

History:	
Topic:	Surgeon Watson – Medical Board of Enquiry 1876
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Notes:	Parish Medical Officers referred to as Surgeons (not doctors) in the Victorian era were the appointed providers of medical care in the local community. Male and often from a wealthy family it was a profession that an educated younger son could derive a living from, although for the young and inexperienced the income was not substantial.



Surgeon Watson – Medical Board of Inquiry 1876

Parish Medical Officers referred to as Surgeons (not doctors) in the Victorian era were the appointed providers of medical care in the local community. Male and often from a wealthy family it was a profession that an educated younger son could derive a living from, although for the young and inexperienced the income was not substantial. Also, whilst the standard of such practitioners improved during the century their intrinsic knowledge of the human body and its functions was limited, and the medicine and treatments similarly questionable.

This article relates the story of such a surgeon based in Barrow but covering Hargrave. Specifically, it covers the Thingoe Union Local Government Board Inquiry in to charges of neglect on the part of a parish surgeon, namely Frederick Hastings Watson, in May 1876. Cited are two cases, his treatment of patients Caroline Ashman in Chevington and James Nunn in Hargrave.

Caroline Ashman and her family claim that she was pregnant and that when attended by Mr. Watson (surgeons called Mr. and not Dr.) he claimed that she had had a miscarriage and that her pain was due to other causes. However, she subsequently gave birth to a child which died shortly afterwards.

James Nunn's family, the Rev. Samuel Chamberlain, Rector of Hargrave and Mr. Robert Tricker, Guardian for Hargrave, claim that despite repeated assurances that he would monitor the deteriorating health of Mr Nunn, Mr. Watson failed to do so. Also, that his diagnosis was inadequate and that Mr. Nunn who was subsequently transported by Rev. Chamberlain to hospital in Bury St Edmunds died of far more serious complaints that should have been identified and treated earlier.

The Local Government Board Inspector, Courtenay Boyle listened to presented evidence and concluded that in the first case there were inconsistencies in the evidence from the complainant, her mother, Mrs. Smith, and the nurse/midwife Mrs. Paske. Proof of neglect would depend on the weight given to these witnesses statements and those of Mr. Watson.

Whilst in the second case the Inspector considered that Mr. Watson's attendance at Mr. Nunn, appeared from the evidence presented by several witnesses, deficient, and that his record keeping was inadequate.

What is frustrating is that whilst initially receiving widespread coverage in the local press there is no record, yet recovered, which confirms what happened next, i.e. what actions did the Local Government Board take on receiving the Inquiry Report. What can be said is that Mr. Watson was still in post

performing his duties in August that year, but that he had been replaced by December. Further that Mr. Watson passed away the following year at just 34 years of age.

Despite the nuisance factor of not having part of the conclusion to the narrative, this is an unusual set of circumstances, and provides the opportunity to explore the provision of medical assistance in rural West Suffolk in the Victorian era.

The Main Combatants at the Inquiry.

Frederick Hastings Watson

Frederick Hastings Watson (1843-1877) was born in Eaton on the southwest outskirts of Norwich, Norfolk. His father was Frederick Elwin Watson (1810-1898) a solicitor appointed as Clerk to Commissioners for Land and Assessed Taxes, a wealthy man who on his death left £76k in his will, equivalent to around £12m today. His mother was Bridget Greene Parsons (1811-1844) who died when he was one year old, and he had two older siblings. His father remarried to Agnes Taylor (1813-1873) who became his mother and he was joined by a further six half siblings. His father's last wife was Harriet Ann Gwyn (1827-1887).

The family lived in the Norwich suburbs until his father's retirement when they moved to Thickthorn Hall, Hethersett, Norfolk. Frederick jnr. trained as a surgeon and was initially plying his profession in Mottram, Cheshire north of Macclesfield, Cheshire in 1871. He was subsequently appointed local parish Medical Officer, based in Barrow, Suffolk, but covering neighbouring villages including Hargrave, in the summer of 1874 following the passing of his predecessor Mr William Searle Barker who died at the age of 61 years in April of that year.

His tenure didn't start that well, as on the evening of 14th August 1874, he was to receive serious injuries falling off his horse, with it unlikely that he was able to resume his duties in the short term.

A more difficult time was to follow, with the Local Government Board Inquiry in May 1876 attracted much local attention and being reported in depth in all the local papers. Allegations were that he was negligent in the care he gave to two of his patients resulting in their unnecessarily early demise. The full details are outlined in the press report, to be found later in this article.

Unfortunately, yet to be discovered is the final decision of the Board. Suffice to say that Frederick continued to act as local surgeon for the area, with a press report of him carrying out his duties on the 7th August 1876 at an Inquest into the death of Barrow elderly resident George Jolly. However, by 30th December 1876 Frederick had been succeeded by a new surgeon Charles Richard Johnson who gave evidence at the Inquest into the death of a young girl Eliza Kimmance from Higham.

Frederick, therefore, was not to serve long in Barrow, and he subsequently died in June of 1877 at his father's home in Hethersett, at the young age of 34 years. Whether this can be linked to complications from his earlier riding accident is unknown. There is no record of any marriage.

