JOHN HENRY HILL LEWELLIN: THE FIRST ETHERIST IN GLASGOW

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SUMMARY

John Henry Hill Lewellin, a surgeon-dentist, was the first to administer ether in Glasgow, on January 4, 1847. He was born in Calcutta, trained at St Bartholomew’s Hospital, qualified M.R.C.S. in London in 1842, and studied in Paris and Heidelberg, before moving to Glasgow in December 1845. He remained there for about 18 months, advertising his dental practice in a high profile manner and, when the time came, he publicized his experience with ether in the local press in an exemplary way. He disappeared from Glasgow in June 1847, and reappeared in Australia 5 years later, practising as a dentist initially, and later as a general medical practitioner in Melbourne until his retirement in 1883. He died in 1886. (Br. J. Anaesth. 1993; 70: 228–234)

KEY WORDS
History: diethyl ether

William Morton’s historic administration of ether to Gilbert Abbot on October 16, 1846 in the Ether Dome of the Massachusetts’s General Hospital in Boston preceded the first administration in Britain by 9 weeks. The manner by which the news travelled from Boston to London, and independently from Boston to Dumfries, is well documented [1, 2]. James Robinson and Francis Boott administered ether to Miss Lonsdale for the removal of a firmly fixed molar tooth on Saturday, December 19, 1846 in Boont’s house at 42 Gower Street, London and on the same day, in the Dumfries and Galloway Royal Infirmary, Dr William Scott operated on a patient who was under the effect of ether, having learned of the discovery from Dr Fraser, the ship’s doctor on the “Acadia”. There are few details about the Dumfries case, as the relevant hospital records are missing and, indeed, there almost seems to have been a cover-up over the episode, making one wonder if the administration of ether in that case went badly.

From London to Scotland

During the subsequent 2 weeks, the news of the discovery of ether also reached Scotland by private correspondence and by the daily newspapers. Robert Liston, the Scottish surgeon who had performed the first surgical procedure under ether in England at the University College Hospital, London, on Monday December 21, had corresponded with James Millar, Professor of Surgery in Edinburgh, and this resulted in the first use of ether in Edinburgh taking place in the Royal Infirmary on Saturday January 9, 1847 [3], when Dr James Duncan performed a thigh amputation on a young man who had been involved in a railway accident [4].

First use of ether in Glasgow Royal Infirmary

The first use of ether in Glasgow was thought to have taken place at The Royal Infirmary towards the end of January 1847, when Professor James Lawrie was reported to have performed several operations on patients who were under ether, although no exact dates or details are given [5]. It is probable that this initial use of ether in Glasgow took place on January 27, and was witnessed by Benjamin Ward Richardson, who was a medical student at the time, having begun his studies at Anderson’s College in 1845. In his memoirs, published many years later [6], he describes the occasion vividly. He records that a Dr Fleming gave the ether vapour “from a sponge surrounded by a towel”, and that Professor Andrew Buchanan did the operation, in the presence of Professor James Lawrie and Professor Moses Buchanan, Professor of Anatomy. This trial of ether was entirely successful, and ether administration soon became accepted in Glasgow. Unfortunately, no dates are recorded in these memoirs. Four further operations were performed under ether on Wednesday February 10, and were described in detail in the local press [7].

The discovery of Lewellin

All the newspaper articles relating to the introduction of ether at Glasgow Royal Infirmary had appeared in the Glasgow Herald. There were, however, seven daily newspapers in Glasgow in 1847, although only the Herald has survived. They were mostly four-page broadsheets, published twice or three times a week. Articles printed in one newspaper often appeared in the others a few days later. This also applied to articles from the national newspapers, which were occasionally reprinted in full. For some strange reason, the Herald failed to

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copy the reports which had appeared in the Glasgow Courier and the Glasgow Argus, announcing the earlier use of ether in Glasgow.

The first that Glasgow readers knew of the discovery of ether was the report of the Glasgow Courier of January 1, 1847 [8], which contained the entire reprint of the famous article from the Medical Times, headed "Surgical Operations without Pain", which began: "We have been informed that two operations were performed by Mr Liston at University College Hospital on Saturday last...."

On January 5 [9], the Courier published an extract of Dr Bigelow's publication in the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal, which had appeared in the Morning Chronicle a few days before, describing in detail his experiences with 10 patients given ether. This long article provides enough information to enable anyone to go away and administer ether himself, and yet it was several weeks before Dr Lawrie used it in the Glasgow Royal Infirmary.

