The New Veterinary College, Edinburgh, 1873 to 1904

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This year's our Congress takes place in Edinburgh, home of the Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies. However, the Scottish capital has been host to more than one veterinary school over the years, as Colin Warwick and Alastair Macdonald explain.

VETERINARY education in Edinburgh has had a long and meritorious history, most of which is popularly perceived to be exclusively associated with the veterinary school founded by William Dick in Clyde Street, Edinburgh, in 1823 (Bradley 1923). Very few people seem to be aware that two New Veterinary Colleges were sequentially established in Edinburgh later in the 19th century—one by John Gamgee in 1857 and the other by William Williams in 1873 (Bradley 1923). Nowadays there is very little knowledge of these, where they were located or how they contributed to the veterinary profession generally, and in the past 40 years almost nothing has been written about them (Hall 1965, Boddie and Phillips 1973, Allan 1981). More recently, an interesting memoir of William Williams, the Principal of the second of the New Veterinary Colleges in Edinburgh, was published by his granddaughter, Jacqueline Williams (2001). Her article, and the forthcoming celebrations in 2004 of the centenary of the Veterinary Faculty in Liverpool (founded when the New Veterinary College transferred from Edinburgh in 1904), prompted us to search out, collate and review the material, scattered in various Edinburgh archives, which pertained to William Williams and the establishment, development and eventual closure in 1904 of his New Veterinary College.

THE YEAR OF 1857

William Williams (1832-1900) was a Welshman with many family links to farriery and early veterinary medicine. He enrolled to study veterinary medicine at William Dick's College, Edinburgh, in 1855 (The Scotsman 1900, Williams 2001) and after two years of lectures and clinical work he was one of 37 students who passed their oral examinations in 1857 and obtained diplomas from the Highland and Agricultural Society of Scotland (Highland and Agricultural Society 1857). One measure of William's veterinary competence was the award to him of the first Highland and Agricultural Society's Gold Medal for proficiency in veterinary science (The Scotsman 1900). Among the other notable graduates of that year were James McCall, who subsequently founded the Glasgow Veterinary College in 1862, James Law, who later that year joined the staff of the first of the New Veterinary Colleges in Edinburgh, and then went on in 1868 to become the first professor of veterinary medicine in the USA, at Cornell, and Thomas Strangeways, who in 1860 became professor of anatomy in William Dick's College (Highland and Agricultural Society 1857, 1879, Bradley 1923, Cornell 2002).

THE YEARS 1867 TO 1873

Between 1857 and 1867, William Williams built up a large veterinary practice in Yorkshire (Williams 2001). His return to Edinburgh in May 1867, one year after the death of William Dick, was as the third Principal of the by then named Dick's Veterinary College. It was prompted by the early departure of his predecessor, Colonel James H.B. Hallen, who had been urgently recalled to India to investigate an outbreak of Indian cattle plague, subsequently designated rinderpest (Bradley 1923, Scott 2000). Williams held the post of Principal at the college in Clyde Street until July 1873. However, during that period there were a number of problems, the factors underlying which can now only be surmised. Two of these may be identifiable: the death in 1867 of Williams's first wife, Charlotte Owens; and the culture changes resulting from the new staff and management at the veterinary college (from a brother and sister 'family-run' private business to one managed by a group of trustees in the form of the Lord Provost, Magistrates and Council of the City of Edinburgh).

In 1868, 1870 and 1873 a series of thoroughly reported disagreements took place among the staff members of the college, between the clerk to the Trustees and Mary Dick (William Dick's redoubtable sister, who, under the terms of his will, retained a large say in the finances of the college), and between Principal Williams and some of the Trustees (Sederunt Book of the Trustees 1868, 1870, 1871, 1873a, The Scotsman 1868a, b, c, 1869a, b, c). As a consequence of this apparently never-ending train of events, which also involved student unrest and significant legal and other costs, the majority of Trustees perceived the underlying reason to be Williams's inability to adequately control his staff (Sederunt Book of the Trustees 1873b). There were also indications that Williams was unhappy because he was not able to run the veterinary college exactly as he wanted (Bradley 1923). On July 16, 1873, it was finally agreed that he would be asked to resign for 'want of harmony between the Principal and professors' (Sederunt Book of the Trustees 1873c). It is clear that the way the decision was reached and delivered had a large and negative impact on Williams, and his substantial hurt was also reflected in the public speeches he made throughout the subsequent 27 years of his life (Sederunt Book of the Trustees 1873d, Williams 1876, 1883b, 1897).