Caroline Ashman

Caroline Garrod (1843-1901) was born in Chedburgh and married Josiah Ashman (1834-1922) an Agricultural Labourer from Bury St Edmunds in 1863. They were to have six surviving children. Initially living at Weathercock Hill, Chevington until the 1880's when they moved to Horringer. In later life their eldest son Charles Alfred (1864-1927) went on to become Horseman for the Marquis of Bristol.

James Nunn

James Nunn (1829-1876) was the fourth child of ten born in Depden to John Nunn (1797-1887) from Hargrave, an Agricultural Labourer who married Sarah Nunn (1798-1875) from Rede in 1817. James married Sarah Murkin (1833-1900) from Ousden in 1851 and over the next ten years they also had ten children. The family lived in a cottage on Hargrave Green. Three of their children were still recorded as living at home in the 1871 census, namely: Mary Ann and Honor employed as sewing machinists at the Clothes Factory in Chevington and son Robert a Carpenter.

It is not intended to delve too deeply in to Mr Nunn's life here, but it is worth noting that he was working as a Carrier of Goods and his mentions in the local press are few. He was convicted of Unlawfully Dealing in Game in 1870 and was part of the group of villagers responsible for the unlawful demolition of a 'Town House', see the article 'Riotous Behaviour in Hargrave 1875' in the History Section of the website.

Medical Treatment in Victorian England

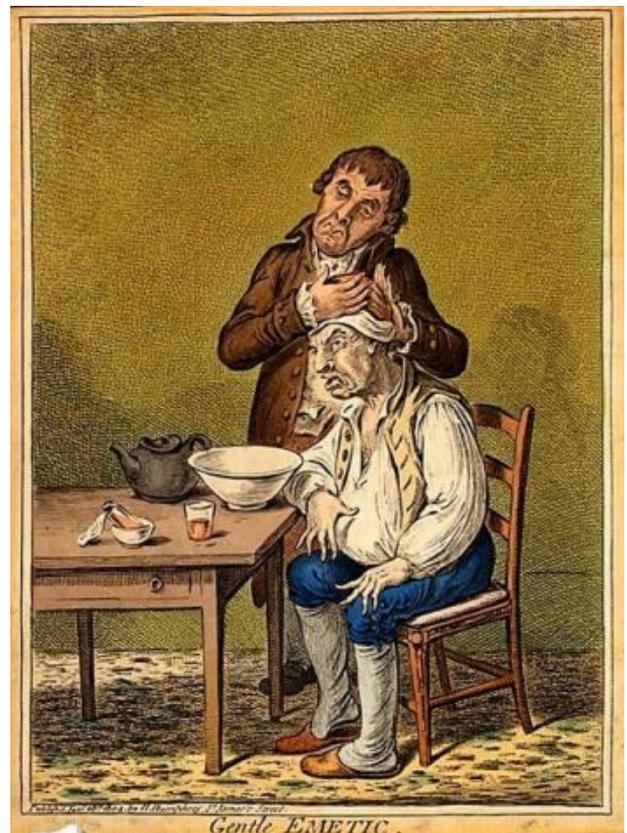
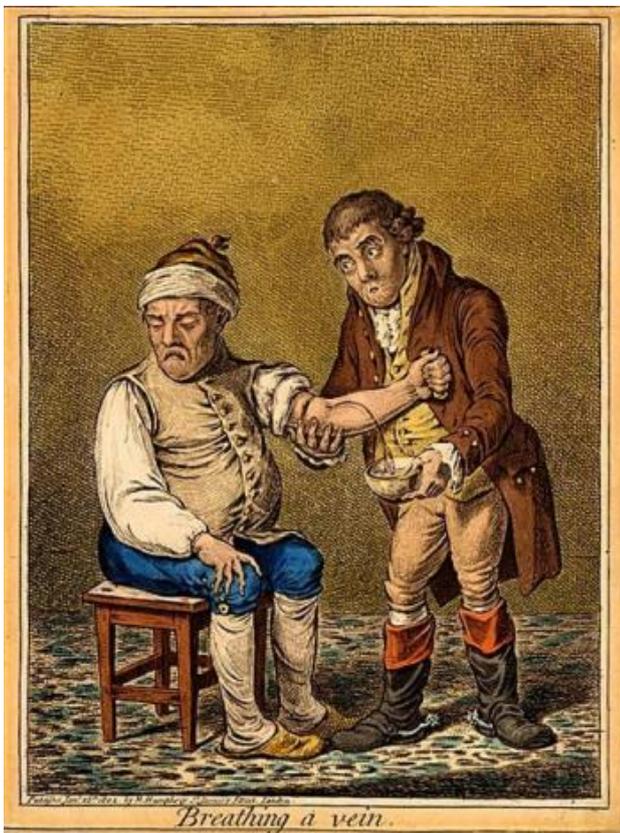
In the early Victorian era, the treatment of illness was rudimentary and had changed little from the Middle Ages. Apart from being expensive the calling of a doctor didn't guarantee effective treatment as they often had little or no training and had very limited knowledge of the workings of the human body. Prescriptions of high dose minerals and poisons that caused vomiting or sudden evacuation of the bowels; bloodletting using leeches; or simply telling the patient to get plenty of fresh air, did little to cure a condition or in the extreme case resulted in greater suffering or even death.