The Glasgow Argus of January 11 [10], under the heading "New Discovery in Surgery", printed an article from Punch, in which the writer caricatures the new miracle: "a man may have his legs cut from under him without his knowing it....while the drawing of teeth becomes an agreeable excitement, which is so delightful that a boy having been mutilated of a molar clamoured loudly to have another extracted". This article, too, might have stimulated Glasgow surgeons to try ether, but it was another 2 weeks before they did so.

The Herald of January 15 [11] described Dr Duncan's first use of ether in Edinburgh—another prompt, which again had no immediate effect.

The Courier of Saturday January 16 [12] produced an unexpected discovery. Under the heading "Dental Surgery", an article described the use of ether by a Mr Lewellin, a Glasgow dentist, on a 23-year-old man for the extraction of an upper molar. It is an impressive description of the procedure, revealing a scientific approach to the administration of this new agent. It describes how the inhalation continued for 2 min, being complicated slightly by the patient swallowing at one stage instead of inhaling, how the heart rate increased from 64 to 80 beat min⁻¹, and how the face became slightly flushed. It also comments that "not the least attempt at coughing as observed in the American experiment" took place. Presumably Mr Lewellin had read Bigelow's article. He also says how the tooth, of a particularly bad shape and in a difficult locality, was removed without pain. He finished by inviting anyone to come to witness the new technique.

Twelve days later, on January 28 [13], again in the Courier, another communication from Lewellin appeared, written two days earlier. This was a letter to the Editor, under the heading "Use of Ether in Dental Operations". It referred to a notice in the Courier of January 26, which apparently had stated that ether had first been used in Scotland on January 5. Lewellin made it quite clear that he had used ether one day earlier, on January 4. He added that the equipment used was similar in principle to that used in London (so he must have had knowledge of Squires' inhaler), and that the administration was witnessed "by several gentlemen, medical and scientific, as well as friends of the patient, and it was at their instigation that the case was brought before the public".

Lewellin demonstrated in this article an impressive awareness of many of the finer points of administering ether. He urged caution in not using the agent in all cases, he warned about the dangers of leaving it exposed to air and light, and he described how its toxic metabolites might injure the texture of the lungs.

He finished "I merely state these facts knowing that ether will and must become general in dental surgery for which it is peculiarly applicable, and as the greater number of dentists are not properly qualified medical practitioners, and consequently ignorant of the circumstances. With many apologies for having trespassed so far on your space, I am sir, Your obedient Servant, J. W. H. Lewellin, MRCS, 86 West Regent Street, 26th January 1847".

This was a confidently written letter, composed in an educated and authoritative style. No doubt, his inference that most of his colleagues were less well qualified than he was would not have endeared him to many.

The M.R.C.S.S. did not appear in the lists of recognized qualifications, but was almost certainly a Membership of a Royal College (see later).

Buchanan's unsuccessful claim

The Courier of January 26 [14], which Lewellin had referred to, revealed an obscure paragraph, easily missed, and under a misleading heading. This stated that Mr Buchanan, another Glasgow dentist, "has introduced the vapour of ether in his practice", and that he was "the first to employ this powerful new agent in Scotland, having used it on the 5th inst". It also mentions that the apparatus used on this occasion was a bent glass tube. This piece of equipment was almost certainly the apparatus devised in December 1846 by George Buchanan of Glasgow, a cousin of this dentist, who later became Professor of Clinical Surgery in Glasgow. It is slightly confusing that both cousins had the same name, but, in his article published 51 years later [15], George Buchanan recounts how his dentist cousin had received a letter on December 22 1846 from a friend in London who had witnessed Liston's first operation under ether the day before. That same evening, he and his cousin, in the presence of his father, had experimented with ether at their home, using the bent glass tube with a bulb in the middle. There can be little doubt that this experiment must have been the first self-administration of ether in Scotland. It is remarkable also to think that, in those days, a letter posted in London on December 21 could have reached Glasgow the following day.

There is no further correspondence after Lewellin's second letter, so Buchanan must have conceded victory to Lewellin. One cannot help feeling sympathy for Buchanan, as the Argus of January 21 [16]—7 days before Lewellin's first announcement in the Courier—revealed that Buchanan actually advertised his "ETHER INHALER, similar to what has been recently used in London by
Robert Liston, Esq. and others with such eminent success. By this process the most painful operations may be performed without inconvenience to the Patient". This was therefore in print 5 days before his claim to be the first etherist in Scotland. Buchanan does not state in his advertisement that he had actually used the inhaler himself, although he clearly had done so on January 5. Nevertheless, he gets the credit of being the first to advertise the use of ether in Glasgow.

