

A wee blether with Mary Dick



By Colin M Warwick MBE and Dr Alastair A Macdonald



WE WERE strolling north along Middle Meadow Walk in Edinburgh. The morning was typically late autumn damp-cool. Many leaves had already fallen onto the sides of the tree-lined path. Lots of athletes were about, in groups of all ages from tiny tots to seniors, running, exercising, playing football or some other energetic game.

"Look, see that wee lassie over there. She's coaxing her wee chum to go faster."

"Maybe that's her wee brother; they look like one another."

It got the two of us thinking. There is a lot of normal life in Scotland that 'just happens' and is rarely noticed by other folk. People know about the 'Dick Vet' – the old veterinary school building at the east end of the Meadows; it is now called 'SUMMERHALL' and has been transformed into a very active Art Centre. They are sort of aware that the Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies has moved its student training and animal care research 7km south, to Easter Bush in Midlothian. But do they know the story of Mary Dick, the sister of its founder, William Dick? It seems that almost nothing was written about women like her back in the early eighteen hundreds. Who was she? What was she like? What did she do? How do you find out?

"How about getting her to tell her own story?"

"Apart for the wee problem of her being dead for over a hundred years."

"Well, we can begin the tale with what we know. Let's see where that takes us."

*Who was she?
What was she like?
What did she do?
How do you find out?*

The heavily corbelled spire of Barclay Viewforth Church came into view as we turned into Jawbone Walk. A slight breeze rustled the leaves.

"Mary Dick's mum and dad came from farming stock, near Old Deer in Aberdeenshire. They moved to Edinburgh in about the mid 1780s and came to live in White Horse Close (Figure 1), on the north side of the foot of the Canongate."

"Wasn't Mary born there?"

"Aye. I was born there on the 1st June 1791. My brother William too, on the 6th May 1793. Our father was a farrier. He made and fitted horseshoes. I had another wee baby brother, James, born too early in December 1793, but he died on the 21st July of the next year. I still had my brother William, and I was very fond of him. We played together in the White Horse Close yard."

"In 1795, when I was four years old, we flitted to live on the north side of Rose Street in Edinburgh's New Town (Figure 2A). Father said we were the tenants of Mr Porteous, as was our neighbour, the kindly Mrs Shaw, or was it Mrs Law; I forget now. It was there that my wee sister, Georgina was born, about the start of November 1795. The three of us were growing up and played a lot together, and with other children, in the back lane and in the street, watching out for the horses and carts. I minded my wee William and Georgina. Early in January 1798 another wee brother was born; he was also called James. Mr Storrie had the smithy and farriery business in Rose Street, and Mr Young and Mr Laing were the teachers who lived quite near us."

Fig 1 Illustration of White Horse Close (J. Skene, c.1818).