Regulation of medical practice began with the establishment of the British Medical Association in 1856 and the General Medical Council in 1858. Medical training became more formalised with the establishment of medical schools, and the number of qualified doctors available increased considerably.

The Public Health Act 1848 gave powers to newly formed Boards of Health to appoint qualified members of the medical profession to be their officers of health, to report on sanitary conditions and level of diseases on a district basis. For the poor medical relief could be subsidised through parish relief, obtained by applying for a Medical Order from the local Relieving Officer. The cost of the doctor's time and for any prescriptions for medicines and on occasion fresh meat, were funded through a 'poor tax' paid for by local householders.

On a parish patient basis, surgeons, as they were referred to, would treat immediate life threatening and longer-term self-limiting conditions. They would be appointed by and report to then Local Government Board made up of lay persons with limited medical knowledge, but who would non the less consider cases of alleged malpractice. Competition for post was such that applicants would underbid each other, resulting in low remuneration, and impractical stipulations on expenditure on medicines to be provided. Overwork resulting in inadequate and ineffective attendance of patients was therefore not uncommon.

By 1859 the first official Medical Register was published, and practicing without registration would result in a heavy penalty. There was a hierarchy of medical practitioners, each with specific functions. Physicians were 'real' doctors having undergone university education, whilst surgeons and apothecaries had trained by apprenticeships and were therefore called Mr. rather than Dr. Today specialist doctors performing surgery are the only practitioners to be called Mr. as a traditional nod to the past.



Press Reports covering Mr. Watson's appointment as Medical Officer and his Horse-riding Accident:

The following item was printed in the Bury & Suffolk Standard on the 16th June 1874.

HARGRAVE

The members of Foresters' Court " Marquis of Bristol," and the members of the West Suffolk Friendly Society residing in Hargrave. and one or two of the adjoining about 40 in number, held their anniversary on Friday last. The two clubs met together at the Cock's Head at 10.30, and, headed by the Bradley band, proceeded to the parish church, where Divine Service was held, and an appropriate sermon preached by the Rector, from 1 Corinthians x., 31. After the service, the members, having made a tour of the village, and called upon some of the chief inhabitants, returned to their lodge room, where they were joined by the Rector, the Rev S. Chamberlain, Mr. Bell, Mr. Watson, Mr. N. Hubbard, Mr. Jolly, and others. They adjourned thence to a large marquee, which had been specially erected for the occasion, where a most excellent dinner awaited them. The chair was occupied by the Rector, and Mr. Watson, the newly appointed surgeon, filled the vice-chair. After ample justice had been done to the good things provided for them by the new landlord, Mr. Taylor, the Chairman proposed the usual loyal toasts, which was most heartily received. He then gave "Success to the two Societies," - and expressed a hope that although this was the first occasion on which he had met the members together, it would not be the last. He also entered into some particulars respecting the West Suffolk Friendly Society, and called upon the Secretary of the Foresters' Club to enter into a statement of the financial position of that Lodge. In answer to this appeal, Mr. Cooper gave a few particulars respecting the Lodge, the number of its members, and the state of its finances. It appeared from his statement that there has been an unusual amount of sickness amongst its members, that the lodge has added one new member since last year, and that its funds are not so flourishing as he could wish to see. The Chairman then proposed the health of the new Surgeon, Mr. Watson, and referred in feeling terms to the loss which they had sustained in the lamented death of their late surgeon, Mr. Barker. In his reply, Mr. Watson, after cordially thanking the company for the hearty welcome he had received, and assuring them of his

best endeavours to do all he could for all who might require his services, went on to speak of the manufacturing districts, and from his own experience a surgeon there, he warned the members of the unfitness of Suffolk labourers to bear the hard and rough work of the coal pits and the iron work. Those who had left the neighbourhood in the hope of obtaining higher wages would, he feared, in too many cases, return home with unpaired health and strength; and, therefore, he exhorted the young men around him not to be over anxious to leave their present employment, but to remember that health is far better than high wages and impaired strength. A very interesting discussion followed his speech, and it was generally felt by all who were present that some steps ought to be taken to procure an alteration in the rules of the clubs of the neighbourhood, as it seems very unfair that members should be allowed to go on and engage all kinds of work, injurious to their health, and should continue to receive the full benefit of their respective clubs in sickness, without contributing more to the funds than their fellow members who remain in their healthy old homes. Various other toasts followed, including that of "The Chairman" and "The Visitors,"- and a very pleasant afternoon was spent by all. It seems right that some notice should be taken of this successful meeting, as in these days of strikes and strife it is well to notice that the good old English feeling of brotherhood is not quite extinct, and that parson and farmers and labourers can still meet together as friends, and can enjoy a few social hours together without a single note of discord to mar the harmony of the meeting.

