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**To cite this article:** Howard Cox (2023) Worcester as a Pioneering Provincial Centre of Medical Publishing and Reform, 1828–1854, *Midland History*, 48:3, 311–327, DOI: [10.1080/0047729X.2023.2266735](https://doi.org/10.1080/0047729X.2023.2266735)

**To link to this article:** <https://doi.org/10.1080/0047729X.2023.2266735>



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Published online: 20 Nov 2023.



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## Worcester as a Pioneering Provincial Centre of Medical Publishing and Reform, 1828–1854

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### ABSTRACT

The fact that Worcester Infirmary provided the location for the founding of the Provincial (later British) Medical Association has long been commemorated as a highlight of the city's history. This paper seeks to extend our understanding of the significance of this event by placing it in the broader historical context of the campaign for medical reform. In doing so, the paper links together the origins and early activities of the Association with the emergence and consolidation of Worcester as arguably the leading centre for medical publishing in England, outside of London, during the period 1828 to 1854. Hence, in charting the significant part played by Worcester's doctors in driving the process of medical advancement and reform, the paper also gives due credit to the supporting role played by the city's leading newspaper publisher during these years, namely the firm of H.B. Tymbbs and H. Deighton, particularly through its collaboration in the ground-breaking launch of the *Midland Medical and Surgical Reporter* in 1828.

### KEYWORDS

Provincial medical association; medical reform; medical publishing; *British Medical Journal*; *The Lancet*; Worcester

A hallmark of the second quarter of the nineteenth century in Britain was the increasingly vigorous demand among learned groups for religious and political reform, which in most cases was allied to a strong desire for an expansion of enlightened and scientific forms of education.<sup>1</sup> The pressures that eventually led to the wave of reforms enacted from the late 1820s had been ratcheted up by a growing range of printed periodicals which had been established in support of (or in some cases opposition to) these various campaigns of reform. The new periodicals had thrived in spite of the plethora of legislative restrictions introduced between 1789 and 1819, as a succession of British governments sought to prevent any repetition of the revolutionary movements that had seized power from the French aristocracy. As Finkelstein notes in his introduction to a recently published volume on the press and periodical publishing in Britain and Ireland during the period 1800–1900:

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<sup>1</sup>David Cannadine has aptly referred to the period from 1829–41 as the iconoclastic years: D. Cannadine, *Victorious Century: The United Kingdom, 1800–1906* (London: Allen Lane, 2017), pp. 150–99.

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At the start of the [nineteenth] century, press outputs and numbers were limited, labouring under severe legal restrictions and government censorship, high production costs, and low readership numbers confined to elites and literate citizens with expendable income. Matters began changing from the 1820s, with press and periodical publications flowing through into the marketplace in response to new political movements, technological innovation and audience expectations.<sup>2</sup>

These periodicals spanned a variety of formats, from highbrow quarterly journals published in London and Edinburgh, to the popular, illustrated publications of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge (SDUK) that had first been set up in 1826 by Whig MP Henry Brougham.<sup>3</sup> It was also during this period that provincial newspapers such as the *Leeds Mercury* and the *Manchester Guardian* actively adopted the cause of reform. As well as taking a more pronounced political stance, these provincial newspapers generally acted as important supporters of the areas they represented and in most cases sought to foster a positive sense of identity.<sup>4</sup>

During the 1820s, therefore, a range of institutions, societies and publishing initiatives emerged which stimulated debate and embraced an involvement among a growing segment of Britain's educated population. In Worcester, a strong focal point for such progressive causes was provided by the members of the local Medical Society based at the city's Infirmary. These educated practitioners sought to promote medical knowledge and to disseminate advances made in clinical practices that would enable improvements in the health and wellbeing of the local population. In developing these efforts, the doctors of Worcester were materially assisted by one of the governors of the Infirmary, namely Harvey Berrow Tymbs – the proprietor of the city's longest-established newspaper. In 1828, Tymbs agreed to support a pioneering initiative on behalf of the Worcester practitioners by taking on the task of printing a quarterly periodical in which their efforts to advance and disseminate medical knowledge could be addressed to a wider audience. As this paper illustrates, over the course of the next 25 years, this productive alliance between Tymbs' publishing house and the medical staff of Worcester infirmary enabled the city to become a key focal point for medical advancement and reform in Britain.

### Launching the *Midland Medical and Surgical Reporter*

Worcester's emergence as a driver of improved medical practice during the second quarter of the nineteenth century was given its principal impetus by the activities of the local physician Charles Hastings. The ninth of fifteen children born to Elizabeth (née Paget) and the Rev. James Hastings, Charles was raised in the Worcestershire village of Martley. In September 1810, at the age of 16, he was apprenticed to the apothecary partnership of Richard Dukes and Kenrick Watson based in the busy Worcestershire

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<sup>2</sup>D. Finkelstein, 'Introduction' in *The Edinburgh History of the British and Irish Press, Vol 2, Expansion and Evolution*, ed. by D. Finkelstein (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020), pp. 1–32.

<sup>3</sup>The most significant periodical published by editor Charles Knight on behalf of the SDUK was the illustrated *Penny Magazine* which launched in 1832 and recorded sales of up to 200,000 copies in its early years: V. Gray, *Charles Knight: Educator, Publisher, Writer* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006). On sales of the *Penny Magazine* see R. D. Altick, *The English Common Reader: A Social History of the Mass Reading Public, 1800–1900* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, 1998), p. 335.

<sup>4</sup>For an overview of the role played by the provincial press in Britain and Ireland during the nineteenth century cf. A. J. H. Jackson, 'The Provincial, Local and Regional Press', in Finkelstein, *Edinburgh History*, pp. 709–29.

manufacturing town of Stourport-on-Severn. After eighteen months in practice, Hastings travelled to London in 1812 to study anatomy, midwifery and pharmaceutical chemistry, where his tutors included the esteemed Joshua Brookes, who had founded one of the capital's leading schools of anatomy. He completed his studies in September 1812 and was awarded a certificate of study in *materia medica* and chemistry.<sup>5</sup>

On his return from London, Hastings successfully applied for the position of house surgeon at Worcester Infirmary in December 1812. His appointment to such a responsible post at the tender age of 18 was greeted with surprise among certain local dignitaries. Such a sceptical reaction may well have been a factor in encouraging the young medic to seek further qualifications. Whatever the driving forces may have been, in 1815 Hastings decided to relinquish his post at the Infirmary and enrol as a student at the prestigious Edinburgh Medical School. During his three years of study in the Scottish capital, the Worcester man benefitted from the encouragement of leading anatomist Dr John Gordon who supported his application for membership of the Edinburgh-based Royal Medical Society. Before he completed his studies in Edinburgh, Hastings had made a sufficiently good impression to be elected as one of four joint-presidents of the society in 1817. His medical education was further stimulated through a study of the learned papers published in the *Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal* which was edited by one of his most admired tutors, Dr Andrew Duncan Jnr.