Old White Horse Inn - Canongate

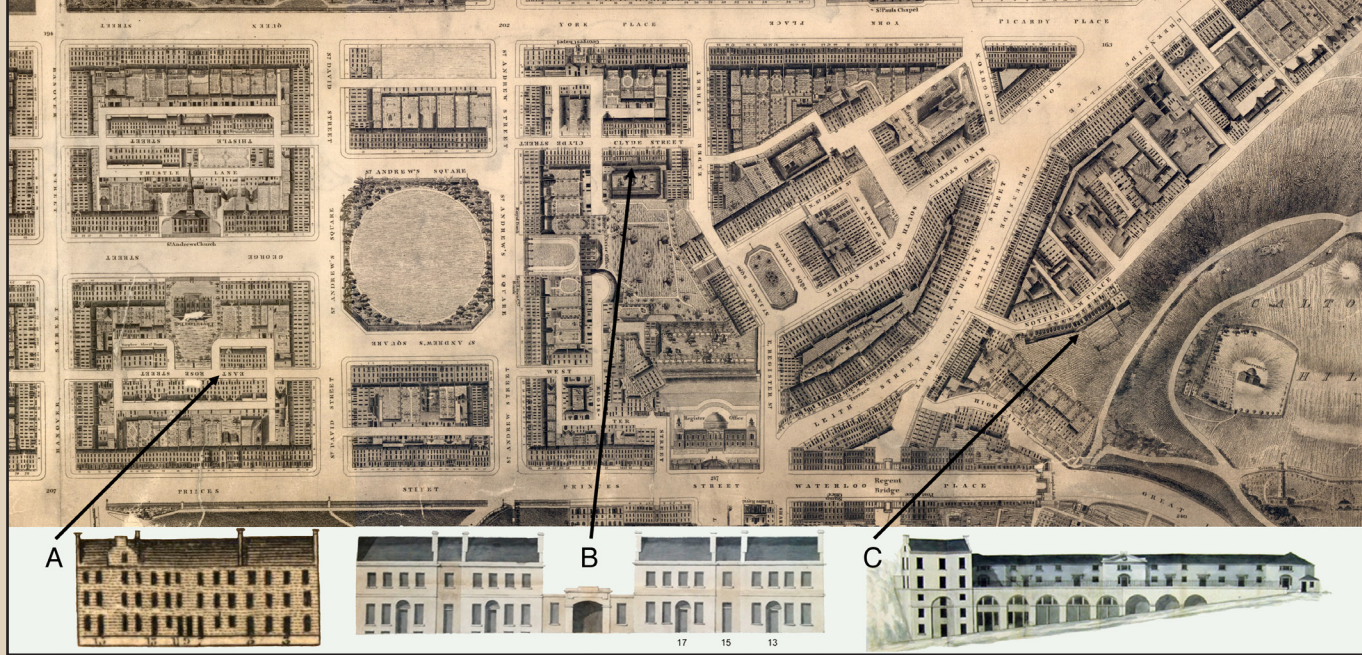


Fig 2 Map of the central Edinburgh – places that Mary lived in (Kirkwood & Son, 1819).

Fig 4 Illustration of Dead Child Carrier.



Fig 5 Illustration of a fruit seller.



Fig 6 Illustration of the maid.



The house was very sad at those times and it had a very big effect on me

“Early in 1799 we flitted again, this time out of the New Town to Mud Island. It was one of several strange names (Rubbish Hill and Tumble Dust were two others) for a lovely bit of countryside at the top of Leith Walk. You can best see it from this view up on the north side of Calton Hill, down there in the foreground with its cluster of five houses (Figure 3). Our neighbour, Mr James Gilchrist, had built his house there, the one with the walled garden. William and I often used to play together on the Hill’s grassy slopes. We would watch the horses and carts on the road from Edinburgh to Leith. We had a lot more freedom and many more adventures together there. In 1803, when I was twelve years old, I went by open boat across the Forth to Kirkcaldy, paying two shillings for my passage and for me to be carried from the boat to the landing place on the boatman’s shoulders. Father was doing his farriery work, and very importantly, Mr James Burt, the only veterinarian in Edinburgh at that time, had based his veterinary practice beside our house on Mud Island. William and I got to see all sorts of different animal health problems, and Mr Burt and our father explained how they were being dealt with. From 1800-1814 this was a core part of our every-day lives.”

“Very sadly, soon after we had arrived at Mud Island, our wee sister Georgina died, on the 4th of April, 1799; she was only three and a half years old. Our wee brother James also got sick, with measles, and he died two months later. The next year, on the 10th of May, mother gave birth to another baby boy, called George. But he died of Chincough [whooping cough] on the 21st June 1801. The house was very sad at those times and it had a very big effect on me. I was by then ten years old and my beloved brother William was eight. The following year, 1802, another brother, John, was born on the 3rd of May; and he survived.”

“Throughout most of our school years we lived at Mud Island. I can remember, the year we moved there, Mr William Kesson the schoolteacher opened an Academy at the head of Leith Walk, not far from our house. He taught English, Latin, French grammar, arithmetic and writing. He later moved his teaching to rooms in Shakespeare Square, beside the Theatre Royal on Princes Street (Figure 2). That’s where Mr Ross taught geography. In 1804 Mr Kesson flitted to North Berwick to become the Burgh schoolmaster there. William took classes in rhetoric from Mr Wilson, and mathematics from Mr Noble. Other teachers taught bookkeeping. I was good at bookkeeping.”