The flowing item was printed in the Bury Free Press on the 15th August 1874

BARROW.

SERIOUS ACCIDENT. — On Friday evening, as Mr. F. Hastings Watson, who recently succeeded to the practice of Mr. W. S. Barker, surgeon, of this parish, was riding in a field near the village, he was by some means thrown from his horse, and sustained a fracture of the thigh, besides severe bruise on the shoulder. After remaining some time unable to make himself heard, he was found by some men, and was conveyed home in a tumbril sent for the purpose by Mr. Oliver Johnson. He was speedily attended by Mr. Kilner, surgeon, of Bury, who set the fractured limb, and is going on well, although it will probably be some time before he can resume his professional duties.

Extended Press Report covering The Local Government Board Inquiry:

The following item was printed in the Bury and Norwich Post and Suffolk Standard on the 23rd May 1876.

Local Government Board Inquiry at the Thingoe Union.

CHARGES OF NEGLECT ON THE PART OF A PARISH SURGEON.

On Friday last Courtenay Boyle, Esq., the Local Government Board Inspector for the district, held an enquiry at the Board Room of the Thingoe Union, Bury St. Edmund's, before a full Board of Guardians, with respect to certain charges of neglect which had been preferred against Mr. Watson, one of the parish medical officers.

The Inspector, in commencing the proceedings, read the notices that had been forwarded to the Local Government Board with respect to the charges about to be enquired into, from which it appeared that on the 12th of February last a statement was made to the Guardians by a person named Caroline Ashman, of Chevington, complaining of the conduct of Mr. Watson, the parish medical officer, in reference to her, the effect of which was that having been supplied with an order by the Guardian of

the parish for attendance in her confinement, she sent for Mr. Watson, who visited her, and pronounced from an examination he made that she had had a miscarriage. This the woman denied, and said she was within fourteen days of her confinement. He then left her, promising to visit her again on the following day, but neglected to do so. Owing to this negligence, and feeling much worse, the woman called in another doctor, Mr. Wilkins, of Wickhambrook, who ordered her to be kept very quiet, or she would prolong her confinement. Mr. Watson subsequently went to the woman, who at first declined to be examined by him, but afterwards consented, when he still adhered to his opinion that she was not with child, and went away again. A few hours afterwards the poor woman was partly delivered of a full-grown child, without any nurse or doctor to assist the birth: after three-quarters of an hour a nurse named Paske came and completed the delivery, but the child was dead. Owing to this neglect, Mrs. Ashman complained that she had not been well ever since. In consequence of that statement, Mr. Watson also forwarded one in reply to the Local Government Board, the purport of which was that he pleaded ignorance of his duty to attend Caroline Ashman as a pauper, as her husband was earning £1 per week. However, he did visit her, and gave her some medicine, and left with the impression that his services would not be required for some days, giving instructions that if anything happened she was to send for him at once. When he was sent for on the following day, he had several very urgent cases to attend to, and was thereby prevented from visiting Mrs. Ashman. However, he should have managed to see her somehow that night if he had not been informed that Mr. Wilkins had been called in. When he (Mr. Watson) did go, Mrs. Ashman refused to allow him to examine her, and was excessively rude to him. He understood from Mr. Wilkins that she had arranged to pay him as a private medical attendant. Both he and Mr. Wilkins seemed confident that Mrs. Ashman would not require their services for some time, and he was perfectly satisfied in his own conscience as to the manner in which he acted. He felt confident that the child of which she was delivered had never lived at all. The Inspector also read another statement, a copy of which was forwarded to the Local Government Board, by Mr. Watson, purporting to be a statement made by Mrs. Paske, the midwife, to the effect that she sent for Mr. Watson directly Mrs. Ashman was taken unwell, and that he came as soon as possible. As he did not see any immediate likelihood of the confinement taking place, he went away, before which he authorised Mrs. Paske to send for him if anything happened, and promised to attend at once. She did accordingly send for him at Mrs. Ashman's request on the Wednesday, but he did not come, and Mrs. Ashman persisted in calling in Mr. Wilkins, but she (Mrs. Paske) could not see there was any necessity for doing so. This statement was signed by Mr. Watson in the presence of Mrs. Paske and Mr. Petley, of Barrow.

The Inspector then proceeded to read the statement referring to the second charge against Mr. Watson, which was forwarded to the Local Government Board on the 5th of May. It was to the effect that Mr. Watson, having been requested to do so, attended off and on for five or six weeks a labourer named James Nunn, of Hargrave, but as his friends were not satisfied with the treatment he was receiving as a pauper it was recommended that he should, if possible, be sent to the hospital. Mr. Watson however, begged that the case might be left in his hands another week, and said he would do his utmost to get the man well; it was accordingly so arranged, but not once during that week did he visit the man, and he was removed to the Hospital a day or two afterwards, where he died a few hours after his admission.