Hastings gained his M.D. from Edinburgh in 1818. At this point he turned down an opportunity to stay on in the city and succeed his mentor Dr John Gordon, who had died unexpectedly, as an extramural teacher of anatomy and physiology. Instead, he sought a return to practise medicine in Worcestershire, and in November 1818 he was elected to the post of junior physician at Worcester Infirmary.<sup>6</sup> On his return to the Infirmary, Hastings revived the Worcester Medical and Surgical Society and became its president, reprising the role he had played in the Royal Medical Society in Edinburgh. Hastings consolidated his professional reputation when, in 1820, he published a medical tract based on research undertaken for his doctoral thesis on diseases of the chest. The book was well received by the medical press, including in Andrew Duncan's *Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Review*.<sup>7</sup>

The first half of the nineteenth century was an important period for the development of medical publishing in Britain.<sup>8</sup> In Edinburgh, Andrew Duncan's father, Andrew Duncan Snr, had gained influence during the late eighteenth century by publishing a series of *Medical Commentaries* for the purposes of which he had cultivated an editorial voice that was quite innovative.<sup>9</sup> The subsequent launch of the *Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal* by his son in 1805 was an important development in the shift of medical-based publishing towards a more scientific approach to the subject. The

<sup>5</sup>W. H. McMenemy, *The Life and Times of Sir Charles Hastings* (Edinburgh: E & S Livingstone Ltd, 1959), pp. 6–7.

<sup>6</sup>*Life and Times*, pp. 19–34. McMenemy notes that Hastings had to wait a further forty years before achieving the honour of being appointed to the position of senior physician at Worcester.

<sup>7</sup>McMenemy, *Life and Times*, p. 44.

<sup>8</sup>W. F. Bynum and J. C. Wilson, 'Periodical knowledge: medical journals and their editors in nineteenth-century Britain', in *Medical Journals and Medical Knowledge: Historical Essays*, ed. by W. F. Bynum, S. Lock and R. Porter (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 30.

<sup>9</sup>R. Porter, 'The Rise of Medical Journalism in Britain to 1800', in Bynum *et al.*, in *Medical Journals*, p. 16.

journal also addressed questions relating to the social and ethical responsibilities of the medical profession, together with discussions of public health, medical jurisprudence and the philanthropic duty of doctors.<sup>10</sup> In studying for his M.D. in Edinburgh, Hastings had been exposed to a pioneering and innovative form of medical publishing. As a means of disseminating medical knowledge, however, a significant shortcoming of the *Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal* was that its principal readership was limited to those who were members or alumni of the Edinburgh School.<sup>11</sup>

Notwithstanding its origins in the Scottish capital, Duncan's journal was published jointly in both Edinburgh and London, and it was in the latter city that the upsurge in medical publications found its primary focus, particularly after the conclusion of the Napoleonic wars. As Sally Frampton has pointed out, two influential new medical journals were inaugurated in 1816: the *Monthly Gazette of Health*, designed to be accessible to both medical practitioners and the public, and the *Medico-Chirurgical Journal*, whose editor James Johnson had completed a stint as a naval surgeon in the British colonies. Johnson's publication became increasingly popular with those practising medicine and by 1821 the journal was boasting sales of 1,200 copies per issue.<sup>12</sup>

This buoyant demand for medical intelligence in printed form encouraged further initiatives. One important new development in the field, which made its first appearance in October 1823, was Thomas Wakley's radical sixpenny weekly journal *The Lancet*. In certain respects, Wakley's early career had mirrored that of Charles Hastings. Wakley was 1 of 11 children whose initial medical education was gained through an apprenticeship with apothecaries and surgeons, before becoming enrolled as a student at the United Hospitals Medical School of Guy's and St Thomas' in 1815. Rather than being inspired by the experience of his medical education, however, Wakley became disenchanted with the nepotism and financially driven culture of medicine that characterized the London teaching hospitals.

Strongly influenced by his growing friendship with the radical publisher of the *Political Register*, William Cobbett,<sup>13</sup> Wakley launched *The Lancet* as a campaigning journal, designed both to expose and excise the medical malpractices that were rife in Britain's principal centre of medicine. Wakley targeted his criticisms at leading institutions, notably the two Royal Colleges, for their elitism and the level of control they were able to exercise over medical development and career opportunities. *The Lancet* therefore set itself the dual objectives of disseminating good medical practice – including by the unauthorized reproduction of lectures given by leading physicians and surgeons in the medical schools of London – and providing a sharp critique of the shortcomings in the organization and management of medicine in 1820s Britain.<sup>14</sup>

Settled in Worcester, Hastings was more than sympathetic to the aims espoused by *The Lancet*, and he noted with approval two meetings organized by Wakley in London

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<sup>10</sup>S. Frampton, 'The Medical Press and Its Public', in Finkelstein, ed., *Edinburgh History*, p. 439.

<sup>11</sup>J. Loudon and I. Loudon, 'Medicine, politics and the medical periodical 1800–50', in Bynum et al, in *Medical Journals*, pp. 54–5.

<sup>12</sup>Frampton, pp. 440–1.

<sup>13</sup>M. Conboy, 'The Press and Radical Expression: Structure and Dissemination' in Finkelstein, ed, *Edinburgh History*, pp. 512–16.

<sup>14</sup>M. Brown, "'Bats, Rats and Barristers": *The Lancet*, libel and the radical stylistics of early nineteenth-century English medicine', *Social History*, 39, 2 (2014), 188.

during February 1826 that sought to attack the attitudes and policies pursued by the council of the Royal College of Surgeons<sup>15</sup> In particular, Hastings shared the widespread concerns that were voiced among the growing number of general practitioners; notably the limited legal protection provided by the Apothecaries Act 1815 for properly qualified doctors.<sup>16</sup> Medical reform became a key area of campaigns with which Hastings engaged prior to the passing of the Medical Act 1858. At the same time, the Worcester man began to formulate possible ways in which the medical professionals, particularly doctors based in the provinces, could form productive alliances.