However, it was from this awkward beginning that the third veterinary school to be founded in Edinburgh grew and flourished. Williams did not give up. Instead, he followed an example set during his student days, when his former anatomy teacher in Clyde Street, John Gamgee, departed William Dick's College in 1857 to found the first New Veterinary College (Bradley 1923, Hall 1965). Moreover, Williams took with him from the Clyde Street college most of the clinical material and more than 40 of the students he had been teaching. As these students represented the majority of the members of the Edinburgh Veterinary Medical Society, they in turn took with them the library which had been created with the founding of the Society in 1834 (The Scotsman 1874).

GAYFIELD HOUSE, 1873 TO 1883

William's New Veterinary College began its existence at the request of numerous students of veterinary science, veterinary surgeons and agriculturists ('The Scotsman 1873') in Gayfield House, a large villa on East London Street, at the east end of Veterinary Record (2003) 153, 380-386

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Edinburgh’s New Town (Fig 1). The house had been built between 1761 and 1765 (before the New Town of Edinburgh was planned) by Charles and William Butter (Sasines 1765). According to detailed plans of the house drawn up in 1870, the property comprised the following: a five-roomed basement; two storeys of four rooms each (Fig 2); a two-roomed attic; a separate, single-storey office block in the garden, comprising six rooms; and, across the road, a coach house and stables with hay loft (Blanc 1870). There appears to be no evidence that Williams purchased the property.

On October 1 and 3, 1873, the following announcement, dated Edinburgh, September 29, 1873, was inserted in The Scotsman newspaper.

**NEW VETERINARY COLLEGE EDINBURGH,**
Professor Williams begs to intimate that he has REMOVED his PRACTICE to the NEW VETERINARY COLLEGE, Gayfield House, East London Street, where he may be consulted.

The SHOEING DEPARTMENT is at present carried on at the West End of Rose Street, adjoining the Tontine Stables.

Gayfield House had been designed for family life, so its use as a college, especially for animal dissection and the reception of clinical material, must have been rather confined. Nevertheless, the New Veterinary College was formally opened on Wednesday, October 22, 1873 (The Scotsman, 1873), and was to be a home of veterinary education for the next 10 years. In the same advertisement the members of staff were announced:

Prof W. Williams, FRSE, MRCVS
Prof Melville, FRSE
Prof I. Vaughan, MRCVS
Dr Stevenson Macadam, FRSE
Mr A. Balfour, MRCVS
Mr T. J. Simpson

Veterinary Medicine & Surgery
Physiology
Anatomy
Chemistry
Practical Pharmacy
Secretary

In 1875, following the death of Professor Melville, Peter Young transferred from Clyde Street to Gayfield House to teach physiology. This signalled the start of a pattern of long-term stability among the teaching staff. Indeed, it was commented upon by Williams in 1876 that there has never been one word of discord between any professors nor has there been any unpleasantness among the students themselves or between them and their teachers (Williams 1876). In 1882, Young was succeeded in the physiology post by James Hunter, who remained with the College until it closed in 1904. In 1881, anatomy teaching was transferred from Professor Vaughan to T. H. Lewis, who remained until 1891, to be followed by A. C. Longden (for four years) and then from 1893 to 1900 by O. Charnock Bradley. Chemistry was taught by the Macadam father and son, Stevenson Macadam teaching from 1873 to 1884, and his son, W. Ivson Macadam, from 1885 until his violent death in 1902. Daniel McAlpine taught natural history and botany from 1879 until his departure for Australia in 1894, when he was succeeded for the following six years by Archibald N. McAlpine. In April 1881, Williams's eldest son, William Owen Williams (1860-1911), completed the course and, after a study period in Alfort, returned to work first as his father's assistant and then to teach in his own right in 1886 (Post Office 1874-1904; Anon 1881, 1911, Obituary 1902).

The Clyde Street students who, in 1873, had received the news of the requested resignation of their Principal 'with great surprise,' unanimously passed a vote of confidence in him (Faulkner 1873). Many subsequently followed Williams to Gayfield House. However, a number then took fright at the prospect of losing a session of study, and left Edinburgh to study elsewhere. They were uncertain whether the Principal would obtain the authority from government to allow them to present themselves for the examinations set by the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) (Williams 1874). Nevertheless, at the opening of the new session in 1874 Captain R. A. B. Tod, Chairman of the Veterinary Committee, reported that 46 students from Gayfield House had taken the
examinations before the Highland and Agricultural Society of Scotland in April of 1874 (Williams 1874). Indeed, it was later reported that 61 students had attended during the year 1873/74 (Lewis 1882). The numbers of students attending grew each year, and in order to maintain this increase in student numbers, Williams chose not to alter student fees in 1876, when the length of the course was increased from two to three years (Williams 1876). At the prize giving ceremony in 1882, Williams declared that his classes had grown to such a degree (145 students on the roll) that larger and more suitable premises were required (Williams 1882). By the 1882/83 session, student numbers had reached 154 (Williams 1883a).