“In those days there was a lot of house building going on around the top of Leith Walk and in the New Town. Many



Fig 3 Panorama of Mud Island from Calton Hill (R. Barker, 1792).

carts passed by transporting stone for these buildings, and carrying wood up from the docks at Leith. There were stables near the top of Leith Walk to add horses to those already hitched to the carts, to help them pull their loads up the last bit of hill into the New Town. All of this meant lots of work for my father, not just shoeing horses but working with Mr Burt attending to the sick and unhealthy animals. My brother William was fascinated by all this horse medicine and surgery around him, and so was I.”

“One of our neighbours, and a good friend of my father, was Mr Samuel Wordsworth. He used to have a four-horse stagecoach business running between Edinburgh and Glasgow; you could go there, attend your meeting, and come back home all in one day. In 1804 he got permission from the Dean of Guild to build stables and houses on the road round the north side of Calton Hill, which he named Nottingham Place, after the town he came from. In 1805 we moved up the hill from Mud Island to live in one of Mr Wordsworth’s newly built houses. It was on the east end of his stable block (Figure 2C). Mum got on well with Mrs Sarah Wordsworth. About the beginning of November 1805 a baby boy was born into our family, and we called him Samuel Wordsworth Dick. Sadly, however, he lived only just over two years and died of whooping cough on the 4th March 1808. Ours was not the only family to suffer from such traumatically high child mortality. Our new friends, the Wordsworth family, had nine children between 1796 and 1811, of whom seven had died aged two years or less (Figure 4). In 1807 their daughter, Sarah, was aged eight when their son, Samuel, was born; both survived.”

“In 1811 the census said that there were 120,000 folk in Edinburgh, and that 11,000 of them were spinsters. I was 20 years old and well aware of this situation. William was eighteen and busy working with our father as a farrier.”

“Then several additional things happened that year that nudged our family further along a now obviously developing path. In March, a famous singer, Miss Elizabeth Feron, came to Edinburgh to perform first at the Assembly Rooms on George Street, and then in the Theatre Royal on Princes Street (Figure 2). Father said that she was the daughter of a Frenchman, Jean Feron, who had attempted to establish a veterinary school in the town back about the time when William was born. This added to discussions in the house and in Mr Burt’s, about how to treat sick and injured horses in a better way. They both reminded us of one of their old farrier



Fig 8 Photo of a disruption brooch.

Fig 7 Illustration of William Dick as Dean of Guild?



The Wordsworth family, had nine children between 1796 and 1811, of whom seven had died aged two years or less

friends, Mr James Clark. He had tried to start a veterinary school in Edinburgh in the 1790s, and had been writing another book for his hoped-for students when he died in 1808; they had gone to his funeral. Then later in 1811, Alex, the son of Mr Alexander Gray, another of father’s farrier friends, set off for London to study at the veterinary college there. I continued to encourage William to think about all of this as something for him. We talked a lot about it.”

“I was kept busy working in the house, helping our mother. There was food to be bought from the markets in the town, meals to prepare, clothes and sheets to be washed and dried up on Calton Hill, sewing and mending of clothes to be done, and the house to be kept tidy. Father made a swey for our kitchen in Nottingham Place; it was a strong swinging arm attached to an upright post in the fireplace, with a chain and hook attached. It was a huge improvement for our mother and I as it meant we could swing the small pottage cooking pot, and in particular the heavy clothes washing water pot, on and off the fire. Yes, we usually ate

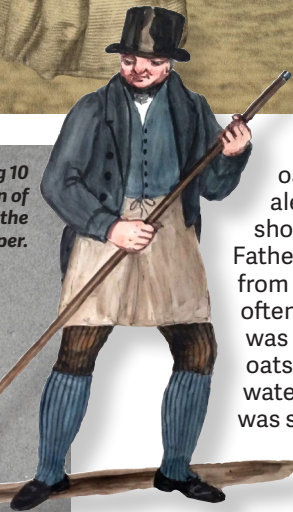


Fig 9 Photo montage of the interior of Clyde St courtyard with staff, students, Mary and photographer (c. 1864).



