about 1786; but by 1794 Richard Bigland and Dallaway were involved in a somewhat acrimonious correspondence in the *Gloucester Journal* – a complicating factor was that Bigland lent money to Dallaway which he was slow to repay. Dallaway postponed any more

co-operation with Bigland as he was going abroad, but in the event he took no further part in the Bigland volumes;³¹ in the *Gloucester Journal* correspondence he does not appear in a very favourable light. The appointment in Turkey to which Dallaway referred was the combined posts of physician and chaplain to the British Embassy in Constantinople, which he occupied for only some three years before returning to clerical duties; he had several livings, and from 1797 was secretary to his patron, the Earl Marshal.³²

Dallaway does not appear to have had any interest in natural history, and his written works, which are numerous, are concerned with heraldic and antiquarian matters (notably his *Antiquities of Bristow in the Middle Centuries* (1834) with its valuable transcript of William Worcester), and his travels in the Levant. He is the exception among Dr. John Washbourn's medical pupils as the one with whom Edward Jenner did not correspond.³³

The sixth boy was *John Heathfield Hickee* (1751–1808), who came from a well-known Gloucestershire family, and was very distantly related to Edward Jenner by marriage through Jenner's grandmother, Mary Davies.³⁴ He was also a cousin of Henry Hicks³⁵ who, Baron says,³⁶ was a lay visitor to the Medico-Convivial Club; John Hickee was a foundation member. Parry, writing of the Medico-Convivial Club, reports 'This little society meeting thrice annually during several years at Rodborough in Gloucestershire, and other places for the united purposes of conviviality and improvement in medical science, consisted only of the following persons: Dr. Hickee of Bristol, Dr. Jenner of Cheltenham, Dr. Ludlow of Corsham, Mr. Paytherus of Norfolk Street, London and the author of these pages. We were all virtually either school-fellows or fellow students. The last two are to me comparatively late of acquaintance, of about twenty years: but they have been endeared to me by private and professional merits and by habits of reciprocal obligation. Of the first two it is sufficient to say they have been my friends for almost twice that period acquired in the gay morning of my life and faithfully preserved during various changes of place and fortune.'³⁷ It is possible, thus, that Parry knew both Jenner and Hickee at school, a view taken by Proudfit.³⁸ Hickee later proceeded to the University of Edinburgh where he matriculated for the sessions 1772–3, 1774–5, and 1775–6, and qualified M.D. in 1776.³⁹ He practised first in Gloucester, where in August 1778 he was elected physician to the Gloucester Hospital in succession to Dr. Wall – a post he occupied until 1795.⁴⁰ During this period Hickee was certainly known to John Hunter, for he was the carrier of hedgehogs from Jenner for the famous hibernation experiments (probably in the year 1778).⁴¹

Jenner was also helped by Hickee in the development of vaccination by his clinical descriptions of chickenpox, smallpox and cowpox epidemics which were often misdiagnosed by local people. John Hickee reported to the Medical Society in 1791 that there had been an outbreak of swinepox in the Gloucester infirmary; it was so similar to smallpox that some doctors believed it not a distinct disease,⁴² and for us it is difficult to realise that, at this time, illnesses associated with vesicular rashes were poorly differentiated: William Heberden had first differentiated chickenpox in 1782, published in his *Commentarii de Morborum Historia et Curatione*, (1802) English version (1803).⁴³ This work acquired international fame, an excellent and accurate account of it appearing in 1818.⁴⁴ By 1800, Hickee is recorded as residing at Park Street, Bristol having been in 1787 an unsuccessful candidate for a post of physician at the Bristol Infirmary.⁴⁵ Later he returned to his family estate at Pedington, near Berkeley, where he died, aged 57, in July 1808⁴⁶ and was buried in the same churchyard as Edward Jenner. A memorial to him is on the south wall of Berkeley church.

Jenner was certainly responsible for maintaining friendship and correspondence with these medical men. Although Fisk⁴⁷ states that Jenner's profession was chosen for him by his family for practical reasons, it would be fascinating to know the influences which led such youths to enter medicine and surgery at a time when these subjects were beginning a period of tremendous growth in knowledge, and starting on a scientific path based on experiment and observation. The circumstances which led a small school to produce six boys having an interest in natural science and entering medicine, three becoming Fellows of the Royal Society, must have been exceptional. A neglected but endearing aspect of Jenner's character is his constantly keeping in touch with old friends, and it may even be that his influence further conveyed his own interest in natural history to them.