Keenly aware of the role played in facilitating ongoing contact among the alumni of Edinburgh Medical School by Andrew Duncan's journal, Hastings began to explore the possibility of creating a publication that could perform the same function among medical practitioners based in the midlands. Hastings found an important ally in Harvey Berrow Tymbs. Tymbs' father, John Tymbs, had gained the proprietorship of Worcester's long-standing local weekly newspaper, *Berrow's Worcester Journal*, through marriage into the Berrow family in 1779, naming his second son Harvey Berrow Tymbs after his wife's father. By 1816, Harvey Berrow Tymbs became the sole proprietor of the newspaper and six years later he formed a partnership with Henry Deighton, whose family had a long-established printing and stationers business in Worcester.<sup>17</sup> This enabled Deighton to assume responsibility for managing the printing side of the operation, allowing Tymbs to concentrate on raising his profile within Worcester's civic society.<sup>18</sup>

Hastings persuaded Tymbs to support the idea of publishing a medical journal in Worcester, and to use his newspaper office to both print and act as the journal's headquarters. In promoting the new journal Hastings and Tymbs were embarking on a ground-breaking project, since establishing a medical publication at this time anywhere in England – outside of London – represented a novel development.<sup>19</sup> Not only was London the centre of the medical establishment in Britain, but in the 1820s it also provided the exclusive location within England and Wales for the publication of periodicals that focused their attention on medicine.<sup>20</sup> In addition, the capital offered unrivalled transportation links into the provinces. Thus, London emerged as the key distribution centre for all periodicals whose target audience extended beyond the immediate location in which they were printed. This made it necessary for Tymbs and Deighton to appoint an agency in London to manage the journal's distribution. With these arrangements in place, the first number of the *Midland Medical and Surgical Reporter and Topographical and Statistical Journal* (commonly referred to as the *Midland Reporter*) came off the presses in August 1828.

<sup>15</sup>McMenemey, *Life and Times*, pp. 51–2.

<sup>16</sup>I. Loudon, *Medical Care and the General Practitioner 1750–1850* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), pp. 167–76.

<sup>17</sup>R. Berkeley, *Sketch of Early Provincial Journalism* (Worcester: Worcester Diocesan Architectural and Archaeological Society, 1898), p. 5; I. Griffiths, *Berrow's Worcester Journal: An Examination of the Antiquity of Britain's Oldest Newspaper* (Worcester: George Williams and Berrows Ltd, 1941), p. 28; H. W. Gwilliam, *A Survey of Worcestershire Newspapers* (Unpublished typescript, Local Studies Section of the Worcestershire Archives, 1982), p. 9.

<sup>18</sup>As well as acting as a governor of the Worcester Infirmary, Tymbs also raised his civic profile by acting as a city councillor and alderman for many years, serving as a magistrate, becoming a supporter of Worcester Royal Grammar School, a trustee of Worcester Savings Bank, a director of the Birmingham and Gloucester Railway, an active promoter of the River Severn Navigation, as well as serving on many church and charitable committees. In 1831 Tymbs was elected as Mayor of Worcester. G. Cottrell, ed., *Berrow's Worcester Journal Tercentenary 1690–1990* (Worcester: Reed Midland Newspapers, 1990), p. 9.

<sup>19</sup>Bynum and Wilson, p. 37.

<sup>20</sup>Frampton, p. 440.

## Founding the Provincial Medical Association

The new journal specified that it was printed and published by the firm of H.B. Tymbis and H. Deighton in Worcester and that its principal selling agency was the London publishing firm T. and G. Underwood of Fleet Street. Its convoluted title was designed to encompass a range of themes: medical topography was an area that Hastings was particularly keen to embrace as a way of setting out the landscape of medical facilities that had been developing in Britain since the mid- to late-eighteenth century.<sup>21</sup> The journal also provided a platform in which the activities of these medical establishments could be conveyed through the medium of hospital reports. In addition, although the *Midland Reporter* was not designed primarily to be a campaigning publication, it also used its pages to report on legal proceedings that affected the medical profession. These items it carried under the heading of medical jurisprudence. For the most part, however, the purpose of the journal was to disseminate accounts of clinical practices, allow its readers the opportunity to submit reports on the efficacy of particular medicines and treatments, and provide information regarding new technological innovations, such as the introduction of the stethoscope.

Hastings assumed the role of the *Midland Reporter's* editor-in-chief and was supported by a five-man editorial board, consisting of three colleagues from the Worcester Infirmary – Jonas Malden, John Rayment and James Sheppard – along with John Darwall, a physician to the Birmingham Dispensary, and John Burne, who had studied with Hastings in Edinburgh and was secretary of the Medical Society in London.<sup>22</sup> The first article of the 64-page opening number was a 15-page account of the medical topography of Worcester, authored anonymously by Charles Hastings. Two of the Worcester-based co-editors – John Rayment and Jonas Malden – contributed non-attributed papers on their work, while Hastings provided an account of pulmonary tubercles under the guise of ‘an editor of MMSR’. The authors of each of the papers in the first number of the *Midland Reporter* have been identified retrospectively by McMenemy in Hastings’ biography.<sup>23</sup> Only one of the 10 articles published in this opening issue was credited to a practitioner outside of Worcester, an account of a knee operation by an unnamed surgeon from Cheltenham Casualty Hospital, identified by McMenemy as having been submitted by a doctor named Charles Averill. In the second number of the journal, this editorial policy of anonymity was replaced by one in which authorship was attributed, following a stance that had become increasingly adopted by the London-based medical press.<sup>24</sup>

Hastings and his colleagues opted to publish their journal on a quarterly basis, aligning it with the style of high-brow periodicals of late-Georgian Britain. The first six numbers, covering the period August 1828 to November 1829, constituted volume 1. The journal’s key purpose was to provide an opportunity for doctors across the midlands to share useful information as a way of improving the quality of medical provision. By the conclusion of the first volume, in addition to the London-based editor John Burne, a further 28 medical practitioners had made contributions to the

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<sup>21</sup>I. Waddington, *The Medical Profession in the Industrial Revolution* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1984), p. 27.

<sup>22</sup>E. M. Little, *History of the British Medical Association* (London: BMA, 1932), p. 16.

<sup>23</sup>McMenemy, p. 58.

<sup>24</sup>Loudon and Loudon, p. 56.

*Midland Reporter*. The bulk of these were from doctors in other parts of Worcestershire and the south-west of England, viz: Cheltenham (4); Gloucester (3); and Bath (2). Apart from the co-editor John Darwall, who contributed to four of the first six numbers, only one other paper was published in volume 1 from a Birmingham-based medick, George Male, a physician based at Birmingham General Hospital.

Before 1830, the sole contributor from outside of the midlands – who was not directly engaged with the journal – was a Dr J. K. Walker from Huddersfield. He contributed a paper to the second number of the *Midland Reporter* on his observations whilst travelling in the Malvern Hills, when he became acquainted with the activities of Worcester Infirmary. Thereafter, he published at least one item in every succeeding issue of the *Midland Reporter* to become its most prolific author. The contributors to the journal comprised medical practitioners who were both hospital-based surgeons and physicians, and those who served within the community as general practitioners. The latter group were particularly well represented among the journal's contributors from other parts of Worcestershire, such as Pershore, Droitwich, Kidderminster and Evesham. Submissions were also received and published from two local veterinary surgeons.