Fig 11 Carte de visite of Mary (J.B. Knott, c.1872)

Fig 10 Illustration of 'Charlie' the sweeper.



oatmeal pottage for breakfast, with milk or ale. Sometimes there was the brose from shorn cabbage left over from the previous night. Father had also made oatcake toasters that hung from the bars of the fire-grate. We had oatcakes often. And for dinner there was sowans, which was made from oat bran or the husks of ground oats. They had to be soaked for two days in warm water, and ferment slightly, and then the liquid was sieved and boiled, with a little salt added, until it thickened into a paste. In the evenings we sometimes had kale [red cabbage] brose, or perhaps a thick broth of barley and turnip, and sometimes fish, oh and sometimes beef-brose and potatoes. We also had flat bread made of barley and peas. They were first ground together into a meal, kneaded into bannocks and I then toasted them on a griddle over the fire. We had cheese too. And I began to enjoy my cups of tea more and more often."

"A couple of years later we started to talk of moving house because father wanted to set up his own farrier business. In 1815 he set up his forge in a courtyard on the north side of Clyde Street, at the east end of the New Town. We moved to a newly built house at number 15, just across the road (Figure 2B). We were very close to St Andrews Square. I read a lot, kept up with the news, and had been offered the perusal of several of Walter Scott's novels while they were yet only in manuscript. But I declined to read them, both then and afterwards; my political and religious views were diametrically opposed to those of Scott. William had a real taste for knowing about anatomical things. He saw in the April issue of the Farmers' Magazine that a three-month course of classes on comparative anatomy for farriers was to be run from May by the famous Dr Barclay at Surgeon Square. We all encouraged him to attend."

"William greatly enjoyed the lectures and practical classes. Almost all the other students were studying medicine. One glaikit chiel had called William 'a common working



Fig 12 Photo of bronze Marly horses.

blacksmith'. Dr Barclay replied to the class 'all that I can say is, that whether he be a blacksmith or a whitesmith he's the cleverest chap among you'. Oh, I was so proud that someone else had seen his worth. Dr Barclay was a kindly man, quite modest and full of quiet humour. He gave William lots of encouragement, and through him, William was able to attend lectures in the university on chemistry and the practice of healing disease. I coaxed and cajoled William to learn as much as possible. And I reminded him of how Alex had recently gone to the London Veterinary College, and was now a qualified veterinarian like Mr Burt. We were lucky to have Mr John Gray, the agent for the stage to London, living next door, and William got advice from him for his trip south. It was also convenient because letters could easily be sent back and forth. I told Mrs Burt 'our William's going to be a grand veterinarian too. He's saved enough now to take the long road coach to London'."

"In the autumn of 1817 William went south to the London Veterinary College. While there we sent him meal and potatoes from Edinburgh by Leith smack [fishing boat] and he wrote letters to keep us informed. He worked hard at his studies and transferred his lecture notes into one book, which I've read. I encouraged him to learn how the College was organised and to identify how it could be bettered. With all that he already knew from his youth in Edinburgh, he presented for examination and passed on the 27th of January 1818, three months after starting."

"As soon as William got back home our conversations were filled with his desire to start a veterinary school in Edinburgh. I rejoiced at the idea. He started right away and for several years had a small number of students. They were mostly young farriers and apprentices. Looking back, it was a really important 'turning moment' in my life too."

"In 1820 Sarah Wordsworth got married to Robert Hartshorn. I was long since convinced I was never going to marry. William never got married either. He had fallen in love with the daughter of one of the local bankers, but her father did not agree to the match; 'we weren't good enough for her'; she married someone else. However, my brother and ... erm, that lady, ... remained very good friends for the rest of his life. He never cared for another woman like that ever again."

Fig 13 Oil portrait of Mary with tea-set (A. Young, 1883).



Fig 14 Where is the portrait of Mary Dick by T. Fraser?.



"My younger brother, John, was not as strong as William and I. He was learning farriery with father, but did not have the same drive and enthusiasm for it. In 1820 he somehow became more and more lethargic; he died on 17th July 1821. William was much affected, and never mentioned John's name again."

"I liked bookkeeping and did that work well for both my father and my brother. They did the animal work. I wasn't the slightest interested in the changing fashions of those days and scorned the 'elegant types' parading about in St Andrews Square, along George Street and onto Princes Street. I had learned to 'keep my ear to the ground' to know what was going on in the neighbourhood, and in the town. I read the

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newspapers and magazines and knew what was happening further afield too.”