During the 10 years at Gayfield House, student esteem for Williams the teacher was manifest in a number of ways, of which the following is a good example. At the prize giving in April 1878, the students presented a large photograph of those attending the session 1877/78 to the Principal (Anon 1878a). At the same meeting, and on behalf of members of the veterinary profession, General Fitzwigram, President of the RCVS, presented to Principal Williams a full-sized head portrait of himself by G. [P?] M. Barclay, RSA. The current whereabouts of these gifts is unknown.

During the occupation of Gayfield House, four signatures were scratched onto several glass windowpanes. These were 'Professor W. Williams', 'W.O. Williams, Esq.', 'M.R.C.S., The New Veterinary College, Edinburgh', 'John Young, Cockermouth, Cumberland, 1883', and 'J.W. Bennett, Leigh, Lancashire' (Wallace 1887). However, since 1877, these panes have been removed for safekeeping, and have not yet been traced. Similarly, searches throughout archives held by the city of Edinburgh and the University of Liverpool for the records of the New Veterinary College have yet to yield a large body of material.

41 ELM ROW, 1883 TO 1904

The premises

On October 24, 1883, a custom-built Veterinary College (Fig 3), designed by Hamilton Beattie, was officially opened, 300 m to the east of Gayfield House, on Elm Row, Leith Walk (Anon 1883). Williams indicated that the chief aim of the design of the building was 'to secure accommodation not only for the students, but to enable us to demonstrate clinically our treatment of disease, and to show the higher value we attach to physiological principles and sanitary measures than to mere medical remidies, and also to facilitate the scientific investigation both of healthy and diseased structures and processes; in fact, we aspire not only to encourage a desire for research in our students, but also, as in the case in continental laboratories, to give facilities to those members of the profession who have already been engaged in its arduous toils and duties, and who may wish to improve their knowledge, and perhaps to unravel, with the assistance of scientific applications, some mysterious problems which may have repeatedly arisen in the course of their ordinary practice' (Williams 1883b).

The new buildings, as described in the local press (Edinburgh Courant 1883, The Scotsman 1883), 'extend about 80 yards backwards from Leith Walk; and, speaking roughly, cover four sides of a square, to the height of two storeys, leaving a large open space in the centre (Fig 4a). This open space or yard is covered with [lithite] concrete cement, with the exception of the central portion of its entire length, which has been caused, so as to give a length of 50 yards of "trotting stone" as it is called – a stone course upon which horses are trotted to test their soundness. The elevation of the building towards Leith Walk presents a bold and massive yet ornamental appearance – a frontage [of polished ashlar] in which boldly-pedimented windows are a feature, being surmounted by a handsome stone balustrade (Fig 3a).

On the street floor, the pier heads are decorated with carved representations of various animals. The upper flats of this block are to be occupied partly by resident professors, and partly as students' boarding-houses.

In connection with the College, a restaurant, with a saloon at back, and having an entrance from Leith Walk, has been provided for the students.

Entering by [the] principal doorway – (there is another doorway at the opposite end of the yard, opening on Windsor Street) we have immediately to the left on the ground floor the Principal's office [with a bow window, commanding a view of the courtyard] and consulting room, with the College offices adjoining, and the pharmacy next, farther on (Fig 4a).

Making up the remainder of the northern line of the buildings are a six-stalled stable with saddle-room, six horse-boxes (including an extra large one for any particularly violent animal), and a six-stalled cow house; while a covered shed, laid with bark, and intended for the exercise of horses, extends along the greater part of the front of these boxes and stables.

In the courtyard on the north side there was a concrete bath box for animals, with shower and spray apparatus, and an inclined entrance. It was said that horses could have a hot or a cold bath there according to the nature of the ailments from which they may be suffering.

The floor level of the eastern block was chiefly taken up with a large boiler house which heated the whole building by means of hot water pipes, with the radiators extending to some of the horse boxes, the temperature of which could be raised as high as 70°F if desired. Beside the boiler house was the shoeing forge, which was fitted with three forges 'of the most modern construction' and was large enough to accommodate 10 horses for shoeing at any one time.