The editors of the *Midland Reporter* quickly ran into a problem that was a characteristic feature of medical publishing in the early nineteenth century: that of plagiarism.<sup>25</sup> In the third number of the journal, it was noted that the *London Medical & Physical Journal* had reproduced verbatim some of the hospital reports previously published in the *Reporter*. Hastings and his colleagues noted:

As our main object is to promote knowledge, and to facilitate its attainment, we cannot regret that we have been thought deserving of being conveyed through more channels than one to public notice. Still we think that, if our facts and observations be of sufficient value to enhance, by their adoption, the reputation of other Journals, the least our complimentary friends can do, is to allude, in some shape or other, to the source of their new current of information.<sup>26</sup>

The offending editor of the *London Medical & Physical Journal*, Roderick Macleod, had earlier in the 1820s strongly opposed the practice of publishing hospital reports – which had been initiated by *The Lancet* – on the grounds that the practice was unethical. However, as his journal increasingly suffered losses of circulation to Thomas Wakley's new weekly, he too adopted the practice and made use of whatever sources he could lay his hands on.<sup>27</sup> The unaccredited use of the *Midland Reporter's* contents by London-based journals remained a matter of irritation for Hastings and his colleagues. At the conclusion of the first volume Hastings repeated the complaint by noting that he and his fellow editors 'cannot avoid stating the astonishment with which they have observed the contents of the *Midland Reporter* copied verbatim . . . by other Journals'.<sup>28</sup>

The six numbers (7 to 12) that made up the second volume of the *Midland Reporter* featured contributions for a further 16 new authors, accounting for 23 of the 65 papers

<sup>25</sup>Loudon and Loudon, p. 58.

<sup>26</sup>*Midland Medical and Surgical Reporter (MMSR)*, 3, (1829), 213. A full set of this journal is available in the Palfrey Collection of the Worcestershire County Record Office.

<sup>27</sup>B. Pladek, "'A Variety of Tastes': *The Lancet* in the Early-Nineteenth-Century Press', *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 85 (2011), 564, n.23.

<sup>28</sup>*MMSR*, 6 (1829), 444.



published between February 1830 and May 1831. The location of these new authors illustrates the widening circulation of the journal, with papers received from doctors in Chester, Wakefield, Monmouth, Norwich and Hanley in Staffordshire. A greater number of contributions were also received from practitioners in Birmingham, including a paper by the influential Dr John Johnstone who was to play a crucial role in the creation of the Provincial Medical and Surgical Association. Notwithstanding the undoubted success of the *Midland Reporter*, at the commencement of the third volume the editors sounded a note of concern when they stated that, 'the Editors have uniformly excluded from their pages all communications not decidedly original'.<sup>29</sup> Thus an additional editorial burden by this stage had become the filtering out of submissions previously published elsewhere.

Based on the established publishing cycle, the third volume of the *Midland Reporter* ought to have covered six numbers spanning August 1831 to November 1832. However, at the conclusion of the May 1832 issue the following editorial notice appeared:

The present Number completes the third volume of the *Midland Reporter*, and with it, the Work, under the above name, will terminate: as the Editors can now congratulate themselves and the Public, upon having attained the great object which they contemplated at the commencement of their arduous undertaking. Their appeal to the public spirit, generous feelings, and pure love of Science, which so extensively pervade and dignify our noble Profession, has not been made in vain. A wish has, in consequence, been warmly expressed and widely circulated, that the members of the Profession, residing in the Provinces, should unite themselves into an Association *friendly and Scientific*: that this Association should have for its main object the diffusion and increase of Medical Knowledge in every department of science and practice; and that the valuable communications of its Members should, from time to time, appear in the shape of the published Memoirs of the Society. The subjoined Prospectus will afford to our Readers more minute information upon this truly gratifying topic. We here, then, take our leave of our numerous friends and correspondents, thanking them most cordially for the valuable aid they have afforded us in the prosecution of our past labours; congratulating them most sincerely on the means of widely-spread and friendly co-operation which the new Society will open to us all; and earnestly entreating them to join us with head, and heart, and hand, in the support of so excellent an Association.<sup>30</sup>

Thus, the *Midland Medical and Surgical Reporter* was brought to its conclusion on the promise of a new and more direct form of collaboration among its readers. By providing a platform for the exchange of medical intelligence among provincial practitioners in the midlands and beyond, the journal had performed the function of creating a social network upon which could be built an association of like-minded professional men dedicated to the advancement of scientific practice. Critically, these print-centred communities transcended the existing boundaries that operated until this time among medical practitioners – traditionally based upon professional rank, education, and family background – who sought to apply scientific principles to medicine.<sup>31</sup>

Although the *Midland Reporter* facilitated the creation of a community of medical practitioners across the midlands, it is equally true that the decision to promote the

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<sup>29</sup>*MMSR*, 13 (1831), 1.

<sup>30</sup>*MMSR*, 16 (1832), 302–3, emphasis in original.

<sup>31</sup>C. Berkowitz, *Charles Bell and the Anatomy of Reform* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), p. 81.

formation of a medical society did not necessitate the termination of the Worcester-based publication. The circumstances that actually prompted the cessation of the journal remain opaque. Hastings' own explanation for halting publication of the *Midland Reporter* places the blame on the financial collapse of the journal's London-based selling agent. Thus, in an address to members of the Provincial Medical Association at its annual meeting of 1843 in which he set out the origins of the Association, Hastings is reported to have remarked that, 'had it not been for the failure of the bookseller the *Midland Reporter* might have continued in existence and then there might never have been an Association'.<sup>32</sup> However McMenemy, both in his biography of Hastings and in a paper he authored on behalf of the BMA in 1966, lays the responsibility for the journal's demise squarely on the shoulders of its Worcester-based publisher.<sup>33</sup> This is hard to credit. While it is true that in 1831 Tymbs and his partner Deighton did have a serious falling out over their different views towards the Whig's policy of electoral reform – the Conservative-supporting Tymbs having opposed the bill – there is no evidence in historical accounts of the publishing house of H.B. Tymbs and Henry Deighton that supports the idea of financial difficulties experienced by the Worcester firm at this time.<sup>34</sup>

A different slant to the financial failure of the journal's publisher has been taken in a history of the British Medical Association authored by Ernest Little. Here it is stated that 'the immediate cause of [the *Midland Reporter's*] decease was the failure of the printers and publishers in London'.<sup>35</sup> This explanation certainly tallies with Hastings' 1843 speech insofar as it relates to a cessation of trading on behalf of the *Midland Reporter's* London-based bookseller, rather than its Worcester-based printer and publisher. As previously noted, in 1828 the firm of T. and G. Underwood had been appointed as the journal's main sales agent in London, and this firm did indeed cease trading in 1831.<sup>36</sup> Such a disruption may have caused Hastings and his colleagues a degree of financial difficulty and led them to consider halting publication of the journal. Nonetheless, by the middle of 1831 an alternative London agent had been appointed in the shape of the well-established publishing firm of Baldwin and Craddock.<sup>37</sup> Hence, while the failure of the journal's original London agents may have focused the minds of Hastings and his colleagues on the future financial viability of their publication, it does not seem to have been the direct cause of the journal's demise in 1832. Perhaps in his speech of 1843, Hastings was looking for a diplomatic explanation for the decision to cease publication of the *Midland Reporter*, which was based on a valid, but not decisive, setback.