“The 1820s were filled with the growth and development of William’s veterinary teaching and veterinary practice. Dr Barclay was a very important help to him in this. As a result of Dr Barclay’s conversations, first at the School of Arts and then at the Highland Society of Scotland, William was invited to give courses of lectures ‘on veterinary physic and surgery’. Although we, as a family, considered that William’s first course of lectures began on the 12th November 1818, the course that started on the 24th Nov 1823, under the patronage of the Highland Society of Scotland, has become regarded as the official beginning of the College. Father became a Burgess of Edinburgh in 1828.

“That year we bought from Dr Monro, the University’s Professor of Anatomy, an old house, number 8, across the street from where we lived. William moved his teaching there. It was more convenient because the forge and farriery practical work was already being taught in the courtyard there (Figure 2). However, I thought the room he used to teach in was far too crowded. In April 1829, William went off to France and the Low Countries to see how veterinary colleges over there were organised. He came back full of good ideas. My bookkeeping showed the family that our veterinary and farriery businesses were making quite a lot of money. So, after much discussion, they hired the brothers Richard and Robert Dickson to design a proper building for our veterinary school, with accommodation for the family too. It was built on that number 8 site and opened in 1833. William was 40 years old, and as a family we moved into our own house for the first time. I had the wee bedroom on the first floor, and I kept the window tight shut. It was also about that time that I had my portrait painted by Thomas Fraser, who had a studio round the corner in North St Andrews Street; it was exhibited in the Royal Scottish Academy, at the foot of the Mound.”

“In 8 Clyde Street I was in my element and would be happy there for the next thirty years. Although every year was different, there were annual events that gave structure to the year – fresh fruit coming on sale (Figure 5), student enrolment, the start of the autumn academic session in November, the year-end break, the winter session, the examinations in April, the annual dinner for guests, students and staff, and the summer

I supported William’s idea to treat the animals of the poor for no payment



College under construction, ca. 1916 credit EUA CA7

Summerhall Exterior

break. And then it all started over again. Throughout this time the accounts of the veterinary practice, as well as those of the veterinary school, needed regular attention. I used my watchful eye to prevent those financial leakages that are not unknown in professional business. They said that I was a most energetic and business-like woman. I was very satirical of modern extravagance and effeminacy. And I always boasted that I had never taken a walk for health in my life. I have never had a cough.”

“William was a very successful veterinarian. He gathered many clients. As a result, his students had lots of opportunities to see examples of the diseases and injuries he described to them in lectures. They were able to learn how to practice and perform their treatment in the courtyard below. I supported William’s idea to treat the animals of the poor for no payment. It brought into Clyde St many examples of animals that needed urgent surgery or medical care, again of great benefit to his students’ education.”

“I took a great interest in the welfare of every student and was always anxious for the real good within each one of them. I made it part of my business to be fully acquainted with all their outgoings and incomings. I was not slow to note peccadilloes. Part of my role was to be the general censor of their manners and morals. All the idle, noisy, or dissipated delinquents had to appear before me, much to their embarrassment. There were very few misdemeanours that escaped my detection. No discovered culprits escaped reproof. However, I could tell that they all held me in sincere respect and with affectionate regard. I may have been a bit despotic, but my rule was kindly and helpful when they were in sickness or trouble. Former students were constant and regular correspondents. They frequently sent me newspapers that contained personal paragraphs; these, I declined to have destroyed.”

“Some of our former students became my life-long friends. For example, William Anderson completed his studies with us in 1835. He named his daughter after me. And of course there was William Worthington, who in April 1840 qualified as a Veterinary Surgeon. Our William then appointed him to be his Clinical Assistant at the college, and he became a loyal friend and devoted colleague. He was the College’s first member of staff and took part in clinical instruction. His first wife, Christiana had two children, Anne and William. They lived in the house in the northeast corner of the courtyard. In 1844 Mr John Barlow, a very bright young man, came back to teach anatomy and physiology as another staff member. There were many others.”