Mr. Watson, in answer to the Inspector, said he had nothing particular to say with respect to the first case, beyond what he had already pointed out in his statement, and as far as witnesses was concerned he had none to bring forward, saving Mrs. Paske. With regard to the second charge, Mr. Watson said the death of Nunn was not his fault, and if he had been advised, he should have strongly objected to his being removed when he was taken to the Hospital, which was done without his knowledge or consent. He had understood that, for some reason or other, the removal was kept entirely secret.

The Inspector then proceeded to call the following witnesses as to the first charge, viz., that made by Caroline Ashman : —

Caroline Ashman was first examined, but much of her evidence was necessarily unfit for publication. Its purport was that on a Tuesday in November last she sent for Mr. Watson, who came between 7 and 8 p.m. Mrs. Paske and Mrs. Smith were present at the time. Witness told him of her condition, and he said she had had a miscarriage, but that she denied, telling him she was within a fortnight of her confinement. He told her to hold her tongue, and to speak when she was spoken to. He persisted in his opinion, and when he went away he left her some medicine, and expressed a wish for someone to call and tell him how she went on. On the Wednesday morning her husband went for Mr. Watson, and on returning told her he would be sure to come sometime during the day. Mrs. Paske and witness's mother, who were with witness, were obliged to leave her to go home, and up to nine or ten at night no doctor came. Witness told her husband he should insist on having another doctor, and during the evening she sent for Mr. Wilkins, surgeon, of Wickhambrook, who came the same night, examined her, and ordered her to keep quiet in bed. On the Thursday Mr. Watson came, Mrs. Paske and Mrs. Smith being present, but she refused to let him examine her because he had not come before. Mr. Watson left, but returned about dinner-time, and said that he had seen Mr. Wilkins, who was very angry with her for having taken the liberty to send for him without acquainting him (Mr. Watson) about it. Mr. Watson gave her some medicine, and then went away. On the Friday morning witness awoke in pain, and between nine and ten Mrs. Paske left her, Mrs. Smith remaining with her. About noon witness was taken very ill, and about 2 p.m. Mr. Watson came. Witness told him she had been full of pain ever since 4 a.m., and he examined her twice in the presence of Mrs. Smith, and repeated his opinion that she was not with child. While he was in the room witness had another labour pain, but he said that was in consequence of his examination. He left shortly after two o'clock, and at about four o'clock she was partially confined. A little girl was sent for Mrs. Paske, the child being then alive, but when she came and completed the delivery it was dead. On the Saturday Mrs. White, wife of the Rector, came to see her, and advised her to send for Mr. Watson; she did so by post, and he came on the Sunday morning, when she told him that if he had been there the child would have been alive, to which he replied, "Never mind the child: it is not the same as if it was your first: how many have you got?" She told him five, to which he replied, "Oh, you can spare that then." At his request the child was shown to him: he measured it, and she heard him say it was nearly a full-grown one. Mr. Watson came regularly after that time, and she had never had any previous misunderstanding with him.

— The Inspector: Did you ever ask him for an order for meat? — Witness: Yes, he ordered me such things, and I asked him how I was to get them with my large family. I asked him to report me to the Board for an allowance, and he promised to do so. I never resisted Mr. Watson's wish to have a child of mine vaccinated. About two years ago I had some dispute about a vaccination paper: he would not give me a paper to prove that the child had been vaccinated. Mrs. Paske lives about a mile and a half from me.

— By Mr. Watson (through the Inspector): When I saw Mr. Watson first of all he told me to take a little brandy: I told him I hadn't any. He then asked my husband to go up to the Greyhound with him, and he would order me a half-pint, which I got.

Harriet Paske deposed that finding Mrs. Ashman was near her confinement, she sent for Mr. Watson, and he asked her whether she thought it was a miscarriage, and she said, "No." He told her that if the child was born alive she would know what to do. He stayed about an hour. There was no want of him then, nor of her. She stopped there that Tuesday night, and on the Wednesday evening about eight o'clock she left to see her mother, who was unwell. She did not say anything about Mrs. Ashman sending for a doctor, because she was not advanced sufficiently in her confinement. Did not say she might have been delivered if she had had a doctor. On the Tuesday morning witness returned to Mrs. Ashman's, and found she had sent for Mr. Wilkins. Told her neither she nor a doctor could do any good. About two o'clock on the Thursday, at Mrs. Ashman's request, she went to Mrs. White's, and obtained

some linen and brandy. On the Friday, between 9 and 10 a.m., she left Mrs. Ashman again to see her mother, and told her that if she altered she was to send for her directly. In the afternoon she was sent for, and upon going found the child partly born: it was dead. She delivered the baby. No one could have delivered the child a minute sooner than it was born. She had not seen Mr. Wilkins within the last few days.

— Cross-examined by Guardians: I saw Mr. Wilkins on the Friday, about dinner-time, on the Chevington-road, when he told me about Mrs. Ashman's state. It is about half-a-mile from my house to Mrs. Ashman's: it is about a quarter- of-an-hour's walk.

— The Inspector: If you had been present when Mrs. Ashman was first taken, do you think the child would have been born alive? — Witness: No. — The Inspector: Did you hear Mrs. Ashman say the child was alive. — Witness: She never told me so, and she never told Mr. Watson so in my presence.