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<sup>32</sup>McMenemy, *Life and Times*, p. 261.

<sup>33</sup>W. H. McMenemy, 'Charles Hastings (1794–1866) Founder of the British Medical Association' in *Charles Hastings and Worcester, 1794–1866*, British Medical Association (London: BMA, 1966), p. 10; *Life and Times*, p. 75.

<sup>34</sup>Cottrell, pp. 8–9. See also the accounts cited above by Berkeley, Griffiths and Gwilliam.

<sup>35</sup>Little, p. 17.

<sup>36</sup>P. A. H. Brown, 'London Publishers and Printers c.1800–1870', in *British Book Trade Index* <<http://bbti.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/details/traderid=71267>> [accessed 1 August 2022].

<sup>37</sup>Baldwin and Craddock were listed for the first time as the *Reporter's* principal London sales agents at the beginning of Volume III in August 1831. These were publishers of a higher standing than George Underwood's business – and were therefore likely to have demanded a higher fee – being one of the firms that published materials on behalf of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge: H. Cox and S. Mowatt, *Revolutions from Grub Street: A History of Magazine Publishing in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 6.

What seems more likely is that the time and cost spent publishing the journal was becoming an increasing burden on Hastings and his colleagues. Plagiarism had frustrated the editors and the desire for original contributions required greater scrutiny of submissions. In the final four numbers of the *Midland Reporter* only eight new authors had submissions published, suggesting that the growth in the journal's readership may have been waning. Moreover, the submission from one of these new contributors had been solicited directly by Hastings from a Dr Brown in Sunderland. This area of England had experienced the earliest cases of Asiatic cholera in 1831 and Hastings had sought information from Brown regarding the aetiology of the illness and the forms of treatment that had been applied.<sup>38</sup> The continuing spread of the cholera epidemic during 1832 was responsible for increasing Hastings' workload, due partly to the requirement by the Privy Council in the March of that year for local authorities to set up Boards of Health to manage the epidemic. In fact, by this time such a committee had already been constituted in Worcester whose members included, along with Hastings, his co-editors Malden and Sheppard and the hospital governor Harvey Berrow Tymbms.<sup>39</sup> Thus the growing workload that accompanied the arrival of the cholera epidemic may have been a further reason for deciding to cease publication of the quarterly Worcester-based journal in May 1832.

One significant new contributor to the final volume of the *Midland Reporter* was Dr Edward Barlow, a physician attached to the two main hospitals in Bath who, like the Worcester man, had studied medicine in Edinburgh some years before. He and Hastings began a productive correspondence, and these discussions embraced the idea of forming a new society for medical practitioners in the provinces. Despite the success of the *Midland Reporter*, Worcester was unable to lay claim to having a medical reputation as strong as either Birmingham or Bristol, both of whom had developed their own medical schools by the 1830s.<sup>40</sup> Through the medium of his journal, Hastings had already fashioned links with a variety of Birmingham-based medical men, including his co-editor John Darwall and the esteemed physician Dr John Johnstone. The friendship that he cultivated with Edward Barlow added a new ally in the south-west of England which proved important for the successful launch of the new Association.

The response to the prospectus for a new medical society that had been included with the final issue of the *Midland Reporter* was met with widespread approval and support from the journal's readership. Working closely with Edward Barlow, Hastings put in place arrangements for an inaugural meeting of interested doctors at the infirmary in Worcester. Thus, *Berrow's Worcester Journal* noted that On Thursday, July 19<sup>th</sup>, a Meeting of more than fifty Medical Gentlemen took place, agreeably to advertisement, in the Board Room of the Worcester Infirmary, for the purpose of forming an Association [and] the venerable Dr Johnstone, of Birmingham, was unanimously called to the Chair.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>38</sup>*MMSR*, 15 (1832), 220–23.

<sup>39</sup>W. H. McMenemey, *A History of the Worcester Royal Infirmary* (London: Press Alliances Ltd, 1947), p. 201. McMenemey's history of the Worcester Infirmary also notes that although Tymbms sold off his interest in his father's publishing firm in 1836, he nevertheless continued to act as a governor of the Infirmary well into the 1850s, p. 233.

<sup>40</sup>The University of Birmingham dates the origin of its Medical School to 1825. University of Birmingham, 'History of the University of Birmingham Medical School, 1825–2001,' *University of Birmingham* <<https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/university/colleges/mds/about/history.aspx>> [accessed 21 November 2022]; The University of Bristol dates the origin of the Bristol Medical School to 1833. University of Bristol, 'History of the University,' <<https://www.bristol.ac.uk/university/history/>> [accessed 21 November 2022].

<sup>41</sup>*Berrow's Worcester Journal*, 26 July 1832, p. 4.

This meeting brought into existence the Provincial Medical and Surgical Association, with Johnstone elected to serve as the association's first honorary annual president. At the same time the meeting proposed that there should be two permanent secretaries of the association, resident in Worcester, making that city the hub of the organization. Hastings and his colleague James Pook Sheppard were duly elected to serve in that capacity.<sup>42</sup> It was agreed that the association would hold an annual meeting of its members, in different locations within the provinces of England, and that the transactions of these gatherings would be published each year in Worcester under the supervision of the two secretaries. Thus, the annual *Transactions of the Provincial Medical and Surgical Association* became the successor publication to the quarterly *Midland Medical and Surgical Reporter*.<sup>43</sup> There were two advantages of this new publishing arrangement. One was that only those original papers which had been delivered at the annual meeting would be eligible for publication, hence overcoming problems of non-originality, and the other was that the cost of printing and distribution would be funded by members' subscriptions. Each member of the new medical fraternity was required to pay an annual fee of one guinea which could be put 'towards printing the transactions of the Association and defraying the incidental expenses'.<sup>44</sup> According to Hastings' biographer, the initial membership of the new association quickly rose from 140 in 1832 to 316 in 1833.<sup>45</sup>

The body responsible for overseeing the association's activities, and adjudicating on the acceptance of papers for publication, was the council. Council members were selected exclusively from the principal provincial towns of England, thus ensuring that the organization stood apart from the various medical bodies which had their activities centred on London. Having agreed that the inaugural president would be the Birmingham-based Dr Johnstone, it was also proposed and accepted that the first annual meeting would be held in Bristol in 1833 and that the second honorary president would be Dr Andrew Carrick of Bristol.<sup>46</sup> This arrangement, facilitated by Edward Barlow, enabled the new organization to balance the interests of both Birmingham and Bristol as leading medical centres in the Midlands and south west of England, allowing these two groups of practitioners to become collaborators rather than rivals. In addition, the prospectus stated that the council should consist of 'Members [with] Physicians and Surgeons being in equal proportion as nearly as may be practicable'.<sup>47</sup> Hence the arrangements for the new association sought to defuse the rivalry between these two branches of the medical profession, which was actively promoted by the London-based Royal Societies and served as a significant, ongoing obstacle to reform.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>42</sup>McMenemey, *Life and Times*, p. 92.