“In the autumn of 1837 there was a bad dose of influenza in the town. Our mother caught it and could not fight it

off. When she died I became the proprietor of our home at 8 Clyde Street. We had a young woman to help me do the housework. I recall that at about that time it was Isabella Graham (Figure 6) who held that position. Sometimes there was also a younger lass to help out with the washing of clothes, bedding, etc.

“In 1840 most of the students signed a letter to the Highland Society requesting that the title of Professor be conferred on William, and that his ‘school’ became a ‘College’. We were all delighted by the Society’s positive response. Increasingly, in the 1830s, William had been involved with the Town Council through his elected role as Deacon-Convenor of the Trades of Edinburgh. He became *ex officio* General Commissioner of Police, and in that position, on Saturday the 4th September 1842, he had to get all dressed up in his finery (Figure 7). He was to be in charge of the detachment of High Constables at the Cross guarding the keys of Edinburgh town, which were to be symbolically presented to Queen Victoria. Large crowds were on the streets to see her carriage go by.”

“1844 ended sadly for us. Our father had been suffering from a shortness of breath and chest discomfort for some time. He also had a bad cough. He succumbed and died of bronchitis, aged 75, and on the 28th December was buried in New Calton Cemetery alongside our mother.”

“We were a normal church-attending family. However, since 1838 there had been growing disquiet in our church and it was said that the ‘church had become a creation of the State’. You could say that I was quite Calvinist in my faith. On the 18th May 1843 at the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, which was being held in the Church of St Andrews in George Street, a large number of ministers and elders walked out and held a Disruption Assembly. I agreed with them. To show my clear convictions, I joined the Free Church and obtained and treasured one of the 500 silver disruption brooches that were made in Aberdeen in 1845 (Figure 8). William was very against the Annuity tax, which was imposed on house property for the support of the clergy of Edinburgh. Like many others he refused to pay it and was prosecuted in 1849 in the Small Debt Court.”

“At home we were a very hospitable household. He was a very genial and generous host. Our house was much frequented, by neighbours, students, visiting veterinary surgeons, town councillors, and others. Our friends, colleagues and acquaintances passed many a happy hour under our roof. We had plenty of wine and spirits in our basement cellar for the guests that came. Preparing meals was also much easier and more flexible than before because of the Carron cast iron stove that we had installed in 8 Clyde Street. Ann Smith, the younger of my two maids, once overheard one of the

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students, Mr Thomas Dollar, refer to me as ‘active, smart and trig’. We laughed.”

“It was in the late 1840s that we decided to explore the possibility of building a house away from the city in the countryside. I was keen to see the sea again and to have the warmth of a south-facing outlook. We chose Burntisland, and in 1848 bought a piece of hill called Craig Kenochy. It was on the edge of the town, above rocky ground overlooking the seashore. We built two spacious houses, side by side, such that from the front they had a lovely view over the Forth towards Leith and Edinburgh. We called them Craigkennochie. In fact they were the first of a row of houses that became Craigkennochie Terrace. William had other houses built in Aberdour Road and in the High Street as well. On the 17th May 1851, he was made a Burgess of Burntisland and became a member of the Burntisland Council (as well as already being an elected member of Edinburgh Town Council). We were also given the rights to two seats in St Columba’s Church, a building with both an interesting architecture and very special history. Throughout the next decade we often enjoyed sailing over to Craigkennochie. It was a place of peace and relaxation away from the veterinary business and William’s Town Council duties in Edinburgh. William and I were in our 60s.”

“The start of the 1860s was filled by the bits and pieces of normal life. I had my 70th birthday in 1863 and that year William Worthington’s son William qualified from the College and left to practice in Wigan. His sister Anne got married to John Aitken in March of the following year, and in 1865 we carried out building work to extend the College eastwards into 10 Clyde Street. We also arranged that a photograph be taken of the staff and students in the Veterinary College courtyard (Figure 9). Back in 1837 William had been appointed as Veterinary Surgeon in Scotland to Queen

THE ROYAL DICK

Victoria. At the time, we had discussed how to signify that appointment in some appropriate way. It was agreed that the Royal Crest of the queen in Scotland should be carved in stone and put up onto the south-facing wall of the courtyard. You will notice that at its centre the crest has the shape of a lozenge, and not a round shield. That was because Her Majesty had not yet married Prince Albert at that time.”

