



The Evolution of Irish Veterinary Practice, 1700-1950

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Ph. D. by research and thesis

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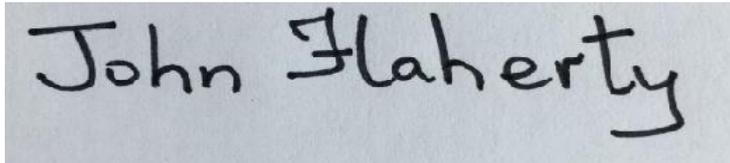
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Author's Declaration

I, John Flaherty, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

Signed:

A photograph of a handwritten signature in black ink on a light-colored surface. The signature reads "John Flaherty" in a cursive, slightly slanted script.

Dedication

To my wonderful wife, Sarah McConkey
and our children

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Abstract

This thesis explores the evolution of Irish veterinary practice, especially with regards to cattle practice, over the course of some 250 years. It begins in the eighteenth-century, with a discussion on prominent farriers that practiced in Ireland, and culminates in the 1950s, when the veterinary surgeon finally gained approval with the Irish farmer. The main sources cover both the personal testimonies of individuals involved in the medical care of farm animals, farmers, cow-doctors and veterinarians, and documentary sources, which include, newspapers, veterinary registers, folklore collections, state papers, veterinary journals and publications that deal specifically with animal health care. The research identifies the first generations of veterinary surgeons to practice in Ireland and examines their backgrounds and their interactions with each other and with the wider body of animal care providers, namely farmers and traditional practitioners. It questions how these circumstances changed over time. The study considers the main factors that helped with the profession's development during the nineteenth-century, and those that hindered this development. It examines why Ireland lagged well behind other European countries in attaining a veterinary college, and considers the role of traditional practitioners in the care of farm animals, comparing their proficiency with that of the contemporary veterinary surgeon.

Although the profession made major strides during the nineteenth century, with legal recognition and improved standards of education and proficiency, it was hindered in making a significant contribution to Irish farming and society because of internal divisions within the profession, a lack of state support, limitations in treating animals other than the horse, Irish farmers' dislike for change where the benefit of such was not clear, and a continued preference for traditional methods, many of which were highly effective. However, the veterinary surgeon ultimately achieved a prominent position in Irish agriculture because of the emergence of a more proficient practitioner, a better understanding by farmers of scientific methods, a greater involvement in public health initiatives, and scientific advances, especially the development of effective, life-saving drugs. Generally, the experience of the veterinary profession over the period in question is a combination of both continuity and change. The period was dominated by a

practitioner, deficient in training, who had few effective treatments to offer the farmer. Change began to accelerate during the latter part of the nineteenth century, when a better educated vet became more proficient, and was cemented in the 1950s with new opportunities in state employment, and by a conjunction of new scientific advances.

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To my wonderful wife Sarah, thank you from the bottom of my heart for all the support and encouragement you have given me. To my darlings, Jack and Kate, our twins have taught me so much about methodology! Thanks to my sister Maria, for all your support during the past years. Thank you and I love you all. To all my friends for their support and help, especially my old friend, Tim, Rest in Peace.

Last but by no means least I would like to thank my interviewees and their families. To the person, you welcomed me into your homes and generously gave of your time, knowledge and hospitality. Spending time with you all has been the highlight of my research. Your contributions have added so much to this study. They say that when an old person dies a library of knowledge dies with them. Several of those who contributed have gone to their eternal rest, but I know that this study will keep some of their knowledge and memories alive. May that gentleman, John Joe, and all of those who took pleasure in caring so well for our farm animals, in health and sickness, find eternal happiness.

Abbreviations

AVC – Army Veterinary Corps

FSI – Farming Society of Ireland

HASC – Highland and Agricultural Society of Scotland Certificate

ICVA – Irish Central Veterinary Association

ICVMA – Irish Central Veterinary Medical Association

ICVMS – Irish Central Veterinary Medical Society

LVC – London Veterinary College

NIVMA – North of Ireland Veterinary Medical Association

NIVMS – North of Ireland Veterinary Medical Society

PDSA – People’s Dispensary for Sick Animals of the Poor

RAISI – Royal Agricultural Improvement Society of Ireland

RCI – Royal Cork Institution

RCVS – Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons

RDS – Royal Dublin Society

VCI – Veterinary Council of Ireland

VMAI – Veterinary Medical Association of Ireland

Introduction

Friend (if I may call thee) who ever thou art, that readest this small Treatise, if thou do it only for pleasure, it may add some profit also; but much more if thou practice. For what more pleasure canst thou have in any earthly imployment, then to recover thy sickly beast to health by thy labour and industry?¹

These words were written by Michael Harward, a Cheshire born ox-leech who practiced in Ireland in the seventeenth-century, who highlighted how successfully curing a sickly beast would bring both economic and psychological benefits, to both the animal's owner and the healer. From the earliest of times, there was much cross fertilisation between human and veterinary medicine, with certain individuals providing health care for both man and beast.² According to Fergus Kelly, early Irish legal commentary from the seventh and eighth-centuries contained reference to the complex system used for assessing the veterinary fees of the *liaig*, a healer of both humans and animals.³ Early accounts of animal disease were recorded in the Irish annals, the entries suggesting periodic outbreaks of animal plague.⁴ According to Thomas More Madden, symptoms of disease in animals were first described in the *Annales Ultonienses*. *Baccach* (lameness) and *ventris profluvio* (diarrhoea) were recorded in the year 708.⁵ Further accounts suggested an early recognition that some conditions were communicable to man, with symptoms, described in the eleventh and fifteenth-centuries, now equated with cow-pox and horse glanders, respectively.⁶ The manner in which serious outbreaks

¹ Michael Harward, *The herds-man's mate: or, a guide to herdsmen, teaching how to cure all diseases in bulls, oxen, cows and calves, etc.* (Dublin, 1673), sig. A3.