<sup>43</sup>Csiszar points out an important distinction that had been established in the publication of scientific papers by the beginning of the nineteenth century. By this time the term 'transactions' had become accepted as the generic noun referring to the collections of memoirs published by the members of scientific societies, in contrast to journals and magazines which printed information from a variety of sources. A. Csiszar, 'Science and the Press' in *Edinburgh History*, p. 458.

<sup>44</sup>*Berrow's Worcester Journal*, 26 July 1832, p. 4.

<sup>45</sup>McMenemey, *Life and Times*, p. 100.

<sup>46</sup>*Berrow's Worcester Journal*, 26 July 1832, p. 4.

<sup>47</sup>The Prospectus to Inaugurate the Provincial Medical and Surgical Society'. This document was included in the final issue of the *MMSR*, 16 (1832). A copy of the Prospectus is bound into Volume 3 of the *MMSR* available in the Palfrey Collection of the Worcestershire County Record Office.

<sup>48</sup>Waddington, *Medical Profession*, p. 48.

## Promoting Medical Reform

The launch in Worcester of the PMSA and the publication there of its annual *Transactions* constituted a major innovation in the historical development of the medical profession in Britain. The new Association was strongly influenced in its *modus operandi* by the British Association for the Advancement of Science, which Hastings had joined soon after its formation in 1831.<sup>49</sup> Although *The Lancet* welcomed the PMSA to begin with, Wakley's journal quickly began to criticize the organization, particularly for its determination to remain provincial which, he argued, reduced its effectiveness in campaigning for the cause of reform. In 1830 Wakley had set up the London College of Medicine whose purpose was to create an institution on the basis of liberal principles in which all legally qualified practitioners, whether physicians, surgeons or apothecaries would be associated upon equal terms, enjoy equal rights and recognized by the same title.<sup>50</sup> The London College proved to be short-lived, but in 1836 Wakley supported the creation of a new medical association launched by Dr George Webster, a general practitioner in Dulwich, south-east London. Wakley suggested to Webster that the new institution should be called the British Medical Association and that it should act as a direct rival to the Provincial Medical and Surgical Association. Webster's association was political in nature and intended specifically to instigate legislation to improve the state of general practice.<sup>51</sup> Despite the emergence of this new rival, the Worcester-based association continued to thrive. As the 1830s progressed, the PMSA created a branch network that broadened its membership and by 1837 it had formed branches in both eastern and southern England, along with one each in Bath and Wells. Furthermore, the avowedly scientific orientation of the PMSA did not prevent the doctors in Worcester from continuing to petition Parliament on behalf of its members, for example in relation to the adverse impact of the 1834 Poor Law on the earnings and status of general practitioners.<sup>52</sup>

Wakley's growing opposition to the activities of the PMSA provided an important stimulus for the publication of an alternative to his weekly medical journal that was seized on by Peter Hennis Green. Green was a London-based paediatrician who had gained experience in medical journalism working for *The Lancet*. By the late 1830s, the PMSA's council was aware that the quality of the papers in its annual *Transactions* fell short of the submissions being published by the leading medical journals in London. Hence when, in 1840, they were approached by Green with the idea of launching a weekly journal in collaboration with the association, his proposal quickly found favour. By this time, the membership of the PMSA numbered some 1,200 and Green recognized that this would provide a more than adequate readership upon which to launch a rival publication to *The Lancet*.<sup>53</sup> In order to consolidate the link with the PMSA membership, Green and the council agreed that Hastings' colleague at Worcester, Dr Robert Streeten, should take the role of co-editor.

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<sup>49</sup>McMenemey, *Life and Times*, p. 74.

<sup>50</sup>P. W. J. Bartrip, *Mirror of Medicine: A History of the British Medical Journal* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), p. 6.

<sup>51</sup>Louden, p. 279–80.

<sup>52</sup>*Life and Times*, pp. 148–52.

<sup>53</sup>The figure for the membership of the PMSA in 1840 can be found in P. Bartrip, 'The *British Medical Journal*: a retrospect', in *Medical Journals*, p. 128.

The opening issue of the *Provincial Medical and Surgical Journal* was printed by Richard Clay and published by the firm of William Ball, both of London, and dated 3 October 1840, with a cover price of 6d.<sup>54</sup> To begin with, unlike the *Transactions*, the journal was not included as part of the annual subscription for members of the PMSA but rather it operated as an affiliated publication. Nevertheless, with the *PMSJ* registered with the Post Office as a newspaper, the members of the PMSA living in the provinces were able to obtain the new weekly publication through the post for an extra 1d in stamp duty. In order to stimulate the journal's circulation, the PMSA soon began to offer its members the *PMSJ* at a discounted price. Hence the association began to make bulk purchases of the journal, and from 1842 introduced the policy of including the new publication as a benefit of membership. However, negotiations over the price paid by the association to the London publishers seem to have become a matter of dispute and in 1844 the location of the journal shifted from London back to Deighton and Company in Worcester, with Green being paid off and Streeten taking full editorial control. Thus, from its issue of 3 April 1844 the *Provincial Medical Journal*, as it had now been renamed, became a dedicated publication of the PMSA and Britain's first medical weekly to be published outside of London.<sup>55</sup>

During its first decade in operation, the PMSA evolved into an organization with a membership made up increasingly of general practitioners: by the time of the passage of the Medical Act of 1858 around 95% of its members were practising medicine as GPs.<sup>56</sup> In early Victorian Britain, these community-based doctors were the leading advocates of medical reform and the *PMJ* consistently promoted their interests. One overriding concern of general practitioners lay in their opposition to the ability of unqualified doctors to continue to operate unhampered by any legal constraints. These so-called quacks were one aspect of the long established medical marketplace where conventionally educated physicians were forced to compete with an unregulated collection of chemists, druggists, medicine vendors and unorthodox practitioners.<sup>57</sup> Using data from the city of Gloucester, D. P. Helm has argued that by the 1840s a majority of the local population – specifically the poorer elements – were able to gain access to qualified medical advice and thus reduce their reliance on the purveyors of such remedies.<sup>58</sup> In this respect Helm demonstrates that the medical marketplace declined in importance by the 1840s. However, although the activities of chemists and druggists was increasingly falling under the direction of qualified doctors via the growing use of prescriptions, a continuing concern of those campaigning for medical reform was the need for the suppression of practices based on empiricism – those which were promoted merely on the basis of observed outcomes – rather than through the application of scientific principles.<sup>59</sup>

One area of therapy that relied for its claims of efficacy purely on reported benefits was the hydropathic method, popularized in Germany and more commonly referred to as the water-

<sup>54</sup>Copies of the *PMSJ* are available via the website of the *British Medical Journal* at <<https://www.bmj.com>>.