“However, we could all see the signs. William had been putting on weight and was having occasional breathless episodes. He wrote one of his last letters to the woman he had held in affection and respectful esteem since the time he was a young man ‘of no social standing and few worldly possessions’. In the Winter and Spring of 1866 William had been badly stressed by all the worry and travelling to London to deal with the major outbreak of cattle disease in the country. For much of March he was confined to the house occasionally suffering severely from the difficulty with his breathing, and pains in his chest. I remember it was coming up to exam time in the College. He died on the 4th April 1866. The doctor said that his dropsical symptoms and ascites [oedema] were due to congestive heart failure. The loss of William, my brother and very close friend, hit me very hard. It was a terrible time in my life. We had been together for 73 years. I moved immediately to our house at Craigmarnochie, to find some privacy for my grief. There was large outpouring of esteem from people in Edinburgh and beyond.”

“But I still had his veterinary college to run. On his death, William transferred his college to the Trusteeship of the Edinburgh Town Council. I wrote to the Council to make certain that the offer they were going to make to Lieutenant-Colonel Hallen did not dissuade him from taking the post of Principal of our Veterinary College. Also, I was so used to the daily activity of keeping an eye on the College financial figures, paying attention to the students’ comings and goings, observing the life around Clyde Street, it was difficult to put my work down. I asked to have the accounts brought over to me and to see the old files. Proper retirement away from my work in the College took quite a bit of time. Together with others, Charlie Craig (Figure 10), the Irishman groom who looked after the cleaning of the courtyard and the dissection room,

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kept me informed as before. With the passing of the years, I made a point of inviting the new Principals of the College to come over to Burntisland for lunch on Sundays; I sometimes invited Charlie to come with them too. I remained eager to discuss College events with Principal James P.B. Hallen and then after him, Principal William Williams. However, I ended up being very upset with Mr Williams’ ways of doing things in the college, and told the Trustees. I was also outraged that, when he departed in 1873, he immediately set up the New Veterinary College nearby in Gayfield House; he even tried to call it ‘Royal’. I immediately and respectfully requested that Edinburgh Town Council rename my William’s college *The Dick Royal Veterinary College*; which they did.”

“I organised the construction of the roadway in front of my house and, with the Council’s consent, had a low wall and decorative iron railing erected at my expense along the coastal side of Craigmarnochie Terrace. It improved the view of the Forth and Edinburgh beyond. The building of the houses along the Terrace took some time, and I am grateful to one of Burntisland burgh’s old-time builders, Mr Henry Harcus, for that work. Mr Worthington had his house built on the corner at the east end of the Terrace; he called it Craigmarnochie Villa. The Trustees collected all the feus, and I checked the books.”

“But it was not all work during my retirement. I read a lot of books, and subscribed to a considerable number of local and national newspapers. One example was the Englishwoman’s Review of Social and Industrial Questions, a feminist magazine that came out periodically. I was an ardent Liberal, and advanced female suffrage. It was noteworthy that another Burntisland woman, Mary Somerville, was the first signatory of Mr Mill’s female suffrage petition to Westminster.”

“I continued to enjoy a very extensive acquaintanceship with folk from both at home and abroad, and every day I posted and received correspondence bearing mainly on public questions. Those newspaper cuttings that students sent to me continued to be safely stored under my bed. My maid, Annie Harvie, was under strict instruction to keep them dust-free, and never to throw them out. Some of the former students came to visit me. For example, every year at exam time, Mr Thomas Dollar and Mr Findlay Dun would come over for tea, and we would talk about the exams and the students’ successes.”

“I came over to Edinburgh a number of times, and on one of those visits got my picture taken by Mr James B. Knott for a new carte de visite (Figure 11). He asked me not to laugh, or even to smile. ‘It’s an official photograph’, he said. Hmm. It makes me look very austere.”