² For examples see Lise Wilkinson, 'Veterinary cross-currents in ideas on infectious diseases since Aristotle' in *Veterinary History* (Hereafter cited as *Vet. Hist.*), new ser., vol. 1, no. 4 (1980/81), pp 149-52; Anastasius Tsaknakis, 'Hippocrates and veterinary medicine' in *Vet. Hist.*, new ser., vol. 3, no. 4 (1984/85), pp 155-62; Robert F. Harper (ed.), *The code of Hammurabi* (2nd ed., London, 1904), pp 78-81; P. B. Adamson, 'The relationship between medical and veterinary surgeons from Sumer to the present' in *Vet. Hist.*, new ser., vol. 3, no. 1 (1983), pp 16-24.

³ Fergus Kelly, *Early Irish farming* (Dublin, 1998), p. 217.

⁴ Hugh Ferguson, *The present distemper in cattle with full directions for its treatment, also a means of rendering permanent the secretion of milk from the cow* (Dublin, 1842), pp 23-7; J. P. Gunning, 'Cattle disease in Ireland: A retrospect and some theories of the cause' in *Ireland's Own* (29 June, 1927), pp 426-7; Patrick Dunne, 'Beast plagues' in *Ireland's Own* (6 November, 1937), p. 4.

⁵ T. M. Madden, *Rinderpest of the present time and the contagious cattle diseases of former ages, on these islands and on the continent* (Dublin, 1866), p. 21. For further discussion on the early terminology for animal disease in Ireland see Kelly, *Early Irish farming*, pp 194-216.

⁶ Seán MacAirt (ed.), *The Annals of Inisfallen: (Ms. Rawlinson B. 503)* (Dublin, 1951), p. 235; Kelly, *Early Irish farming*, p. 203; A. Martin Freeman (ed.) *Annala Connacht: The Annals of Connacht, A. D. 1224-1544* (Dublin, 1944), p. 519.

of disease among cattle, in particular, and horses, are recorded in the annals is but one indication of their historical importance to the Irish economy, to provide transport, labour, food, clothing, fertilizers and currency. They were prizes of war, enterprise, courage and daring, not only objects of desire to man but also to the good people of the spirit world.⁷ As a result, as this work will demonstrate, every effort was made to maintain these prominent animals in good health.

This thesis has its origins in a study completed in 2004 by this author, which examined the traditional veterinary practices and beliefs from the baronies of Clanmaurice and Iraghticonnor in north Kerry.⁸ That research found that, even in a small geographical area, traditional practices and associated terminology differed from district to district. The one variable that remained consistent was the desire to keep animals healthy and, when illness struck, to do everything possible to save the animal's life. The findings also suggested that traditional practices survived for longer than might have been anticipated. At the beginning of the twenty-first-century, north Kerry farmers still used many of the simple, tried and trusted preparations that were known for generations. Furthermore, some individuals, most often farmers and cattle jobbers, continued to perform simple surgical procedures largely associated with the vet, such as castration and dehorning, albeit with the aid of modern anaesthetics and painkillers. The research also concluded that the large animal veterinary practitioner of the twenty-first-century, offering both a 'fire brigade service' and consultancy on preventative animal health, is a relatively new phenomenon. Up to at least the 1950s, north Kerry farmers rarely consulted the veterinary surgeon, relying on traditional preventative and remedial treatments and the services of local practitioners, who were known to be interested in and skilful at doctoring animals.

The aim of this current study is to revisit and further explore some of these findings, with a greater concentration on the development of the college-educated veterinarian. The focus of the thesis is on the evolution of veterinary practice in Ireland

⁷ For general reading on the historical importance of cattle and horses in Ireland see John Feehan, *Farming in Ireland: History, heritage and environment* (Dublin, 2003), pp 167-77, 189-91; A. T. Lucas, *Cattle in ancient Ireland* (Kilkenny, 1989), pp 1-14; Kevin Danaher, 'Silk of the kine' in *Biatas*, vol. 18, no. 6 (September, 1964), pp 337-41; Michael F. Cox, Notes of the history of the Irish horse (Dublin, 1897); Dáithí Ó hÓgáin, 'An capall i mbéaloideas na hÉireann' in *Béaloideas*, vol. 45/47 (1977-79), pp 199-243.

⁸ John Flaherty, 'The ethno-veterinary medicine of north Kerry' (M. A. thesis, University of Limerick, 2004).

from 1700 to 1950 and the corresponding decline in traditional veterinary treatments. The beginning of the eighteenth century was seen as an appropriate starting point for the study, as medicine, science and agriculture in the Age of Enlightenment were embedded with the ideals of advancement and progress. The study concludes in the 1950s, when the Irish veterinary profession had finally proved its use to agriculture and society. Particular attention is paid to the development of large animal practice, especially cattle practice in rural districts, while leaving greater scope for further study into the evolution of companion animal practice, the veterinary surgeon's role in public-health initiatives, and the development of state veterinary services. This research poses a number of questions: What was the background of the early veterinary surgeons who saw practice in Ireland? Did this change over time? How did they interact with each other, with their clients and with traditional or unqualified practitioners? What were the factors that either helped or hindered the development of veterinary practice in Ireland during the nineteenth-century? Was there a discernible difference in the ability of the trained man over the untrained? How did the livestock owner perceive the veterinary surgeon? Why was Ireland more than a century behind other European countries in introducing formal veterinary education? Who were the traditional practitioners and what did they do? Why did traditional practice survive as long as it did? What were the main factors that eventually allowed the college vet to supersede traditional practice?

Context

The late eighteenth-century Enlightenment, with a certain emphasis on scientific discovery, a culture of improvement through education and the challenging of existing beliefs is exactly the background that gave rise to the early veterinary colleges in Europe.⁹ For social reformers in nineteenth-century Ireland, the promotion of scientific ideas and the application of scientific principles and technologies, including those used in animal health care, had an important part to play in bolstering national pride, promoting national development, and demonstrating the country's determination to become a progressive state.¹⁰ From an agricultural point of view, the first vets entered

⁹ See John R. Fisher, 'The European Enlightenment, political economy and the origins of the veterinary profession in Britain' in *Argos: Bulletin van het Veterinair Historische Genootschap*, vol. 12 (Spring, 1995), pp 45-51; Michael Brown, *The Irish Enlightenment* (Cambridge, MA, 2016); Sean D. Moore, 'Introduction: Ireland and Enlightenment' in *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, vol. 45, no. 3 (Spring, 2012), pp 345-54.