How did Lewellin hear of the discovery of ether?

The detailed account of Bigelow's experiences of ether appeared in the Courier on January 5, the day after Lewellin's first administration. So he must have heard about ether from another source, perhaps directly from Buchanan, or from someone in Edinburgh who knew of Liston's letter to Millar. He may even have received a personal letter from one of his London colleagues who knew of the discovery.

Another source of information was the medical journals. The first issue of the Lancet of 1847 was published on Friday January 1, and would have been despatched a day or two earlier. That issue contained three letters from Dr Boott to the Editor [17]. The first was a covering letter with a copy of Bigelow's personal communication to him, relating in detail his experiences with ether. The second described Robinson's extraction of Miss Lonsdale's tooth in his presence, and the third was another covering letter enclosing a letter from Liston, recounting his first two successful administrations of ether, and thanking Boott for having given him such early information of the discovery. These articles provide full details of the apparatus used and the technique of administration of ether. If Lewellin was a subscriber to the Lancet, he might have received this issue on or before Saturday 2, in time to study it, and to prepare for his first use of ether on Monday 4.

Lewellin advertises his use of ether

The Glasgow Argus of February 1, 1847 [18], only three days after Lewellin's letter claiming to be the first etherist in Scotland, contained an advertisement headed "Mr LEWELLIN, Member of the Royal College of Surgeons, London, Member of the Royal Parisian Medical Society, Surgeon Dentist". This was a more substantial announcement than Buchanan's, and informed the reader that he had devised a new and better apparatus for the administration of ether, and that he was able to regulate the dose to suit each individual. It concluded "Advice Gratu to the Poor from 9 to 10 every Morning except Sunday".

This advertisement appeared in the Argus every Monday for 6 weeks, and was then replaced on April 11 [19] by an even larger one, which appeared every 2 weeks until June 21 [20]. After this date, no further evidence of Lewellin's existence in Glasgow has been found. His Membership of the Royal Parisian Medical Society is discussed later.

Lewellin's ostentatious advertising stimulated some of his dental colleagues to do likewise. One sounded reluctant at being pressurized into this: "Mr Greig...has been advised to take this mode of acquainting his Friends, that he, among others, has in several cases successfully employed the ETHER INHALER under operations" [21]. One can imagine how Lewellin's style of practice may not have pleased his rivals.

Lewellin's earlier advertising

A further search of the Glasgow newspapers of 1845 and 1846 revealed that Lewellin had begun advertising his dental practice long before ether came on the scene. His first advertisement appeared in the Herald on December 15 1845 [22]. It indicated that he had "lately arrived from Paris", having studied there, in some principal German Universities, and in London.

In another column of the same page of that issue of the Herald, there was another advertisement, headed "Avis aux Etrangers", which, in immaculate French, advised its readers that Mr Lewellin had recently arrived from Paris, where he had, for a long time, been attending courses run by its most distinguished Professors.

There was still more to come. In a third column of the same page of that now historic issue of the Herald, there appeared yet another advertisement, which began, "Herr Lewellin, MRCSL, Zahnez ...,", and, in very accomplished but formal German, drew attention to his years of studies in Germany and France, and to his familiarity with foreign and English methods of treatment, and declared his confidence "that he will be able to serve a most distinguished clientele always to their utmost satisfaction".

This behaviour of Lewellin was quite extraordinary, not only because of the multi-linguistic advertising used, which was surprising enough, but also in the conspicuous and high profile manner in which it was presented. Lewellin seemed intent on attracting an up-market clientele to his new practice. He may have expected there to be a growing French and German speaking population in the business and professional community of Glasgow at the time, as trading links with the mainland of Europe and the Baltic were developing fast. Glasgow was, after all, the "Second City of the Empire". However, it was unusual for dentists in Glasgow to indulge in advertising, and it is apposite to note that Lewellin's advertisements appear amongst those for Furniture Sales, Winter Hosiery, Railway Notices, Pig Iron Sales and School Holiday Dates. His advertisements continued to appear regularly throughout the next year, up to the time that he used ether.