<sup>55</sup>Bartrip, *British Medical Journal*, p.130. The title of the journal was changed to the *Provincial Medical Journal* beginning from the issue dated 9 April 1842.

<sup>56</sup>Bartrip, *Mirror*, p. 38.

<sup>57</sup>D. Porter and R. Porter, *Patient's Progress: Doctors and Doctoring in Eighteenth Century England*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989), see espec. pp. 96–114. On quacks and quackery more generally see R. Porter, *Quacks, Fakers & Charlatans in English Medicine*, (Stroud: Tempus Publishing, 2000). The term quack, to label a bogus physician, was widely used in the nineteenth century, having been included in Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary* as early as 1755. *Ibid.*, p. 18. The word quack appears to have originated as a corrupted version of the Dutch term for charlatan.

<sup>58</sup>D. P. Helm, 'Doctors, Druggists and Patients: The End of the Medical Marketplace in Mid-Nineteenth Century Gloucestershire', *Midland History*, 43, 1 (2018), 80.

<sup>59</sup>*PMSJ*, 1, 3 October (1840), 1.

cure. In 1842, a physician, James Wilson began to practise this treatment in the spa town of Malvern, a few miles west of Worcester.<sup>60</sup> This development provoked the ire of Charles Hastings and his colleagues at the Worcester Infirmary, who questioned the benefits of what seemed to be essentially a form of health tourism designed to earn profits by treating the afflictions of the well-heeled. Writing a leading article in the *PMJ* in September 1842, Hastings poured scorn on the medical interlopers in typical style:

The water-cure has been introduced into this country with such pomp and ceremony, and its claims to distinction, as the most effectual means of dismissing all the pains which flesh is heir to, have been set forth with such unblushing effrontery, that those unaccustomed to consider the devious and dishonest courses, which in all ages have been resorted to, in order to prop up fallacious systems, might have been led to think, that at length some important discovery had been accidentally stumbled upon by a German peasant, and that, henceforth, the age of man was to be prolonged, and his pains and calamities would be relieved.<sup>61</sup>

Hastings' attacks on the Malvern water-cure quacks continued for a year unanswered. In further issues of the *PMJ* in October and November 1842, and again in January 1843, he put forward more case-based evidence to support his argument that such practices were at best worthless and at worst positively dangerous.<sup>62</sup> Eventually Wilson responded in September 1843 to refute one of the specific cases cited by Hastings, but the enmity between the physicians of Worcester and their rivals in Malvern continued for years unabated.<sup>63</sup>

In their attempts to suppress the activities of quacks the PMSA demanded a number of reforms to be enacted by parliament: 'a definition of medical qualification, a register of qualified doctors, a medical council which represented the profession as a whole, and a rationalization of the chaotic state of medical education and examinations'.<sup>64</sup> In this respect, the *PMJ* campaigned for a system of registration that would distinguish properly qualified practitioners from those who lacked these qualifications and who often practised in areas of medicine that were not recognized in medical orthodoxy.<sup>65</sup> The campaign for medical reform also served to consolidate opposition among general practitioners in the provinces to the London medical elite, and in particular to the activities and privileges afforded to the two royal colleges. For many years, this anti-

<sup>60</sup>Grierson's account of Wilson's activities in the field of hydrotherapy notes that he obtained the diploma of the Royal College of Surgeons and the Licentiate of the Society of Apothecaries in London around 1830. The situation regarding his qualification as an M.D. however is opaque. It is suggested that the M.D. was obtained only after he began to practise in Malvern, probably in the middle to late 1840s, 'as he does not add these letters to his name in his early books'. J. Grierson, *Dr. Wilson and his Malvern Hydro: Park View in the Water Cure Era* (Malvern: Cora Weaver, 1998), p. 7.

<sup>61</sup>*PMJ*, 25, 24 Sept (1842), 491–2. Note that the German peasant referred to by Hastings in his tirade against hydrotherapy was Vincent Priessnitz. It was Priessnitz whose methods Wilson had observed at first hand during a stay at his water-cure practice in Graefenberg, Silesia, shortly before setting up his hydro in Malvern which he named Graefenberg House. Grierson, pp. 12–19.

<sup>62</sup>*PMJ*, 108, 22 Oct. (1842), 73; 112, 19 Nov. (1842), 149; 121, 21 Jan. (1843), 328.

<sup>63</sup>*PMJ*, 157, 30 Sept (1843), 541–2. One member of the scientific community who benefitted from the Malvern-based water-cure therapies was Charles Darwin. He first attended the practice of Wilson's initial partner, Dr James Gully, in 1849. Whilst receiving his treatment in Malvern, Darwin wrote to assure his friend Joseph Hooker: 'I feel certain that the Water cure is no quackery'. J. Browne, 'Spas and Sensibilities: Darwin at Malvern' *Medical History*, Supplement No. 10, 1990, reprinted in *The Medical History of Waters and Spas*, ed. by R. Porter (London: Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine), p. 109.

<sup>64</sup>Loudon, *Medical Care*, pp. 297–8.

<sup>65</sup>Beardmore points out that, while the Act of 1858 did not outlaw the activities of unqualified quacks, it did enable registered doctors to set themselves apart from the 'irregulars': C. A. Beardmore, 'Death, Grief and the Victorian GP: A Case Study of Edward Wrench of Baslow, Derbyshire, 1862–1898', *Midland History*, 47, 3 (2022), pp. 313–30.

London sentiment among the majority of PMSA members supported the provincial identity of the organization and continued to facilitate its Worcester-based structure.