The southern line of buildings, ranging in order from east to west, were a slaughterhouse (from which animals were elevated by a hoist to the dissecting room above, and, by means of small overhead carriages with chains, running on rails attached to the roof, could be moved from one part of the room to another as required), 10 horse boxes, boxes to accommodate about a score of dogs, and a coach house.

The upper storey was reached by two flights of steps, one on each side of the yard, leading to an open balcony which ran round three sides of the square (Fig 4b). On the northern side, there was a large lecture hall, with tiers of seats for 192 people, the College museum (round which ran an interior gallery for the better access to and view of the specimens), a public

FIG 3: Bird's eye view of the New Veterinary College, 41 Elm Row, Leith Walk, Edinburgh, seen from the north west and (inset) detail showing the appearance of the group of sculpted animals set on a cornel to the left of the main entrance.
FIG 4: Plans of the New Veterinary College, Edinburgh. (a) The ground floor; (b) the upper floor.

museum or 'bone room' for the students, and a smaller lecture hall with seating for 125 people (Anon 1893). Fitted to the walls of the museum were glass cases containing numerous and rare specimens of animals both in the diseased and healthy conditions, there being a large and varied collection preserved in spirits. There are specimens of dissected parts of animals, wax and papier mâché models, monstrosities, anatomical collections and specimens illustrating various diseases of the bones, a collection of teeth, etc. On the ground floor in the centre, are numerous complete skeletons of animals, and in one of the glass cases are skeletons of a man and a monkey. Other cases contain grasses and feeding stuffs, drugs, English and foreign horseshoes, etc (Anon 1893).

The students' reading room and library were located at the eastern end of the courtyard (Fig 4b). Sadly, during a fierce storm on January 26, 1884, a fire broke out in this area and completely destroyed the book collection of the Edinburgh Veterinary Medical Society (Anon 1884a, Evening News 1884, The Scotsman 1884). Appeals were made by the students to the profession for replacement books (Purdy 1884), and in 1885 the library of John Greaves of Flixton was donated to form the core of a new library (Robinson 1885). The dissecting room completed the east wing. In the southern block was a chemical laboratory about 50 feet in length, between which and the pathological and histological laboratories further to the west was a professors' 'retiring-room'. An open-air labora-

tory was sited on the roof, 'where chemical experiments giving forth bad odours may be conducted'.

Up on the wall to the left of the wide main entrance on Elm Row was a corbel upon which was placed a sculptured group, six feet high, consisting of a horse, bull, and dog, carved by John Rhind (Fig 5a, b). The logo on the front of the prospectus for the session 1903/04 (Prospectus 1903) shows the group more clearly (Fig 5). It is also to be found on the certificates issued by the Edinburgh Veterinary Medical Society to William G. Burnrned in 1900, which are held in the archives of the Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies. The available evidence in Edinburgh suggests that these animal sculptures disappeared from sight after the building ceased to be used as a veterinary college. However, rumour of a sculpted dog, said to be from the Edinburgh Veterinary College, recently led one of the authors (C.W.) to the Scottish borders, where the statue of the dog from the Elm Row façade was rediscovered in the garden of a private house (Fig 6). It is of a recumbent hound, attractively carved from sandstone and measures approximately 100 cm long and 75 cm high. In its

FIG 5: Front cover of the prospectus of the New Veterinary College, Edinburgh, for its final year of 1903/04.

FIG 6: Carving of the dog, by John Rhind, which formerly formed part of the sculptured group including a horse and a bull on the front of the New Veterinary College, Edinburgh.
Students and staff

The number of students that attended the Elm Row College during the 1883/84 session was 164. As had been the custom at Gayfield House, they showed their appreciation to the Principal by presenting, in 1884, a clock and illuminated address (Anon 1884b). The former was installed in the college yard on the east wall opposite the main entry, and is shown in a photograph of students and staff taken on April 20, 1893, which is now held by the Liverpool University Archive (Liverpool). The number of students increased to 196 in 1887 and to nearly 200 the following year (Williams 1887, 1888). However, this seemed to represent the peak of student recruitment. In 1890/91 there appeared to be about 180 students, and two years later, the figure of 190 on the roll included agriculture as well as veterinary students (Williams 1891, 1893). The tougher prelim (entrance) exams in 1892, together with the simultaneous start of the new and more costly four-year course, was repeatedly blamed for the drop in enrolments thereafter (see, for example, Williams 1898, 1899, 1900). The opening of a College in Dublin was also perceived to have further reduced the student intake to the Edinburgh colleges (Anon 1900a, Shennan 1900).