¹⁰ See Kieran R. Byrne, 'The Royal Dublin Society and the advancement of popular science in Ireland, 1731-1860' in *History of Education*, vol. 15, no. 2 (1986), pp 81-8; Enda Leaney, 'Missionaries of

an Ireland where agricultural prices after the Napoleonic Wars favoured livestock over tillage. However, population pressures and periodic agrarian unrest delayed any real change from tillage to pasture until after the Great Famine, which reversed the population trends of a century and caused an immediate and permanent shift from labour-intensive tillage to cattle grazing and dairying.¹¹ The period from the 1850s saw the emergence of the farmer, who now had a greater relevance to Irish society than hitherto seen, and proportionately rising expectations within farming society. Of particular importance were the Land Acts (1881-1909), by which the principle of land purchase was conceded progressively, until, by the early twentieth century, traditional landlordism was fast giving way to farmer-ownership.¹² This land reform was part of a set of increased state interventions from the 1880s, when practical reforms were delivered in order to eliminate troublesome grievances which periodically fuelled popular anti-Union sentiment in Ireland. The establishment of the Congested District Board (1891), the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society (1894), Local Government reform (from 1898), particularly in the areas of public health, and the formation of the Department of Agricultural and Technical Instruction, which promoted education and the development of scientific farming methods, presented greater opportunities to occupations that were previously given little recognition, including the veterinary surgeon.¹³

Literature review

Writing in 1993, the medical historian Roy Porter noted ‘an appalling dearth of significant writings on the history of British veterinary medicine.’ Porter claimed that

Science: Provincial lectures in nineteenth-century Ireland’ in *Irish Historical Studies*, vol. 34, no. 135 (May, 2005), pp 266-88; Juliana Adelman, *Communities of science in nineteenth-century Ireland* (London, 2009); David Attis and Charles Mollan (eds), *Science and Irish culture. Vol. 1: Why the history of science matters in Ireland* (Dublin, 2004).

¹¹ For an overview of trends in Irish agriculture during the nineteenth century see Raymond D. Crotty, *Irish agricultural production: Its volume and structure* (Cork, 1966); Cormac Ó Gráda, *Ireland before and after the famine* (2nd ed., Manchester, 1993); L. M. Cullen, *An economic history of Ireland since 1660* (2nd ed., London, 1987), pp 100-70; Andy Bielenberg, ‘The Irish economy, 1815-1880: Agricultural Transition, the communications revolution and the limits of industrialisation’ in James Kelly (ed.) *The Cambridge history of Ireland: Volume III, 1730-1880* (Cambridge, 2018), pp 179-203.

¹² See K. T. Hoppen, *Ireland since 1800: Conflict and conformity* (2nd ed., London, 2013), pp 89-115; W. E. Vaughan, *Landlords and tenants in mid-Victorian Ireland* (Oxford 1994).

¹³ For example, see Joseph Lee, *The modernisation of Irish society, 1848-1918* (Dublin, 1990), pp 122-9; D. G. Boyce, *Nineteenth century Ireland: The search for stability* (Dublin, 1990), pp 213-27; Alan Gailey, *Ireland and the death of kindness: The experience of constructive unionism, 1890-1905* (Cork, 1987), pp 295-322; L. P. Curtis, *Coercion and conciliation in Ireland, 1880-1914* (Princeton, 1963), pp 424-34; Paul Bew, *Conflict and conciliation in Ireland, 1890-1910* (Oxford, 1987), pp 35-69; Virginia Crossman, *Local Government in nineteenth century Ireland* (Belfast, 1994), pp 91-7.

previous histories largely relied on the four volume *Early history of veterinary literature*, written by Sir Frederick Smith, an author with a ‘relentless contempt for most pre-nineteenth century writings.’¹⁴ A small number of substantial veterinary histories had been published to this point. Originally published in America, James F. Smithcors’ *Evolution of the veterinary art* attempted to encompass large time periods and vast geography, beginning with Babylonian practices, c. 2250 BC, and ending in the mid-nineteenth century. Influenced by Smith, a large portion of the work was devoted to the development of British veterinary practice from the sixteenth to the eighteenth-century, where those who provided health-care to animals, namely farriers, cow-leeches and blacksmiths, were described as ignorant, illiterate and barbaric.¹⁵ As with that of Smithcors, the veterinary histories of Iain Pattison and Leslie Pugh display an inability to place the practitioners and treatments of the era before formal veterinary training within context. The studies are narrowly defined, beginning with the establishment of the London Veterinary College in 1791, before which date animal medicine was portrayed as rife with ignorance and cruelty. Pattison’s history, which is poorly referenced, relied heavily on the early veterinary journals, particularly the *Veterinarian*, and he tended to take its views and personalities as the whole of the profession. Nevertheless, both studies paid particular attention to the theme of professionalisation, where the veterinary profession attempted to distance itself from unqualified individuals, and, simultaneously, gain equal status with the medical profession, which was to the fore both socially and professionally.¹⁶

The contribution of unqualified individuals to animal health care has received some attention in more recent research. In her study of veterinary practices in early modern England, Louise Curth challenged the views that those who practiced in the ‘pre-veterinary’ period, before the foundation of the London College, were not worthy of attention, merely seen as ignorant precursors of the college-trained, scientific veterinary surgeon. Curth demonstrated how the importance of animals, both economically and socially, necessitated a highly complex system of both preventative

¹⁴ Roy Porter, ‘Man, animals and medicine at the time of the founding of the Royal Veterinary College’ in A. R. Michell (ed.), *History of the healing professions: parallels between veterinary and medical history* (Wallingford, 1993), p. 19. See also Frederick Smith, *The early history of veterinary literature* (4 vols., London, 1933).

¹⁵ J. F. Smithcors, *Evolution of the veterinary art* (Kansas City, MO, 1958).

