

This biography available by courtesy of Dr Michael Whitfield

William Mortimer

William Mortimer was a native of Pembrokeshire and was born in 1782, the son of Thomas Mortimer and Catherine Maurice. Apprenticed to his uncle, Joseph Maurice, the Bristol apothecary, for 4 years in Sept 1798 and became a pupil to Mr Richard Smith on 20 Sept 1802 and at the end of 1803 went to the London Hospital Whitechapel and after to Guys and St Thomas's. In 1804 he was appointed surgeon to the Hon East India Company ship Devaynes and sailed for Bombay and eventually sailed to China.

There is correspondence on the family tree web site: Roots web about William

'I also saw a William Mortimer, who was a surgeon and apothecary of 11 Queen Square. I followed him up because of the name of Mortimer and found that his parents were from Trewellwell, St Davids, Pembrokeshire, I found a letter on the internet to them telling them of his travels as a surgeon in "East Indiana" - a ship? In 1804'. It would be good to know who this correspondent is.

In Oct 1806 he landed in England. In Jan 1807 he entered into partnership with John P Berjew Apothecary in High St. Bristol. Apparently Joseph Maurice lent him £1000 to buy into this partnership, but in 1809 he removed to 17 Bridge St - the former gentleman residing in Montague Hill Kingsdown and having soon after taken out a Diploma¹.

The unsettled state of the Infirmary in 1807 afforded an occasion for presenting himself to the Society in the following address:

'To the subscribers of the Bristol Infirmary

By the resignation of Mr Yeatman a vacancy for a surgeon presents itself: I therefore present myself as a Candidate for that Situation'.

He withdrew as there were many applications for the post and in Sept 1810 another opening occurred and there were 11 candidates which again resulted in him withdrawing. He was a Member of the Corporation of Surgeons in London, later being MRCS. He re-applied two years later and blamed his withdrawal this time 'on his health being unequal to the fatigues necessary for such an undertaking.' On March 28th, 1807, some medical men of Bristol decided to form "The Medical Reading Society, for the purpose of promoting medical knowledge and a friendly intercourse among its members, and for purchasing medical books." Some practical rules, very similar to those of most book or magazine clubs, received the approval of these eleven members:

THOMAS JERMYN, Surgeon and Apothecary, 17 Queen Square.

HENRY DANIEL, Surgeon, 52 Queen Square.

RICHARD EDGELL, Surgeon, 68 College Street.

BENJAMIN SPENCER, Surgeon and Apothecary, Paul Street, Kingsdown.

WILLIAM MORTIMER.

ROBERT LAX.

BENJAMIN GUSTAVUS BURROUGHS, Apothecary, Portland Place, Clifton.

JOSEPH MAURICE, Apothecary and Man-Midwife, Upper Maudlin Lane.

WILLIAM HETLING, Surgeon, 18 Orchard Street.

NATHANIEL SMITH, Surgeon, 34 College Green.

JOHN BISHOP ESTLIN.

In 1812 his uncle, Joseph Maurice was his patron in his election as a Burgess of Bristol. Being a burgess entitled the man to vote for a member of Parliament before the Reform Act of 1832. The benefits of many of the City Charities were reserved for City charities and they were committed to not being a part of 'unlawful Assemblies, Riots or Routs'.

Following the dispute between the surgeons and the trustees of the infirmary he offered himself as a surgeon in 1825, but again withdrew when the surgeons agreed terms.

He applied for post of surgeon at St Peter's Hospital, the local poor law hospital. in 1819 and was second in the poll of four. But he was elected president of the Dolphin Society (one of the major Charitable societies in Bristol) in 1832.

In 1832 he was living in Richmond Terrace, Clifton and in 1833 he married Sophia Ann Mansell aged 50 in St Pancras, London with whom he had had a daughter Charlotte, born 1820. Apparently, they were unable to marry earlier than this as her former husband was still alive. It appears that Sophia was the first marriage of an East Indian Company army officer who married her in Wales and then fathered a large family by another woman.

Mortimer's partnership with John Grant Wilson a surgeon who was later appointed to the Bristol General Hospital was dissolved in 1832.

William died in 1842 and was buried at St Andrew's church in Clifton.

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