A group photograph of staff and students, taken inside the courtyard in 1895 from the position shown by the arrow in Fig 4a, was found in the Dick Vet archive (Fig 7). They were contemporaries of the first woman student, Aileen Cust (Fig 8), who that year won the New Veterinary College medal for junior anatomy (Anon 1895). Aileen enrolled in the college under the name A. T. Custance although her name appeared in a number of forms such as Miss Corserphine and Arno Constance (Anon 1895, 1898). She was a good student, and in 1897 was presented with the silver medal for zoology from the Highland and Agricultural Society (Anon 1897a, 1898). However, that same year she was denied access to the RCVS examinations by legal sleight of hand (Editorial 1897). It was perhaps with irony that the Veterinary Journal chose to report in 1897 that the first female veterinary surgeon in Europe was Marie Kapczevitch, the daughter of a wealthy Russian family, who graduated from Alfort in 1897 (Anon 1897b). Although Aileen Cust went on to complete her studies in 1900 and, with the help of a testimonial to that effect from William Williams, went into practice in Ireland, she was not admitted to membership of the RCVS for a further 22 years (Ford 1990). It is also of interest that a letter, dated May 25, 1900, which Williams received about one week after the RCVS final exams in Scotland, was also published in the veterinary press and elsewhere (An old student 1900, Prospectus 1903).

'Remembering the many kindnesses which I have received from you, and also the fact that to you I owe the present position which I now occupy, I would like in some way to express my gratitude. Therefore, if you will kindly allow me, I will give a Prize of £25 annually for the next four years, to be competed for by students of the New Veterinary College, Edinburgh. I would suggest that the Prize should be given to the student who obtains the highest aggregate number of marks in his A, B, C and D examinations of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons also that the student must have been regular in his attendance, and of good behaviour during the time he has attended the New Veterinary College.' (Signed, 'an old student')

Later that year, as a mark of respect to William Williams, Aileen Cust sent a floral wreath to his funeral on November 15, at Warriston Cemetery (Anon 1900b).

THE END OF THE NEW VETERINARY COLLEGE

A portrait of William Williams by John D. Bowie was presented to the RCVS on April 3, 1903 (Williams 1903a). Later that year, the 30th and last session of the New Veterinary College, Edinburgh, was opened. Owen Williams indicated that within 12 months various universities would open their doors to veterinary students, and, in addition to a licence to practise as a veterinary surgeon, they would have university degrees (Williams, 1903b, c).

The New Veterinary College held its final prizegiving ceremony on Monday, May 16, 1904 (Williams 1904). Comments were made in the veterinary press that it was not the college that was moving from Edinburgh to Liverpool, but only Professor Owen Williams; the rest of the staff would stay in Edinburgh (Flint Justitia 1904). In fact, at least 11 of the New College students also went to Liverpool, the others going to the remaining Edinburgh, Glasgow and London colleges (Rutherford 1903, 1904, Veterinary Register 1910). One of the students, James R. Rigby, went to Liverpool, and his lecture notes from the New Veterinary College, Edinburgh, and the
Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, Liverpool, remain extant, together with the diplomas and medals awarded to him (University Archives Liverpool 1992).

POSTSCRIPT

The ownership of the New Veterinary College buildings at 41 Elm Row, with the houses and shops attached, and the forge and offices in Rose Street had passed from William Williams to his son Owen at the death of the former (Register of Deeds 1930, Sabin 1991a, b). The Rose Street forge was sold in 1902 and the College buildings were finally sold to William Perry in 1908 (Sabin 1902, 1905, 1908). In 1909, Perry applied for permission to build a roof over the courtyard, which was then floored with maple to provide a roller skating rink (Map Store 1909, Baird 1964). Further modifications took place to accommodate 'Pringle's New Picture Palace' - a cinematograph and vaudeville theatre - after which the premises became a repertory theatre and then a television studio (Baird 1964). In 2003, most of the Elm Row premises still remain in place and are presently the Drama Centre of the Queen Margaret University College. The four-storey façade is unchanged except that the two pediments and the animal sculptures have been removed. The outer brick walls of the two-storey buildings that lined the north, east and south of the courtyard are also extant. The north and south blocks retain their original roofs and dormer windows, although these are partly hidden behind pipes and electrical services (Fig 9). Three of the four south-facing stained-glass windows of the west lecture theatre are intact.

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