The Royal Parisian Medical Society

The Parisian Medical Society was founded in November 1837, mainly for the benefit of British and American doctors who had come to Paris to complete their medical training. The 18 founder members were almost all members of the Royal Medical Society of Edinburgh.

An address, delivered by the Vice-President of the Society in April 1841, summarized its history, and re-affirmed its aims [23]. It stated "A visit to the Parisian University is now considered the necessary completion of a sound professional education". It is
clear that one of the Society's aims was to coordinate the training of doctors from overseas. The membership in 1841 is recorded as being nearly 300—clearly a flourishing concern—and it was into this Society that Lewellin was presumably accepted a few years later. By that time it had become the Royal Parisian Medical Society. No records of its Proceedings have been traced, and it is likely that it was incorporated into another larger Association. It is not known therefore what part, if any, Lewellin played in its affairs, but he clearly thought it a prestigious enough Society to declare his membership of it when he began advertising his services in 1847.

**Lewellin in Glasgow**

The Glasgow Postal Directories of 1846 and 1847 listed Lewellin as Surgeon Dentist, 86 West Regent Street, and in 1847 his name was included in the list of 13 Dentists, all of whom resided within a few blocks of each other. Lewellin did not appear in earlier or later Directories, so it seems that he was based in Glasgow for only 2 years. The Annual Census lists of 1841 and 1851 for both Glasgow and London did not include Lewellin.

It seemed likely that Lewellin would have involved himself in the local dental and medical circles of the time. However, there was no Glasgow Dental Society in 1847, and the Glasgow Dental Hospital was not opened until 1879. His name did not appear in the Minutes of any of the Medical Societies of the time, the Royal Medico-Chirurgical Society of Glasgow, founded in 1814, or the Glasgow Southern Medical Society, founded in 1844. The records of the Glasgow Trades House, to which Barbers and Surgeons were affiliated, made no mention of Lewellin.

**Lewellin's residence in Glasgow**

Lewellin was showing considerable drive and determination in his quest to build up his dental practice in Glasgow. His residence in Glasgow was in the "New Town", that part of the city extending up Blythswood Hill from Buchanan Street, a prosperous and vibrant community, "on a very splendid scale, bearing comparison with those of any city in the Empire" [24]. West Regent Street was a new terrace of houses built in the 1830s, and No. 86 was a three-storey house on the corner of Hope Street. The houses were renumbered in 1920, but there is no doubt that Lewellin lived and practised in the building now occupied by the Yorkshire Building Society.

**The search for Lewellin's origins**

The very first Medical Directory, published in 1845, reveals "Lewellin, John Henry Hill, S1842, East Indies". The initials do not correspond with those in the Courier, which were incorrect. The possibility of Lewellin being related in some way to Henry Hill Hickman, is an enthralling thought, but as Hickman died in 1830, and as Lewellin's age was not yet known, it is pure speculation to imagine that they might be cousins. "S 1842" signified Membership of the Royal College of Surgeons of London, 1842. "MRCSS" in the Courier should have read "MRCSL": Lewellin's handwriting had been misread.

The List of Fellows and Members of the Royal College of Surgeons in London of 1848 records Lewellin as having passed his examination on April 8, 1842, and in the Examinations Register for that day, his name appears, showing his origin as East Indies, and his exam fee of £21 which, in the currency of the day, was 20 guineas.

An obscure section in the Medical Directory of 1872, under "Practitioners Resident Abroad with British Qualifications", listed "Lewellin, John Henry Hill, Prahran, Victoria, Australia, MRCs, England, 1842".

In 1874, his listing included the information that he had trained in St Bartholomew's Hospital, London, and also Paris and Heidelberg. It also recorded that he was a Justice of the Peace, and Vaccination Officer of Gardiner and Caulfield, which were Districts of Melbourne. He was appointed magistrate for the Colony of Victoria in 1868 [25]. He must have been resident for some years and have been held in high esteem to have gained these appointments.

In 1878, the Directory added "South. Rifles". Lewellin was appointed Assistant-Surgeon to the Southern Rifles with the relative rank of Lieutenant in January 1864, and was posted to the Prahran and South Yarra Corps [26]. He was promoted Captain in 1867 [27], and by 1878 he had gained the rank of Major [28].

In 1882, another Lewellin was listed: Augustus John Richard Lewellin, Prahran, Victoria, MB 1873, LKQCP, Ireland. This was Lewellin's son, who had almost certainly joined the family practice.