Jenner's and Parry's influence on medicine is well documented in their writings, and although little known in this country, John Clinch, the medical missionary was, as we have seen, a pioneer in bringing medicine and vaccination to North America. Trye and Hickee were not so influential in their writings, but they were both hospital practitioners in Gloucester, and this helped to further the eighteenth-century hospital movement which was to have a profound effect on medicine, and more especially medical education. In 1784, Trye wrote: 'A youth who is desirous to acquaint himself with Medicine and Surgery, I would advise to place himself in a city or town, which has the advantage of a public hospital where the surgeons take pupils. In such a town let him article himself to an apothecary of character, not indeed with a view of acquiring further knowledge from his master than that of the common business of an Apothecary's shop, but that he may not be destitute of employment when he is disengaged from his studies or from (what I am next to recommend) his attendance upon the practice of the public Hospital. For I most strongly urge his attendance upon a hospital, as the only situation, which will afford him any true knowledge of the nature and cure of diseases. Without it, indeed an apprenticeship in Surgery and Pharmacy is a burlesque. In his engagements with the Apothecary, with whom he may be placed, he should article for an allowance of so much time every day to attend upon the Infirmary . . . As to the situation - I can only recommend this town only as having perhaps the largest and best regulated hospital in the Kingdom, those of London excepted, and even those want numerous advantages which ours possesses.'⁴⁸

It is possible that a desire to further hospital medical education prompted John Hickee to move to Bristol, where he may have thought there was more likelihood of there being a medical school than at Gloucester.

It is perhaps surprising that the school which has such a long history, and for a short period produced pupils destined to be distinguished in later life, is little marked in Cirencester. It is a pleasure, however, to acknowledge the kindness of Mr. Hamilton Foyne in showing me round his home, the old Grammar School, and in discussing John Washbourn. It is a pleasure also to acknowledge the help given by Mr. Brian Frith in conversations at the Gloucestershire Record Office.

APPENDIX

Near this place lie the remains of
Anne Mathews
 (Wife of the Reverend William Mathews A.M.)
 who died January 4th 1800 aged 80
 Also of the Reverend John Washbourn D.D.
 (Her son by her first husband)
 Fellow of Magdalene College Oxford
 Rector of Siddington St. Mary in this County
 and many years Master of the Grammar School in this Towne
 who died November 22nd 1805 aged 60
 Likewise of Ann Washbourn
 her daughter who died April 7th 1783 aged 36
 Also of the Reverend William Mathews A.M.
 Vicar of Chaddesley Corbet in the County of Worcester
 who died May 25th 1805 aged 44

This is a transcription made in May, 1993 by the author, of the monument noted by Sir John Maclean (*TBGAS* 17 (1887–8), 282) on the west wall of Cirencester church. He describes the arms of Mathews and Washbourn, respectively above and below the text, as follows: *gu., 3 catherine wheels or on a chief arg., a bull's head coupé sa.; and base, upon a fesse gu., 3 cinquefoils between 6 martlets of the second.* Cf. nos. 37 and 38 in his annexed plates. The second William Mathews is mentioned above, p. 192.

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3. J. Ireland, 'The common and free Grammar Schools of Cirencester', M.Lit. thesis, University of Bristol, 1968.
4. A.E. Fuller, 'Cirencester free Grammar School', *TBGAS* 11 (1886–7), 123–9.
5. Buried 9 June: Gloucester St. Nicholas Parish Register (GRO ref. P154/15 IN 1/2); John baptized 7 August 1754, *ibid.*
6. G. Dowler, *Gloucester clock and watch makers* (Chichester, 1984), 32–3.
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8. J. Foster, *Alumni Oxonienses 1715–1886* (1888) [iv], 1506.
9. *Ibid.*, 928.
10. Bingham Library, Cirencester, Local Studies Collection S2–2e.
11. Kilner MSS (GRO IN 6/4), 86. – See above, p. 181 [ed.].
- 11A. John Washbourn was instituted and admitted to the Rectory of Siddington St. Mary with the Vicarage of Siddington St. Peter on 23 September 1775 (GDR 307, 71). The combined livings were worth £429 (S. Lewis, *Topographical Dictionary* (1835), iv, s.v.).
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42. R. Fisher, *Edward Jenner, 1749–1823* (1951), 56.
43. E. Heberden, *Eponymists in medicine – William Heberden* (Royal Society of Medicine Services Ltd., 1989), 175–7.
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46. Buried 18 July: Berkeley Parish Register (GRO P42 IN 1/17).
47. D. Fisk, *Dr. Jenner of Berkeley* (1959), 17.
48. MS, GRO D303 C 2/1.