¹⁶ Iain Pattison, *The British veterinary profession, 1791-1948* (London, 1984); Leslie P. Pugh, *From farriery to veterinary medicine, 1785-1795* (Cambridge, 1962).

and remedial care. She identified a diversity of practitioners that delivered this care, from elite farriers to farming housewives, and explored the media through which veterinary knowledge was conveyed, particularly vernacular veterinary texts and almanacs. The strength of the study is that Curth was not dismissive of the practitioners and practices but saw them on their own terms, in a particular place and time.¹⁷

The work of Stephen Matthews and Abigail Woods also considered the unqualified practitioners, particularly those that provided animal health care during the nineteenth-century in opposition to the qualified veterinary surgeon, many of whom assumed his title. In his paper on veterinary services in mid-nineteenth-century rural Cheshire, Matthews argued that there was little distinction in competency between the qualified vet, perceived as seeking improvement in both performance and status, and the unqualified, seen as incompetent and endeavouring to preserve an unjustified position in society. This lack of distinction was reflected in the reaction of animal owners, who simply employed the individual they thought best for the job.¹⁸ Matthews revisited this theme in a collaboration with Abigail Woods, which focused on the veterinary profession's struggle for recognition during the nineteenth-century, when veterinary reformers were intent in abolishing unqualified practice in order to improve the perception and status of the qualified man. They found that in terms of education, experience, employment and social status there was considerable overlap between the two groups, which did not place the qualified man in a position where animal owners would recognise his clear superiority over the unqualified farrier or cow-doctor.¹⁹ Woods has also considered the past histories and interactions of human and veterinary medicine with the aim of advocating 'One Health', an integrated approach to human and animal health in tackling shared threats such as climate change, food insecurity, antimicrobial resistance and zoonotic diseases.²⁰

¹⁷ Louise H. Curth, *The care of brute beasts: A social and cultural study of veterinary medicine in early modern England* (Leiden, 2010).

¹⁸ Stephen Matthews, 'The provision of veterinary services in mid-nineteenth century rural Cheshire' in *Vet. Hist.*, new ser., vol. 15, no. 2 (2009), pp 147-58.

¹⁹ Abigail Woods and Stephen Matthews, 'Little, if at all, removed from the illiterate farrier or cow leech': The English veterinary surgeon, c. 1860-1885, and a campaign for veterinary reform' in *Medical History*, vol. 54 (2010), pp 29-54.

²⁰ Abigail Woods, 'From one medicine to two: The evolving relationship between human and veterinary medicine in Britain, 1791-1835' in *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, vol. 91, no. 3 (2017), pp 494-523.

Through her biography of Aleen Cust, Britain's first woman vet, Connie Ford examined the exclusion of women from the profession and the general status of professional women in British society at the turn of the twentieth-century. Cust was from an aristocratic background, typical of the majority of women entering the professions at that period, and her career choice was condemned by her upper-class family and the veterinary profession's governing body, the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS). Cust spent time in Ireland and Ford's research delivered an interesting insight into Irish societal attitudes to women in the opening decades of the twentieth-century. Amongst its conclusions was that the church, press and male practitioners were forced to rethink their negative views on a female practitioner, because of an overwhelming acceptance by her clients, who were determined to employ the most competent veterinary practitioner available, regardless of qualification or sex.²¹

Bovine Tuberculosis (BTB) contributed to fears about diseased meat from at least the 1860s and was central to concerns about the transmission of cattle diseases through milk from the 1880s. A key work on the history of BTB is Kier Waddington's *The bovine scourge*, which examined the public unease over, and scientific problems in establishing the relationship between animal and human disease. The study also highlighted the extreme reluctance of Government to challenge business privileges in food supply, even when there was major evidence of dangers to public health. In a separate study, Waddington examined how moves to prevent infection from tuberculosis were accelerated from 1890, with the development of tuberculin, a diagnostic agent, which overcame the problems of detecting BTB in cattle.²²

If Roy Porter was writing a review of Irish veterinary history scholarship in 2020 he would certainly assert that there is still a dearth of material available.²³ To date

²¹ Connie M. Ford, *Aleen Cust, veterinary surgeon: Britain's first woman vet* (Bristol, 1990).

²² Waddington, Kier, *The bovine scourge: Meat, tuberculosis and public health, 1850-1950* (Woodbridge, 2006); Waddington, 'To stamp out "So terrible a malady": Bovine Tuberculosis and tuberculin testing in Britain, 1890-1939' in *Medical History*, vol. 48, no. 1 (2004), pp 29-48.

²³ For example, from 1973 until the close of 2019, the London-based Veterinary History Society has published 85 issues of its journal, *Veterinary History*. However, only three papers relate to Ireland, none of which carry a particular focus on Irish veterinary practice. They are I. M., Niven Mackay, 'The relationship between human and animal health in nineteenth century Dublin' in *Vet. Hist.*, new ser., vol. 3, no. 3 (1984), pp 110-4; Trevor Faragher, 'Foot-and-mouth disease in Ireland in 1912 and the bullock-befriending bard' in *Vet. Hist.*, vol. 17, no. 4 (2015), pp 416-23, and Stuart Anderson, 'A Scottish veterinary remedy for an Irish cattle problem: The rise and fall of Davidson's red water cure, 1872-1938' in *Vet. Hist.*, vol. 19, no. 1 (2017), pp 24-44. Index to *Veterinary History* at www.veterinaryhistorysociety.org.uk.

the most substantial work on Irish veterinary history is *A veterinary school to flourish*, a collection of essays, published in 2001, to mark a century of formal veterinary education in Ireland.²⁴ Whilst the majority of the essays gave a detailed account of the evolution of the Veterinary College of Ireland from 1900 to 2000, the early chapters dealt with events outside this time period. In the opening essay, William Donnelly delivered a chronological overview of how veterinary practice went from an art to a science with the establishment of the first veterinary schools, initially in France and subsequently with the opening of the London School. However, no consideration was given to the history of veterinary practice in Ireland to that point.²⁵ The same can be said of the second chapter, which outlined the early unsuccessful effort of the Dublin Society to introduce organised veterinary education to Ireland.²⁶ Pat Hartigan, the co-author of the latter paper, is currently the most productive historian of Irish veterinary history. His research has predominantly focused on the development of veterinary education and the significant players involved, with particular emphasis on how they raised the profile of the profession in Ireland. In his paper on James McKenny, a prominent Dublin practitioner, veterinary leader and inventor, he argued that in the nineteenth-century success as a veterinary surgeon was largely dependent on the ability to win the approval of the upper echelons of society. McKenny did so through his education, professional competence and publicity. Furthermore, he was one of several nineteenth-century Irish veterinary surgeons who came from a privileged background, able to afford to travel to Britain to be educated, before returning to Ireland to be largely employed by their own peers.²⁷

Any historical accounts of general veterinary practice in Ireland are found in a small number of original accounts written by rural veterinary surgeons, sources that can be considered either primary or secondary, depending on the context. In his memoir of veterinary practice in south Mayo, Pat Daly examined the significant changes that occurred in farming and veterinary operations, especially during the 1950s and 60s. He

²⁴ W. J. C. Donnelly and M. L. Monaghan (eds), *A veterinary school to flourish; the veterinary college of Ireland 1900-2000* (Dublin, 2001).