During the 1840s a number of attempts to address medical reform in parliament were initiated. The Warburton bill of 1840 – subject for discussion in the very first issue of the *PMJ* – along with legislation proposed by Benjamin Hawes in 1841 were criticized by the *PMJ* and did not find their way on to the statute book.<sup>66</sup> During the course of 1844 a medical reform bill was introduced to parliament under the leadership of Sir James Gordon, the Home Secretary in Robert Peel's Conservative administration. This bill proposed the establishment of a Council of Health and Medical Education to govern the profession, along with a registration system that would provide consistency in terms of the required level of qualification needed to practise medicine. Although this initiative constituted a step forward in the process of medical governance, the *PMJ* was again critical of many aspects of the proposed legislation, arguing in particular that it failed to address their desire for the outlawing of quackery. Gordon's proposed bill was revised in 1845 before being withdrawn the following year. A less ambitious Medical Registration Bill was introduced in 1846, gaining the support of the PMSA council, as an interim step in medical reform, but opposition from the royal colleges again led the process to be rejected by parliament, this time at the committee stage.<sup>67</sup>

These efforts at reform between 1844 and 1846 took place when Robert Streeten edited the *PMJ*, and he continued in this role until his death in 1849. As Bartrip points out, during the 1840s the *PMJ* highlighted issues in which it felt progress was sorely needed. As well as professional recognition and the problem of quackery, it also raised the need for improvements in army medicine, the operation of the Poor Laws and better public health measures, notably through its constructive criticism of Edwin Chadwick's 1842 Report and its support for the Public Health Act 1848.<sup>68</sup> By the time of Streeten's death, however, many members of the PMSA had become critical of the journal, feeling that its contents were of lower status than those found in the leading London medical publications. In addition, members of the PMSA felt that at around 60%, too great a proportion of their annual subscription was used exclusively to finance publication of the *PMJ*.<sup>69</sup>

The loss of Streeten's editorial leadership led the council members at Worcester to appoint their colleague John Henry Walsh, together with the *PMJ*'s editor for foreign correspondence William Harcourt Ranking from Norwich, as joint editors. The appointment did not meet with the universal approval of the PMSA's members, and at the association's annual meeting of 1850 Hastings was forced to defend the decision against criticism from the floor.<sup>70</sup> Agitation from members for the journal's publication to return to London at the association's annual meeting in 1852 was supported by the majority of members and led to the resignation of both Ranking and Walsh. As a result, publication of the journal in London resumed in 1853 under the editorship of the highly qualified Scottish physician, John Rose Cormack. Cormack had founded the *Edinburgh Monthly Journal of Medical Science* in 1841, and after moving south, he

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<sup>66</sup>*PMSJ*, 1, 3 October (1840), 13.

<sup>67</sup>Bartrip, *Mirror*, pp. 38–9.

<sup>68</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 41–62.

<sup>69</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 20.

<sup>70</sup>*Life and Times*, pp. 343–4.



inaugurated the *London Journal of Medicine*. On assuming editorship of the *PMJ*, Cormack amalgamated it with his London publication, under the title of the *Association Medical Journal*.

Cormack's decision to drop the term 'Provincial' from the journal's title was significant because it reflected his support for a growing sentiment among members of the PMSA that the organization should end its opposition to expanding its activities into London. In January 1853 the Metropolitan Counties branch of the Association was established to serve Greater London, bringing to a close the exclusively provincial status of Hastings' original association. In 1854, members of the association agreed to cease publication of the *Transactions*. The following year the organization was renamed the British Medical Association, and its weekly publication, the *British Medical Journal*. Through these acts they decisively ended Worcester's role as the association's headquarters and publishing focal point.<sup>71</sup>

## Summary

The key to the emergence of Worcester as a driver of medical advancement and reform in the second quarter of the nineteenth century, is found in the productive alliance between Charles Hastings and his colleagues, based at the Infirmary, and the newspaper publishing enterprise owned by Harvey Berrow Tymbs. Through the *Midland Medical and Surgical Reporter* in 1828, Charles Hastings developed a platform upon which could be built a community of like-minded doctors, based in the provinces of England, who sought to advance the science of medicine and their professional status via the medium of a printed journal. After four years of publishing, the *Midland Reporter* had created a network of sufficient size and influence to enable the formation of the Provincial Medical and Surgical Association that served the interests of a broad range of qualified medical practitioners. Though Worcester was of modest standing as a centre of medicine in the midlands, Hastings used his influence with leading medical practitioners in Birmingham and Bristol to establish his own city as the location for the secretariat of the new association.

Although the formation of the PMSA was the point at which publication of the *Midland Reporter* came to an end – the reason for which, as this article points out, remains an issue for debate – the publishing of the *Transactions* of the annual conferences of the association remained based in Worcester and meant that the alliance between the Infirmary and the publishing house of H.B. Tymbs and H. Deighton continued to flourish. Throughout the 1830s the membership and branch-based structure of the PMSA grew and exerted an important groundswell of support, outside of London, for the professional recognition of qualified medical practitioners. During this time, however, the absence of a regular periodical publication that acted, at least in part, as a campaigning arm of the PMSA led to the promotion of a number of London-centred rival institutions particularly through the influential weekly journal *The Lancet*.

The desire of many members of the PMSA for a publication that could rival *The Lancet* and make a greater impact than the annual *Transactions* was fulfilled in 1840 by the launch of the *Provincial Medical and Surgical Journal*. Although this weekly journal was proposed

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<sup>71</sup>Bartrip, *British Medical Journal*, p. 132.

and edited by the *ex-Lancet* journalist Peter Green, and initially published in London, Hastings ensured that his colleague Robert Streeten was appointed as co-editor in order to maintain Worcester's influence. Over the first two years of publication the *Provincial Medical Journal*, as it was renamed in 1842, effectively became the house journal of the PMSA, and annual subscriptions to the Association were extended to enable members to receive copies for free. In 1844 publication of the *PMJ* in London ceased, with Worcester again assuming the role of publisher. The guaranteed readership provided by the membership of the PMSA helped to boost revenues for the journal and during the 1840s the *PMJ* developed into a serious rival of *The Lancet*.

By Streeten's death in 1849, however, an increasing proportion of the PMSA's members began to oppose the provincial nature of the Association and pressures developed to extend the scope of the organization to include doctors based in London. The decision to inaugurate a Metropolitan Counties branch of the PMSA, finally agreed in 1852, established the association as a national organization representing medical practitioners throughout the United Kingdom. In the same year, the association's annual meeting in Oxford, agreed that the publication of the *PMJ* should revert from Worcester back to London, at which point its title changed to the *Association Medical Journal*. Thus, the calls to extend membership those doctors based in London, and the relocation of the association's journal to the capital, undermined Hastings' long-time leadership. In 1854, the decision to cease publication of the *Transactions* brought to an end Worcester's longstanding influence over the development of the Association which it had been able to exercise for a quarter of a century.

## Acknowledgements

The author would like to express his gratitude to colleagues in the Department of History, Sociology and Politics at the University of Worcester and to the participants at a symposium on the History of Worcester held at The Hive, Worcester, on 9 October 2021. Special thanks are also due to Professor Grazia Ietto-Gillies for helpful advice and comments on an earlier draft.

## Disclosure statement

The author reported no potential conflict of interest.

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