In 1883, the father's name disappeared, but the son's continued. No Obituary appeared in the Lists of Deaths which were, until 1914, included in these Medical Directories.

**St Bartholomow's**

The Students' Register for those studying at St Bartholomow's Hospital in the academic year 1842–43 shows Lewellin's signature, denoting his acceptance of the terms, conditions and rules of the Medical School. It did not record how long he attended, but it did provide two addresses, 40 Gibson Street, Islington, and Fort William, Calcutta. The former was almost certainly his lodgings during his time at St Bartholomow's, and the latter his home origins in the East Indies.

Fort William was the name given to the Army garrison on the banks of the River Hooghli (sometimes now spelt Hugli) in Calcutta. The Old Fort was built in the late 17th Century to protect the English traders from attack from the Nawab of Bengal [29]. The Fort was rebuilt in 1781, and became a training ground for British troops. It was likely that Lewellin's family was based in this garrison.

**Lewellin's family**

The Ecclesiastical Returns of the Fort William Garrison, of 1819, recorded the birth of John Henry
Hill Lewellin on September 18, 1818, and his baptism on May 24 1819 by John Young, garrison Chaplain. Lewellin's father was recorded as Lieutenant Henry Lewellin, of His Majesty's 24th Light Dragoons, and his mother as Anne Eliza.

There is a mystery concerning Anne Eliza. In the Schedule recording John Henry Hill's death [30], his mother was named as "Eliza Anne Lewellin, m.n. (maiden name) Farquhar or Farquharson". This conflicts with the records of her first marriage at Cawnpore, to William Lambert, in which she was named as Anne Eliza Smith, Spinter [31]. No information has yet emerged to resolve this discrepancy, but if her maiden name really was Farquhar or Farquharson, both Scottish names, this might provide a family reason for Lewellin coming to Scotland in 1845. Perhaps she gave an assumed name "Smith" to the Registrar in Cawnpore.

Lewellin in Australia

Lewellin arrived at Port Phillip, Australia on the 500-ton teak-built ship "Bengal Merchant" on September 2, 1852, 5 years after the last reference to him in the Glasgow newspapers in June 1847. The ship left London on April 1, and called in at Port Elizabeth, South Africa, on July 26 [32]. The "Bengal Merchant" appeared in an advertising poster of 1839, intimating its imminent departure from the Broomielaw Pier, Glasgow, taking passengers and cargo to New Zealand and The Colonies.

Lewellin's name appeared in the Medical Register for the Colony of Victoria from 1854 until 1886, and he was listed in a Melbourne Directory for 1858, as a dentist practising at 94 Collins Street, Melbourne [33]. A casual comment in one of his publications, in 1856 [34], stated "...as I have now given up general practice and confine myself to Dentistry". It is not known if he was in general practice when he first arrived in Australia, or before he emigrated.

In 1861, he was listed as a surgeon, practising at 116 Chapel Street, Prahran [35]. Lewellin may by this time have been a general practitioner, perhaps conducting a mixed practice, including dentistry.

Lewellin's publications in Australia

Although Lewellin's name appeared only sporadically in the Australasian medical journals from 1856 onwards, the following three articles are of interest:

In 1856, Lewellin's address to the Medical Society of Victoria on "Acute Dysentery" was published in full [34].

In 1860, Lewellin presented a long and complex Case Report of "Pneumo-Hydro-Thorax" to the same Medical Society [36].

In 1863, Lewellin published a remarkable Case Report of a 12-year-old boy with tetanus [37], a condition for which the outlook in those days was hopeless. The boy developed hourly paroxysms of his back muscles, and Lewellin considered it advisable to remove a decayed tooth, which was acting as a source of irritation. He administered chloroform, and when the boy "was thoroughly under its influence, the rigidity abated sufficiently to allow me to get his mouth wedged open with a piece of soft wood, so that I extracted the first upper permanent molar of the left side, which was very much decayed. The second temporary molar of the lower jaw being also decayed, I removed that". The boy was so much improved as a result of the chloroform administration, that it was repeated at regular intervals every day for the next 12 days. During one of these administrations, Lewellin removed another decayed tooth. Chloroform undoubtedly resolved the spasms and delayed the onset of further spasms. On the 13th day, Lewellin recorded that paroxysms were becoming less frequent, although "he cannot do without chloroform". Ten days later, the boy "has become so fond of it that he flew into a passion when it was refused him". The boy appears to have recovered completely (no mention of hepatic necrosis!). This Case Report is notable for the diligent manner in which Lewellin attended his patient, and the determination with which he persisted with his treatment. This unique use of chloroform in the treatment of tetanus would only have been used by someone well versed in the problems of anaesthesia. There is no evidence that Lewellin had maintained his anaesthetic skills; indeed, the article gives the impression that he was now a General Practitioner.