²⁵ W. J. C. Donnelly, 'From art to science: The genesis of formal veterinary education' in W. J. C. Donnelly and M. L. Monaghan (eds), *A veterinary school to flourish; the veterinary college of Ireland 1900-2000* (Dublin, 2001), pp 1-8.

²⁶ P. J. Hartigan and J. A. Evans, 'The veterinary institute of the Dublin Society: Popular veterinary education in early 19th century Ireland' in W. J. C. Donnelly and M. L. Monaghan (eds), *A veterinary school to flourish; the veterinary college of Ireland 1900-2000* (Dublin, 2001), pp 9-17.

²⁷ Patrick J. Hartigan, 'James McKenny, Principal of the Royal Veterinary College infirmary' in *Irish Veterinary Journal* (Hereafter cited as *Ir. Veterinary Jn.*), vol. 53, no. 5 (May, 2000), pp 251-8.

argued that a culture of the cow-doctor and a general ignorance of scientific methods gave way to what he called a ‘gradual revelation of science’, which resulted in better farming practices, healthier animals, and a corresponding improvement in the health and welfare of their owners. Daly approached the subject of traditional veterinary practices with empathy, showing a respect for the efficacy of many of the traditional practitioners.²⁸ In a short paper, addressing the development of the veterinary profession in east Limerick, Pakie Ryan, was equally approving of many of the traditional practitioners and argued that a scarcity of vets necessitated that every district needed a cow-doctor. He attributed the increase in the number of vets during the 1950s to factors outside of the profession’s control, the increased need for agricultural produce, under the Marshall Plan, the development of effective drugs, and the fact that Attlee’s Labour government in Britain were demanding TB free milk and meat.²⁹ Evidently, the most comprehensive account of the development of a private veterinary practice in Ireland is that compiled by Richard (Dick) Pierce, a Listowel vet. Published as three papers in the *Irish Veterinary Journal* during 1986 and 1987, Pierce traced the family’s practice back to 1893, when his father qualified from the Edinburgh College. The account described the advances made, not alone in veterinary practice, but also in agriculture and infrastructure, during the previous century. Pierce placed particular emphasis on how public health work contributed to the development of the profession. He argued that the Listowel practice existed largely because his father got a part-time local appointment in 1894, a position he personally held ninety-two years later. He also described the difficulties occurred in persuading farmers, butchers and the like to adhere to new regulations regarding hygiene and food safety.³⁰

In the recent past, an interest in traditional veterinary practices, now commonly known as ethno-veterinary medicine, has increased enormously at an international level. A noteworthy example is Raikwar and Maurya’s 2015 paper, which examined the state of traditional veterinary practice at that time. It found that, because of the high costs and inaccessibility of modern veterinary systems, at least eighty per-cent of people

²⁸ P. J. Daly, *A memoir of farming and veterinary practice in bygone days in south Mayo* (Dublin, 2009).

²⁹ Pakie Ryan, ‘Veterinary around Murroe’ in *Murroe/Boher Parish Newsletter* (1999), pp 22-5.

³⁰ Richard R. Pierce, ‘Recollections of three generations in a provincial veterinary practice: 1. In my father’s time’ in *Ir. Veterinary Jn.*, vol. 40 (1986), pp 37-40; Pierce, ‘Recollections of three generations in a provincial veterinary practice: 2. In my own time’ in *Ir. Veterinary Jn.*, vol. 40 (1986), pp 169-74; Pierce, ‘Recollections of three generations in a provincial veterinary practice: 3. In my son’s time’ in *Ir. Veterinary Jn.*, vol. 41 (1987), pp 267-9.

in developing countries continue to rely on traditional veterinary practices and practitioners. They argued that indigenous knowledge and practice, especially that on locally sourced herbs and plants, generally proved effective in treating animal disease and was easily administered. The study concluded that this knowledge needed to be preserved for the benefit of future generations, as it was getting lost due to the advancement of modern medicines and other socio-economic and cultural changes.³¹

Traditional veterinary practices have been examined by a number of studies carried out in Ireland. Patrick Logan's work on Irish folk medicine, first published in 1972, gave some consideration to traditional veterinary treatments. In the foreword, Seán Ó Súilleabháin, Department of Folklore, UCD, described the book as a 'pioneer work in this hitherto more-or-less neglected field.' Logan was a medical doctor who sourced his material from medical colleagues, patients, a farrier and blacksmith, and a bonesetter. He appeared to be a coherent advocate of the expertise of the prominent traditional practitioners of both human and animal medicine. Furthermore, the study suggested that the majority of the traditional treatments were now obsolete, and that those used in Ireland were common to Britain and throughout Europe.³² A contemporary study to that of Logan was undertaken in south-west Donegal during 1970-71 by Eugenia Shanklin, an American anthropologist. It was based on fourteen months anthropological field research undertaken with a sample of thirty farmers, and initially produced a general ethnographic study of the district.³³ Shanklin subsequently revisited the material and examined the Donegal farmers' husbandry and healthcare practices for both livestock and sheep, and the emic logic behind them. The study identified very different attitudes towards the two species, where the philosophy was to maximize production from cattle, seen to provide longer-term economic security, and minimize losses from sheep. Although parasitism, deficiency diseases and various infectious diseases were recognised in both species, delivery of veterinary care differed greatly. While cattle were always treated by the veterinary surgeon, even when their market value was low, sheep were given home remedies or treated by a 'skilled local',

³¹ Arpana Raikwar and Prabhakar Maurya, 'Ethnoveterinary medicine: In present perspective' in *International Journal of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine*, vol. 3, no. 1 (February, 2015), pp 44-9.