— By Mr. Watson (through the Inspector): I have seen many still-born children, and Mrs. Ashman's had the appearance of one. — To the Inspector: Mrs. Smith was in the room at the confinement. I did not hear her say the child was alive.

Susan Smith generally confirmed Mrs. Ashman's evidence, and said that after Mr. Watson left on the Tuesday, Mrs. Paske, referring to his opinion that a miscarriage had occurred, said, "I know better than that; let him have his way; do not contradict, that won't do. He will report us, and let us have the brandy and wine. He often stands a quart of beer for us at the Greyhound. "He is a good-hearted fellow." Mrs. Paske told her she thought the woman was going to have a child, but would not contradict the doctor. Mr. Watson said he should call again on the Wednesday, whether he was sent for or not. Witness was in and out on the Wednesday, and when Mr. Wilkins came he gave her instructions what to do supposing the child was born alive; she was to send off for him immediately. On the Thursday morning Mr. Watson came, and wanted to examine Mrs. Ashman; she refused, and told him she had called in another medical man. He pressed her to allow him to examine her for her own sake, and she consented. Heard Mrs. Ashman tell him she knew there was a child, and he replied that there was not. On Friday evening Mrs. Paske told witness the child was not two inches off the world, but she could not do any good by stopping, and she went away. Witness asked her to come again, and she said "No; not unless I am sent for." Between one and two Mr. Watson came and examined Mrs. Ashman, and while he was in the room she had strong labour pains. He said they were not labour pains, but the effect of his examination. He then said, " Good day: don't scare yourself!" About three or four o'clock the same afternoon the child was born; it struggled hard, and she was perfectly certain there was life in it. At once sent a little girl for Mrs. Paske, and she came in about three-quarters of an hour. She could not have arrived much quicker. The child was dead when she came.

— Cross-examined by the Guardians: It is about a mile and a quarter from Mrs. Ashman's to Mrs. Paske's. There is a shorter cut across the fields, but the girl did not go that way. — By Mr. Watson (through the Inspector): I said Mrs. Ashman "answered" Mr. Watson; I mean by that that Mrs. Ashman said to him, "I heard you were at the Greyhound drunk." I am positive that remark was made, but I am not certain whether I or Mrs. Ashman made use of it. Mr. Watson said, "Dear me, you ought not to take my character away like that."

The Inspector observed that Mrs. Paske and Mrs. Smith contradicted themselves in their evidence in toto. He would therefore call in Mrs. Paske and confront them, Mrs. Paske being called in and reminded of the nature of an oath, again adhered to her former statements. — The Inspector: Have you ever had any beer from Mr. Watson from the Greyhound? — Witness: No, sir, I never had a drop, and never said a word to Mrs. Smith about having had some. I never said anything to Mrs. Smith about the child being only two inches off the world on the Friday.

Mrs. Ashman was again called in, and confirmed Mrs. Smith as to certain examinations made by Mr. Watson in support of his opinion that a miscarriage had occurred. After Mr. Watson had left witness spoke to Mrs. Paske about what he had said, and she replied, "I know better than that: let him have his way: he will get on all the better if you don't contradict him. You will have plenty of wine and beer if you let him have his way."

Mrs. Paske (to a Guardian): Mr. Watson has not offered me any money to give my evidence. I was summoned to attend by the Relieving-officer, Mr. Calver.

Mrs. Sarah Ann Bridge was called to confirm Mrs. Smith, and said she was at the house about half-an-hour before Mrs. Paske came, but could not say whether the child was still-born or not: she did not see Mrs. Smith touch it, nor did she see how she should know whether it lived or not. Mrs. Debenham (another woman referred to by Mrs. Smith) was only there a minute or two.

The husband of Mrs. Ashman stated that he went after Mr. Watson on the Wednesday, when he promised to come during the day; he waited till 10 o'clock at night, and he did not come; so, he went for another doctor, which he thought it was his duty to do, knowing what condition his wife was in.

THE SECOND CASE

The Inspector then proceeded to hear the following witnesses relative to the second charge: -

