

News, Notes and Queries

ROYAL PHYSICIANS IN SCOTLAND, 1568–1853

There are many purposes for which historians may need to know who have held appointments in the Medical Households of British sovereigns. On the one hand this is a part of the history of the monarchs and their courts; on the other it is part of the history of the medical profession and, more widely, of medicine. Unfortunately many mistaken statements are handed down from one writer to another, so that any list of royal physicians compiled from even the best available printed authorities is bound to omit names which ought to be there and to include others which ought not. In an attempt to sort out some confusions of this kind, I recently addressed an enquiry to the Scottish Record Office and received not only a full reply but complete lists of H.M. Ordinary Physicians and H.M. First Physicians, with references to the sources and to other relevant materials. From these lists I have already been able to settle several doubts; but evidently they would be useful to many other workers besides myself, and the Scottish Record Office has most kindly given me permission to publish them here.* They speak for themselves, and I have nothing to add by way of introduction except that there is no information on any office exercising supervision over the medical offices of the Household comparable to that of the Lord Chamberlain in England; and that the Scottish Record Office has no record of the medical appointments made after 1847.

G. N. CLARK

H.M. ORDINARY PHYSICIANS, 1568–1853

Royal physicians (usually called mediciners in the sixteenth century) are mentioned in the *Exchequer Rolls* and other sources from the fourteenth century onwards, but it is impossible to trace actual appointments before the reign of James VI. In the seventeenth century there was a Principal Physician and a varying number of ordinary physicians (or physicians-in-ordinary). After 1714 there was only one of the latter, sometimes referred to as the Second Physician. The salary of £50 attached to the office was discontinued in 1844 and the practice of making appointments by commission under the privy seal lapsed after 1847.

<i>Dates</i>	<i>Names and Notes</i>	<i>Appointed</i>	<i>Source</i>
1568–c. 1580	ALEXANDER PRESTON Reappointed 20 Mar. 1576 (MS. Reg. Sec. Sig. xliii, f75). Still in office in May 1580 (<i>Exchequer Rolls</i> , xxi, 154–5.)	13 July 1568	<i>Reg. Secreti Sigilli</i> , vi, No. 392
1575–1598	GILBERT MONCRIEFF OF MYRESIDE Reappointed 8 Jan. 1579 (<i>ibid.</i> , xlv, f101). Died 24 Feb. 1598 (<i>The Moncrieffs and the Moncrieffes</i> , 602–606).	21 Sept. 1575	MS Reg. Sec. Sig., xliii, f28.

* I wish to thank in particular Dr. Athol L. Murray, Assistant Keeper in the Scottish Record Office.