³² Patrick Logan, *Making the cure: A look at Irish folk medicine* (Dublin, 1972). Veterinary medicine is discussed pp 151-76. The book was subsequently republished as *Irish country cures* (Dublin, 1981), and retitled *Irish folk medicine* in 1999.

³³ Eugenia Snanklin, *Donegal's changing traditions: An ethnographic study* (New York, 1985).

regardless of their worth. On the other hand, it was the cattle that were seen as susceptible to ‘the evil eye’ and accordingly afforded protection by magical and religious trappings, especially holy water, at least by the Catholic farmers.³⁴

The most comprehensive study of traditional veterinary practices hitherto undertaken in Ireland was conducted by Dr Michael Doherty, UCD Veterinary School, the results of which were published in *Bealoideas* in 2001. It examined the experiences of the veterinary profession in Ireland regarding folk custom and belief as it applied to diseases of cattle. A questionnaire was distributed to more than two thousand registered vets throughout the country and at least one reply was received from each county. The results provided invaluable information on the local terminology for cattle diseases and on traditional cures for specific disorders. Doherty argued that ‘the terminology for an animal disease can tell us something about its place in folk memory and this terminology is inextricably linked with history of the disease itself.’ Furthermore, the study highlighted that many of the traditional veterinary beliefs and practices, even those of a magico-religious nature, were still in use at the beginning of the twenty-first-century.³⁵

Sources

In the absence of histories of veterinary practice, especially for the nineteenth-century, the use of newspapers, from the *Dublin Intelligence* in the early eighteenth-century to the *Kerry News* of the early 1940s, was fundamental in forming a comprehensive account of how veterinary practice developed in Ireland. National newspapers were combed for reports on veterinary society meetings, opinions on the state of the profession in Ireland, and material pertaining to the introduction of formal veterinary education to Ireland. Reports of the main horse fairs, where the prominent vets appeared to congregate, also provided valuable insights into the role of the veterinary surgeon in the broader social context. An inspection of the provincial newspapers illustrated the extent and scope of veterinary practice and highlighted its transitory nature. An analysis of practice advertisements and notices regarding change of ownership often revealed how a veterinary practice was established in a town and whether it was sustained or

³⁴ Eugenia Shanklin, ‘Care of cattle versus sheep in Ireland: South-west Donegal in the early 1970s’ in C. M. McCorkle, E. Mathais and T. W. Schillhorn van Veen (eds), *Ethnoveterinary research and development* (London, 1996), pp 179-92.

³⁵ Michael L. Doherty, ‘The folklore of cattle diseases: A veterinary perspective’ in *Béaloideas*, vol. 69 (2001), pp 41-75.

failed. Obituaries, reports of race meetings, agricultural shows and church gatherings were all examined to determine the social circle of the local veterinary surgeon. An exploration of editorials or correspondence from readers proved beneficial in gauging public opinion on veterinary practice, especially in relation to the arguments surrounding the skills of trained veterinary surgeons versus those of traditional practitioners. British newspapers, through a subscription to the British Newspaper Archive, were examined to ascertain the backgrounds of those who came from Britain to Ireland to practice.³⁶

The nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century veterinary press was another rich source of information. An examination of the *Veterinarian*, published monthly from 1828 to 1902, provided an invaluable level of detail relating to the latest scientific developments, local and national veterinary society meetings, legal and political issues affecting the profession, recent examination results and obituaries of prominent veterinarians. Exploration of this source involved an analysis of letters and papers from Irish based college-trained vets, unqualified individuals, and stockowners, which gave an informed account of contemporary veterinary practice in Ireland and highlighted how isolated Irish veterinarians were from London, the centre of veterinary politics. Also involved in the research was the tracing, listing and breakdown of items in two extant veterinary journals. The *Veterinary Record*, was published weekly from 1888, which gave it an immediacy hitherto unseen in publishing news of the latest developments in veterinary science. It regularly carried verbatim reports of Irish veterinary association meetings. The *Irish Veterinary Journal* was established in 1946, at a crucial point in the consolidation of Irish veterinary practice. Central to the examination of these sources was the transcription and analysis of the concise and informative accounts of several rural practitioners' accounts of their experiences in general practice, often highlighting the continued threat from traditional practices. The combing of editorials, research reports and peer reviewed articles, contributed to the study by revealing how new drugs and methods of treatment were beginning to revolutionise veterinary practice.

Much of the primary material relating to the general development of the veterinary profession is to be found in London libraries, which proved the greatest

³⁶ <https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk>

difficulty with this study. The most comprehensive collection of unique material is housed at the RCVS Headquarters, Horseferry Road. Amongst the material examined were letters written in 1840 by Irish veterinary surgeons in support of a charter to legitimise the profession. The content was perused in the hope that it might reveal something of the scope of contemporary Irish veterinary practice. These letters are amongst a small number of items that the library has subsequently digitised since 2015.³⁷ An alphabetical card index of RCVS members, established c.1844, was checked to see if certain individuals who practiced in Ireland using the title ‘veterinary surgeon’ were actually college-trained practitioners. The index, which gave a member’s name, place and date of graduation, and date of death or termination of membership, formed the basis of the annual *Registers of members*, first published in 1852.³⁸ Analysis of a set of documents pertaining to unqualified individuals who wished to be recognised by the RCVS under the Veterinary Surgeons Act of 1881 was time consuming but proved particularly informative. The documents were analysed to establish the scope of unqualified practice in Ireland and to identify those who continued to employ the unqualified over the college trained veterinary surgeon.³⁹ The records of the Worshipful Company of Farriers are held at the Guildhall Library, Aldermanbury, London. As members of the Company were the elite in providing animal health care during the seventeenth and eighteenth-centuries, the collections were examined to establish the backgrounds, terms of apprenticeship, and subsequent employment of the young Irishmen that were apprenticed to the company’s master farriers. Particular emphasis was placed on determining if any had returned to Ireland to offer the country’s horse-owners the most advanced equine health care available.⁴⁰ The catalogue of the British Library was carefully analysed in order to ascertain if there was any unique content pertaining to Irish veterinary practice. Amongst the items inspected over subsequent visits was the only discernible extant copy of *Preservation of the cow and sheep*, a small

³⁷ See <http://www.rcvsvethistory.org/2-letters-written-in-support-of-memorial-to-governors-of-the-royal-veterinary-college-1840/>.

