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# THE FIRST KNOWN USE OF ETHER AS A GENERAL ANÆSTHETIC IN EUROPE



ENGRAVED AND PUBLISHED BY W. & A. G. LEITCH, DUMFRIES

## DUMFRIES AND GALLOWAY ROYAL INFIRMARY, 1846

IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN RECOGNISED THAT A GENERAL ANÆSTHETIC WAS FIRST USED IN A MAJOR OPERATION ON THIS SIDE OF THE ATLANTIC BY ROBERT LISTON, THE DISTINGUISHED SURGEON, ON DEC. 21, 1846, AT UNIVERSITY COLLEGE HOSPITAL, LONDON.

THE FOLLOWING FACTS HAVE JUST COME TO LIGHT, AND IF THEY CAN BE CORROBORATED AND AMPLIFIED, IT WILL BE ESTABLISHED THAT THE FIRST MAJOR OPERATION UNDER A GENERAL ANÆSTHETIC WAS CARRIED OUT AT THE DUMFRIES AND GALLOWAY ROYAL INFIRMARY DURING THE LATE AUTUMN OF 1846, AND POSSIBLY BEFORE NOV. 11.

THE SURGEONS CONCERNED WERE JAMES McLAUCHLAN AND WILLIAM SCOTT. THE ANÆSTHETIST WAS WILLIAM FRASER. THERE IS PRESUMPTIVE EVIDENCE THAT THE OPERATION WAS THE AMPUTATION OF A LEG. THE ANÆSTHETIC AND THE OPERATION WERE COMPLETELY SUCCESSFUL.

FRASER WAS A NATIVE OF DUMFRIES, AND A SHIPS SURGEON. HE HAD HEARD OF MORTON'S WORK WHILE HE WAS IN BOSTON, AND ON RETURNING TO THIS COUNTRY HE VISITED HIS NATIVE TOWN. IT WAS WHILE HE WAS GOING ROUND THE WARD OF THE INFIRMARY WITH McLAUCHLAN AND SCOTT THAT THE OPPORTUNITY OCCURRED OF TRYING OUT THE ETHER WHICH MORTON HAD USED.



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## THE ANÆSTHETIST

WILLIAM FRASER (1819-1883). Son of James Fraser (1765-1844), Surgeon and Apothecary in Dumfries. Studied medicine in Paris. Became a Licentiate of the Royal College of Surgeons in Edinburgh in 1840, and on Aug. 4, of that year was granted the degree of Doctor of Medicine of St. Andrews University. Thereafter he apparently served as a ship's surgeon for some time on ships sailing between Boston and Liverpool.

Fraser settled at 16, Upper Scarthope Street, Liverpool in 1852. On June 22, 1853 he married Mary Miller, only daughter of Charles Cummins, of Edgemoor, Liverpool. In 1854 the Frasers removed to 71, Mount Pleasant, Liverpool. [This house was destroyed by enemy action during the war.]

In 1857 Fraser left Liverpool, apparently for Jamaica. He died at Two-Mile-wood Farm, Spanish Town, Jamaica on June 26, 1883, aged 64 years.



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## THE SURGEONS

JAMES McLAUCHLAN (1798-1844). Born at Lochruon near Dumfries in 1798. Apprenticed to James Fraser (1765-1844), Surgeon and Apothecary in Dumfries. McLauchlan practised surgery to a limited extent, and then went to Paris to study anatomy. In May, 1835 he was elected as one of the two surgeons of the Dumfries and Galloway Royal Infirmary. He held this post until his death during the cholera epidemic on Dec. 10, 1848.

WILLIAM SCOTT (1820-1887). Born at Dumfries, one of five sons of the founder of the tweed industry in the town. Studied at Edinburgh. L.R.C.S. and M.D. (Edin.), 1859. Became Surgeon to the Dumfries and Galloway Royal Infirmary, Medical Officer to Moorhead's Hospital and the County Prison. Surgeon-major on the staff of the Scottish Borderers Militia. Died in July, 1887.