The Rev. Samuel Chamberlain deposed: I am Rector of Hargrave, and the deceased James Nunn was a parishioner of mine. About two months ago I heard he was ill, and called to see him. Mr. Watson was his private doctor and acted as such in the first instance; after a time, Nunn obtained an order from the Relieving officer, and Mr. Watson still continued to attend him. Nunn complained to me very much about Mr. Watson's neglect - that he seldom saw him, and that he never examined him. According to Mr. Watson, Nunn was suffering from asthma. I felt his pulse and asked him to show me his tongue, and he then said I had examined him more than Mr. Watson had done. He then added "Mr. Watson is the strangest man I have ever seen. I went to him for a bottle of medicine, and when he gave it to me he said, 'Take this, and slip it in to you: you will soon be alright.'" I found that Nunn continued to get worse. From time to time, I ascertained that Mr. Watson had not been at the man's house, and I learnt from Nunn's wife that Mr. Watson had said it would be a good thing for him to go to Hospital. I then wrote to Mr. Watson, and asked him if he recommended that course. The date of that letter I do not remember. I afterwards consulted Mr. Tricker the Guardian, and he strongly advised that the man should go to the Hospital. On the 24th April I called at Nunn's, and whilst I was there Mr. Watson came in. He spoke to Nunn as follows— "Mr. Chamberlain takes a great interest in your case: I will do all I can for you." Mr. Watson then came out with me, and I again asked him about Nunn being removed to the Hospital, and he said, "Wait a week: I will see him every day, and report to you his condition in two or three days." I went to Nunn's house nearly every day, but was informed that Mr. Watson had not attended at all. I asked Nunn whether he was still anxious to go to the Hospital, and he replied, "I only regret that I did not go before." So, on Tuesday, the 2nd of May, I removed Nunn in my own carriage to the Hospital, where he died the same afternoon. I have no reason to think that Nunn was injured by the removal: he was well wrapped up in a great coat. — To the Inspector: My carriage is an open one. — To Mr. Watson (through the Inspector): You told me on the 24th of April that you did not think they would admit Nunn into the Hospital, as he was suffering from chronic asthma. As far as my judgment went I did not think he was suffering from asthma at all.

Mr. Watson said he attended Nunn once during the week. The Inspector, upon looking at the medical sheet kept by Mr. Watson, on which is, or ought to be, recorded the different persons, times, and places relating to his visits, pointed out that there was no attendance at all entered for that week.

The Inspector: What about the disease Nunn was suffering from? Mr. Chamberlain: Mr. Watson certainly pronounced it to be one of asthma.

The Inspector: It appears from Mr. Watson's medical sheet that he was suffering from congestion of the liver. Mr. Chamberlain continued: After I had the conversation with Mr. Watson about Nunn going into the Hospital, he wrote a letter to me which ran as follows: — " Of course, to a man in Nunn's position it is a great advantage to get him into the Hospital; but I fancy you will meet with other cases during the year, which will be likely to receive greater benefit." I remember the words, though I have destroyed the letter, which I received on the 23rd of April. I am quite certain that Mr. Watson told me on the 24th of April he would see Nunn every day. Mrs. Nunn heard part of the conversation which took place between me and Mr. Watson on the 24th of April.

Mr. Tricker said he was sorry to say that the poor man was only visited three times by Mr. Watson during seven weeks. Mr. Chamberlain, to Mr. Watson: I don't know when you received an order to attend Nunn. Nunn told me he had had two bottles of medicine from you, for which he paid you. You verbally asked me to wait a week before I removed Nunn to the Hospital: that was all the caution you gave me about removing him. It was on Monday, the 24th of April, that you told me to wait a week, and you would report how Nunn was going on. There was no arrangement entered into by the parishioners to keep Nunn's removal secret. I am able to state that you did not see Nunn that week: I had it from the poor man's own lips.

Mr. Watson: That is not evidence: the man is dead now.

The Inspector, on again referring to Mr. Watson's sheets of medical attendances, complained that they were very irregularly kept, and said he should withhold them, and present them with his report to the Local Government Board.

Mr. Watson: Who received Nunn from you at the Hospital? — Mr. Chamberlain: Mr. Fuller, the house-surgeon.

Sarah Nunn deposed: I am the wife of James Nunn, deceased. On the 2nd of March my husband went to Mr. Watson: he was then a pauper, but had no medical order. On the 11th of March he obtained an order from Mr. Calver, the Relieving-officer, and I then applied to Mr. Watson to attend my husband: he did not come. My husband subsequently went himself, and Mr. Watson came to him. Mr. Watson told me in my husband's presence that he was suffering from asthma. He complained to me of pain in his inside, and of shortness of breath; his eyes swelled a good deal; the pain was in his left side. About three weeks after I carried the order to Mr. Watson, he came and attended my husband. He did not examine him, he only looked at him: he was hardly in the house time enough to enable himself to turn round and go out again. I went for him about a week after this visit, and he afterwards called in and wrote me out an order for a piece of meat: he called again at the end of the week and wrote out a similar order for meat. Mr. Watson also supplied my husband with medicine. Mr. Watson only visited my husband three times in nine weeks. I am certain he pronounced the disease my husband was suffering from to be asthma. My husband called twice on Mr. Watson at his surgery.

Mr. Chamberlain often visited my husband— once or twice a week. I asked Mr. Chamberlain whether he did not think the Hospital would be the best place for him, and he advised me to speak to Mr. Watson about it. I did so, and he said, "Good living and good attendance will do your husband a great deal of good." I acquainted Mr. Chamberlain with that, and he promised to get me an order for the Hospital. On the Monday week before my husband died Mr. Watson and Mr Chamberlain were together at my house. Mr. Watson then felt my husband's hand, which was the only time he had touched him. He promised Mr. Chamberlain he would see my husband every day during the week, but he did not come till the Monday in the following week I was present on all the occasions when Mr. Watson visited my

husband. He never looked at his tongue tapped his chest, or asked him any questions as to the condition he was in. The last time he called he looked at my husband's legs. I have made a slight mistake - altogether Mr. Watson attended him four times. My husband was anxious to go to the Hospital, but was not removed on April 26th because Mr. Watson promised to do all he could to do him good. He was removed to the Hospital on Tuesday, the 2nd inst., and before starting he ate a hearty breakfast, drank some whisky and water, and smoked his pipe. The house-surgeon at the Hospital did not say anything to me about him.