³⁸ See Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, *The register of members, from January 1874, to December 1851, inclusive* (London, 1852). Although the RCVS was only established in 1844, this register listed the names of all those who had hitherto graduated from both the London and Edinburgh veterinary schools.

³⁹ See <http://www.rcvskblog.org/the-1881-list-of-existing-practitioners/> (Retrieved, 25 June 2019)

⁴⁰ A brief guide to the records is available in Guildhall Library, *Livery Company membership guide* (London, 2013), pp 70-1.

notebook-type veterinary manual written in the mid-nineteenth-century by an Irish cow-doctor.⁴¹

The material in the National Folklore Collection, although based on hindsight, was examined for information relating to traditional veterinary treatments and practitioners. The Main Manuscript Collection was assembled from material collected by professional collectors, as well as from material collected from questionnaires, mainly during the years of the Irish Folklore Commission, from 1935-1971. Amongst the fourteen main topics on which information was originally gathered were 'folk medicine' and the 'principles and rules of popular belief and practice'.⁴² A number of manuscripts cited in previous studies, such as that of Michael Doherty, mentioned above, were examined for new material. According to Niall Ó Ciosáin, 'rural, landowning farmers' made up the majority of the Commission's informants. Therefore, the Collection is rich on the terminology, traditions, treatments, and practitioners of veterinary folk medicine.⁴³ The Schools' Collection holds folklore collected by primary-school children in their neighbourhoods during 1937-38. It presents a different profile or perspective to that of the Main Collection, the information gathered from parents, grandparents and neighbours. Although content was often dependent on the interest, or lack thereof, of the teacher, the collection was particularly valuable as it tended to be local and detailed, as envisaged by those who initially organised the scheme.⁴⁴ This study identified content on traditional veterinary practices, especially the ministrations of the traditional practitioner, and the extent of his geographical practice, often discernible from accounts given at several different schools in a district. The essays were also examined for occasional comments by the teacher, which offered that individual's view on the effectiveness, or absurdities, of traditional practices.⁴⁵

⁴¹ Daniel Maher, *Preservation of the cow and sheep: Being the experience and practice of several generations in the causes, symptoms, and cures of all diseases incident to these animals* (Dublin, 1851). British Library Reference 7295.b.4

⁴² Seamus Ó Catháin, 'The Irish folklore archive' in *History Workshop*, vol. 31, no. 1 (Spring, 1991), p. 146. The Main Manuscript Collection is referenced in this study as NFC, followed by the manuscript volume number, colon, and page numbers. The content was examined at the audio-visual library of Mary Immaculate College, Limerick, which also has a copy of the subject index prepared by the Department of Irish Folklore.

⁴³ Niall Ó Ciosáin, 'Approaching a folklore archive: The Irish Folklore Commission and the memory of the Great Famine' in *Folklore*, vol. 115, no. 2 (August, 2004), p. 222.

⁴⁴ Department of Irish Folklore, *Irish folklore and tradition* (Dublin, 1937), p. 13.

⁴⁵ The Schools' Collection is referred to in the text as SFC, followed by the manuscript volume number, colon, and page numbers.

The primary research undertaken for this study was a series of fifty-three tape-recorded interviews producing over forty hours of recordings. The interviews were conducted predominantly in counties Clare, Limerick and Kerry, between 2002 and 2017, in order to capture the memories and opinions of sixty main interviewees, the majority of whom cared for farm animals during the period 1930-1970.⁴⁶ The interviewees ranged in age from forty-one to ninety-nine, with a median age of seventy-seven. Thirty farmers, nineteen veterinary surgeons, seventeen of whom were retired, three housewives/farmers, two cow-doctors/farmers, a doctor, a blacksmith, a priest, a teacher and a publican, were recorded. Each interviewee signed a release form, prepared by Mary Immaculate College, allowing the interviews to be used for this study. The interviews were subsequently transcribed, and a simple index prepared, which was useful in determining prominent themes. A small number of informants, who did not wish to be interviewed, forwarded written material. The findings of a questionnaire, initially distributed during the Master's study, was also re-visited.⁴⁷ The recordings, transcripts and abstracts of the interviews and the accompanying permission forms, along with the anonymised questionnaires, are archived in the Mary Immaculate College Oral History Collection, and are available for consultation in compliance with the interviewees' wishes as specified in the permission forms.

Chapter organisation

The opening chapter discusses the institutionalisation of veterinary medicine during the eighteenth-century, with the establishment of the first veterinary schools. It identifies those who provided animal health care in Ireland during this period, the farriers of early eighteenth-century, and the veterinary surgeons who arrived in the country a century later. It considers the scope of their practice, their interactions and relationships with each other, how they were viewed by contemporary society, and the social standing of their clients. Chapter two addresses how the college trained veterinary surgeon of the

⁴⁶ Four interviews were conducted for the Master's study during November and December 2002. The others were undertaken between 2010 and 2017.

⁴⁷ The questionnaire was largely based on that used by Dr Michael Doherty in his 2001 survey, mentioned above, and used with his permission. During December 2003, this author distributed the questionnaire at a Veterinary Society meeting in Tralee. Only three were returned, about ten per-cent of the total. This result was expected as the majority might have seen the questions before. However, Dr Doherty also received a poor response. His survey was distributed to over 2000 registered practitioners in both the Republic and Northern Ireland. However, only 73 replied. This general rejection of the questionnaire suggested that younger practicing veterinary surgeons had little interest in traditional methods. In total, nine individuals completed the questionnaire for this author, including two who were also recorded.