“Something I had not brought with me to Burntisland was the pair of bronze models of two horses being restrained by their grooms, the Marly Horses (Figure 12). I liked them very much. So I asked for them to be retrieved from Clyde Street and carried here to Craigmarnochie. I also had my little picture of the donkey on the wall here, another great favourite, and a memory from my youngest days in Edinburgh. I was so fond of it I have kept it. I did not give it away to anyone.”

“William Worthington died suddenly on 7th March 1875 of supposed heart disease while at home. It was a great loss of company. However, in June the following year, the three Inglis ladies, Janet, Euphemia and Anna Isabella, moved into 9

Graigarnochie Terrace. We often had meals and tea together. I liked Janet Inglis very much. We became very good friends.”

“When I was 92, in 1883, I asked one of Burntisland’s artists, Mr A. Young, if he would paint my portrait. He agreed, and there it is (Figure 13). It is a good likeness. I heard from Mr Dollar that he was going to ask Mr James E. Christie to make a copy of Mr Young’s painting. Mr Young’s style is quite different from that of Mr Thomas Fraser who painted me more than forty years ago (Figure 14). I have kept it in my room all those years. I liked it so much I have put it in my will to be given to Janet Inglis. What will happen to it after that, I do not know. It will probably go onto a wall somewhere, and not be recognised as me; but it will have Mr Fraser’s signature in the corner. Mr Fraser had called it ‘portrait of a lady’ or maybe ‘female portrait’, I cannot remember which now.”

There was then a lengthy, cool-air silence. The two of us found ourselves walking slowly along Archers Way past the tennis courts towards SUMMERHALL.

“Fancy a cup of coffee? I’d like a hot chocolate. The SUMMERHALL cafe is warm and welcoming.”

“She died at 5 Craigmarnochie on the 14th of July 1883, didn’t she.”

“Yup, 92 years old. She had no children of her own. But she ‘mothered’ over a thousand veterinary students, all men. And she took good care of her wee brother, William.”

“Did you notice she remembered the name of that lassie that William was very fond of, and she nearly said it? It could easily have been Miss Wardrop. She lived on Calton Hill, and was about ages with him.”

“Huh? And it could have been the Grace Anderson girl, on George Street, or indeed some other lass. We’ll never know.”

“Possibly. But maybe it was written about in correspondence between women of that time”

“Aye. Right. On another topic, I have a feeling that there must have been conversations around Dr Barclay not being able to get ‘veterinary’ topics accepted within the University in 1816. They will have discussed between themselves how to make that come about. William must have known that handing the administration of his College to his former colleagues on Edinburgh’s town council would only be temporary. And all that wealth of property created by the two of them on Burntisland and elsewhere? Mary gave it to the University of Edinburgh. She and her brother were both far-sighted.”

“Another thought; what about the amount of time Mary spent listening to her brother’s lectures as well as to those of the other staff; and hearing what was being taught during practical classes? She must have picked up a lot of veterinary information. Just think, over all those years, decades even, what with encouraging students to study and sorting out the various problems of some of them. Mary probably came to know a lot about the various veterinary subjects.”

“So you think that over time Mary Dick became the first woman in Scotland to be educated in veterinary medicine?”

“Yes, and she would have kept it under her hat, only to be shared with the students when they needed help and encouragement. I suspect that many of the students were grateful for her knowledge and guidance.”

“And what about that painting of her by Thomas Fraser? Where is it?”

“Yes, where indeed?”



The Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies

Founded in 1823, The Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies is one of the oldest veterinary schools in the world.

Named after its Edinburgh born founder Professor William Dick (1793-1866), a pioneer of veterinary education, the school had humble beginnings, starting life on Clyde Street in a courtyard in the Georgian New Town of Edinburgh. The Clyde Street building housed the institute for eighty-three years until the expanding school moved to the purpose built Summerhall building in 1923.

Summerhall remained the home of Vet studies until 2011 when the school opened its new teaching building on the Easter Bush campus, moving all teaching and staff to the new site.

With over £100 million having been spent on the Easter Bush campus, the school boasts world-class facilities and teaching staff.

William Dick lives on not only in name but also in the School’s commitment to education and improving the wellbeing of animals.

With thanks to

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Side Panel - Acknowledgements:

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She had no children of her own. But she ‘mothered’ over a thousand veterinary students, all men