— By Mr Watson: My husband first of all saw you at your surgery He went there twice altogether. -Mr. Watson: Then how do you know that I didn't examine him there — Witness: Because my husband told me you never did. I never heard him say that you promised him you would call and see him.

Mr. Harry Fuller deposed: I am house surgeon at the Hospital. I remember Nunn being brought to the Hospital on the 2nd inst. He was almost in a dying state: he had effusion on the chest, arising from pleurisy and emphysema of the lungs; he had also an effusion in the pericardium. There was nothing to lead me to enquire into the state of his liver: I had quite sufficient evidence to account for death. I made a post-mortem examination and found the chest on both sides full of fluid the result of pleurisy: the pericardium was also filled with fluid. He did not speak to me. I did not consider that he was in a proper condition to be removed: I could not say at the time that he had been under medical treatment. When I say that he was not in a condition to be removed, I don't mean that the removal actually caused death: he must have died under any circumstances, as he was so badly diseased. The symptoms were not those where the disease would have come on suddenly. Judging from what I saw, he was likely to have been in a dangerous condition on the previous day. I cannot understand his eating a hearty breakfast on the morning of his removal, and was very surprised to hear it was so. Drinking and smoking a pipe would tend to relieve him somewhat. To Mr. Watson: I do not say that the removal to the Hospital accelerated his death.

In answer to the Inspector, as to whatever he had any explanation to offer, Mr. Watson said he was perfectly ignorant of the removal of Nunn to the Hospital; it was a course he should have objected to, knowing that he was suffering from a bronchial affection. He did not think it was a case that required constant attention. He had every reason to believe that his removal on such a cold morning as the 2nd inst. brought on the congestion of the lungs.

The Inspector: That is not the point you have to answer: the complaint against you is that on the 24th of April you promised to attend Nunn during the week, and you never did.

Mr. Watson: I did go to see him in the middle of the week, on the Wednesday.

Mr Tricker, the Guardian for Hargrave: You did not, and it has been proved by two witnesses, and therefore what is the use of you telling such a falsehood?

The Inspector: (to Mr. Watson): have you anything to show to prove to us that you really did go in the middle of the week?

Mr. Watson: No; I never kept any memorandum. I never dreamt that anything was going to be made of this case.

A Guardian: Why did you promise you would attend and never perform it?

Mr. Watson: The promise of mine has been very much enlarged upon since I made it; I merely promised to pay attention to the man.

Mr. Tricker: You did not even visit him once during the seven days. The poor man's residence was in the centre of your practice, too, and you would not have had to go a yard out of your way. There might have been somewhat of an excuse for you to offer if you had lived a few miles away from him. I must just inform my brother guardians that there is now a pauper lying very ill in the parish, whom Mr. Watson has not visited for 14 days.

In answer, to Mr. Tricker, who asked Mr. Watson whether the entries on an attendance-sheet were in his own handwriting, he replied that half of them were and the other half were not.

Mr. Tricker observed that it was a most improper thing to allow other persons to make these entries.

Mr. Watson said, all he went by was, that when he first undertook the duties of the Union, the attendance sheets were not filled up, and that was the reason he never completely filled his own up.

Mr. Sparke (the Clerk) here handed to the Inspector certain sheets which were in use at the time Mr. Watson was appointed to the office, and which were, he said, all properly filled up.

The Inspector again expressed his entire disapproval of the manner in which Mr. Watson had kept his sheets, and said it was his intention to lay them before the Local Government Board.

The Inspector, in closing the enquiry, pointed out that in the first case there had been very conflicting and contradictory evidence given on the part of Paske and Smith, whilst the statements of Ashman and Smith seemed to confirm each other, so it would have to depend on the credibility of the evidence whether there was really any neglect on the part of Mr. Watson in this case. With reference to the case of Nunn, they had had evidence to show that Mr. Watson promised to attend him regularly, or at all events he made some promise of that sort, but according to the witnesses he failed to act up to it. Mr. Watson had said that he attended twice during that week, but he had not brought forward any proof to substantiate that assertion, and so disprove the evidence of Mr. Chamberlain and Mrs. Nunn.

The Inspector then notified to the Board that the report of this enquiry would be laid before the Local Government Board for their consideration at the earliest opportunity, and the enquiry, which lasted five hours, was brought to a close.

Postscript

It is for the reader to decide if Mr. Watson had indeed failed in his duties and was negligent regarding his treatment of the two patients concerned. Could he have done more to avoid two premature deaths? In the longer-term questions as to his continued practice as a doctor become redundant as he left the profession prematurely passing away just over a year after the allegations were made.