Lewellin's friendship with Ferdinand von Mueller

Lewellin and his family became personal friends of the distinguished Botanist, Ferdinand von Mueller, who was born in Rostock, Germany and had, like Lewellin, emigrated to Australia. Mueller dedicated Volume 8 of his best known work, Fragmenta Phytographiae Australiae [38], to Lewellin, with a Latin inscription, which, translated, means "To my friend Henry Lewellin, a most skilful Physician".

Mueller named two plants after Lewellin: a shrub, named Dicrastylis Lewellinii [39], also called Purple Sand Sage [40], and a fungus, Hygrophorus Lewellinae [41]. In Volume 11 of Fragmenta, there is another reference to Lewellin [42], again in Latin, which translates "...dedicated in gratitude to the distinguished Dr Henry Lewellin, the most generous promoter of my investigations"; Lewellin must have been sponsoring his friend's botanical studies.

Lewellin's death

Lewellin died on October 12, 1886, at his residence, Linton, Westbury Street, East St Kilda, Melbourne, in his 69th year [43, 44]. The Death Certificate, which recorded him as "Surgeon", indicates that he died three days after a hemiplegia, complicated by epileptic convulsions. It records his marriage in London, aged 26 years, to Grace Elizabeth Donnelly. She died in St Kilda, on August 7, 1888, aged 63 years [45]. She would have been 19 when she married Lewellin in 1844. It establishes that Lewellin was already married when he came to Glasgow in 1845. They had seven children.

**Why did Lewellin move from Paris to Glasgow?**

If Lewellin came directly from Paris to Glasgow in December 1845, he was leaving a city which was experiencing widespread social unrest. The working classes were being driven to the utmost limits of their
resources. Lewellin may have sensed that civil war was imminent. Glasgow in 1845 would have provided a stimulating environment for any professional young man.

Why did he leave Glasgow in July 1847?

One can imagine many reasons why Lewellin left Glasgow. Perhaps his practice had not flourished. Perhaps he had upset his dental colleagues. Perhaps he was suffering once again from the wanderlust which seems to have been his hallmark during these early years. Perhaps it was the smoke and the climate that chased him away. Glasgow in 1847 was experiencing severe civil discontent, precipitated by deteriorating living conditions in many parts of the city, made worse by the large influx of Irish immigrants, after the potato famine of 1845. The poor were starving. There was no social support. Law and Order was beginning to break down, and the Bread Riots brought serious disruption to the city.

It is not yet known where he and his wife went for the next 5 years, but, with his entrepreneurial personality, it would almost certainly have been somewhere professionally stimulating. Australia and Melbourne would have fitted that category very well, but it was to be a further 5 years before he and his family landed at Port Phillip Bay.

Epilogue

The story of John Lewellin’s life and career is incomplete. It is not known when he left Calcutta with his mother and brother, or where he lived until 1842, when he studied at St Bartholomew’s. It is also not known when or for how long he was in Paris, Heidelberg, or the other European centres at which he studied. The most disappointing and frustrating gap is the 5-year period from June 1847 when he left Glasgow until September 1852 when he arrived in Australia.

The life of Lewellin provides an interesting, and at times exciting, tale of an enterprising pioneer. He showed initiative, by travelling around Europe to gain the widest experience by training in the most advanced centres. He showed charisma, by his conspicuous and flamboyant advertising of his dental skills during his time in Glasgow. He demonstrated courage, by being the first in Glasgow to administer ether in dental practice, integrity, by bringing his own experiences so promptly to the notice of the public, and remarkable clinical insight, by the perceptive observations which he recorded in such detail. He continued to display this dedicated approach to his work as a general practitioner in Australia, where he maintained his active role in medical affairs.

John Henry Hill Lewellin deserves credit and commendation for all these attributes. He has the distinction of being the first to have administered ether to a patient in Glasgow. If William Scott’s anaesthetic to his patient in the Dumfries and Galloway Royal Infirmary on Saturday December 19, 1846 did indeed go badly wrong, then perhaps John Lewellin administered the first successful anaesthetic in Scotland on Monday January 4, 1847.

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