nineteenth-century struggled to secure cattle practice, because of a perception that he was merely a horse-doctor. It discusses how this perception, and a dearth of veterinary surgeons in the country, meant that livestock owners either employed a lay practitioner or doctored the animals themselves. It considers the use of veterinary content, gleaned from a wide range of literature, in self-doctoring animals. It analyses a small number of veterinary treatises published in Ireland and examines if they made any impact in the veterinary literature marketplace. Chapter three discusses the professionalisation of the veterinary surgeon in Britain during the nineteenth-century, and examines how this impacted on the Irish practitioner. It questions why, in the middle of the century, the vet was seen as a mere tradesman and examines why early attempts at reform largely failed. It then tracks how the profession attempted to improve members' incomes, expertise and status, through legislation, improved education and formal recognition by Government and society. The chapter concludes with a discussion on the formation of Ireland's first veterinary societies, and an appraisal of the veterinary surgeon's regard for the welfare of fellow members of the profession. Chapter four examines veterinary education in Ireland during the nineteenth-century. It primarily discusses the various attempts at introducing formal veterinary education to the country, identifies the major players involved, considers the reasons for their interest, and questions why Ireland was more than a century behind other countries in establishing a veterinary college. It also explores how popular veterinary lectures, most often organised in association with learned or agricultural societies, attempted to wean horse owners and livestock keepers from a dependence on the veterinary services of the cow-doctor or groom. The section concludes with a consideration of the veterinary content in agricultural instruction offered by the Commissioners of National Education, and in the Agricultural Diploma of the Queen's Colleges. Chapter five looks at the development of Irish veterinary practice during the first half of the twentieth century. It initially examines how rural veterinary practices generally struggled during the early decades, and considers the factors on which the survival of the veterinary surgeon in a small town depended. It considers how the Great War, the first female graduates, and the establishment of the Irish Free State impacted on the Irish veterinary profession. The study culminates in the 1950s, by examining the factors that finally allowed the college-trained veterinary surgeon to supersede the traditional practitioner, and the profession to prove its worth to the Irish economy. The closing chapter focuses on traditional veterinary practices in Ireland in the early decades of the twentieth-century. It identifies those that provided

veterinary treatment to farm animals, in a parallel world to the formally trained vets, and questions if their treatments were rational and effective. It examines the backgrounds of these individuals and explores how they became involved in animal-doctoring. The chapter also considers the social background of the traditional practitioners and examines their position in the community, and their relationships with others, especially their clients and the college trained vets.

Chapter 1: Early Farriers and Vets

Farriery: An early form of veterinary practice

The institutionalisation of veterinary medicine in the English-speaking world, with the foundation of the London Veterinary College (LVC) in 1791, is generally credited as marking the beginning of modern animal medicine in Britain.¹ However, Louise Curth has argued that the ‘pre-veterinary’ period, where social and economic factors necessitated the provision of the best available animal health care, is equally worthy of study. During this period animal doctoring was performed by an array of practitioners, including farriers, horse-doctors, cow doctors, grooms and shepherds.² For centuries elite London Farriers headed the hierarchy of animal practitioners as the profession treated that city’s most important domestic animal, the horse.³ Initially the farriery profession was primarily involved with the manufacture and application of horseshoes. Therefore, to distinguish itself from an array of untrained metal workers, it was regulated under the name Marshalls of the City of London, in 1356.⁴ Thereafter this group evolved into an organisation devoted to the general health and welfare of the horse and was granted Royal Charter as the Worshipful Company of Farriers in 1674. This was an elite institution of forty-nine members, holding a legal monopoly only in London and within a seven-mile radius of that city.⁵ Membership required a minimum of a seven-year apprenticeship with an experienced farrier. According to Curth, the apprenticeship model offered both social and economic advantages to the student. Each master farrier was allowed only three students, meaning that the numbers of new farriers entering the market could be controlled and high levels of instruction could be given resulting in individual students achieving a high level of competence.⁶ In return,

¹ See Pattison, *British veterinary profession*, pp 1-3; Leslie P. Pugh, ‘From farriery to veterinary medicine’ in *Vet. Hist.*, vol. 4 (1974/75), pp 11-5; Ernest Cotchin, *The Royal Veterinary College London: A bicentenary history* (Buckingham, 1990), p. 13.

² Louise H. Curth, ‘The care of the brute beast: animals and the seventeenth-century medical market-place’ in *Social History of Medicine*, vol. 15, no. 3 (2002), pp 375-92.

³ For an early history of farriers see Barbara E. Megson, *The farriers of London, 1200-1674, the lost years* (Chipperfield, 2009); F. R. Bell, ‘The days of the farriers’ in *Vet. Hist.*, no. 9 (1977), p. 3.

⁴ Robert C. Palmer, *English law in the age of the Black Death, 1348-1381* (Chapel Hill, 1993), p. 190. See text of the Ordinances of the Farriers in Henry Thomas Riley, *Memorials of London and London life in the XIIITH, XIVTH and XVTH centuries* (London, 1868), pp 291-5.

⁵ Leslie B. Prince, *The farrier and his craft: The history of the Worshipful Company of Farriers* (London, 1980), pp 1-3. An abstract of the Charter is available in Leonard C. F. Robson, *The farriers of London: Being an account of the Worshipful Company of Farriers as described in the records of the Company* (London, 1949), pp 11-4.

⁶ Curth, *The care of brute beasts*, pp 58-9.

apprentices were expected to ‘avoid idleness and be ever employed, either for God’s Service or in your Master’s Business.’⁷ On completing the apprenticeship the students became Freemen ‘free Farryers in deede and in the name of the Citty of London, and free of the same company alsoe.’⁸

An examination of the records of the Worshipful Company of Farriers, deposited at the Guildhall Library, London, revealed that of the c.4000 apprentices recorded between 1619 and 1811 only nine were Irish. The majority of apprentices came from London and surrounding districts.⁹ Mike MacKay’s study on the Farrier Company noted that farrier families consistently apprenticed their sons to farriers.¹⁰ Therefore, one might expect that young Irish apprentices travelled the hazardous journey to London with the intent of receiving the best possible training before returning home to the family business. However, the Irish apprentices came from various socio-economic backgrounds. None were the sons of farriers. For example, Thomas Hiskett, Dublin, apprenticed for eight years in 1649, was the son of a Mason.¹¹ The prospect of eventually earning a good livelihood undoubtedly motivated Irish families to send their sons to the London Company. Some of the Company’s founders claimed to be ‘worth 1,000 [pounds], some 500 [pounds] and the meanest is reputed to be worth 100 [pounds] and upward.’¹² Engagements in the Royal Court were equally lucrative. In 1664 groom farriers, the lowest position, were paid £18 5s, rising to £28 in 1714.¹³

⁷ ‘Instructions for the Apprentices of the Company of Farriers, London’ are reproduced in Robson, *The farriers*, p. 60.

⁸ Megson, *The farriers of London*, pp 91-2. Megson reproduces the Charter of 1674 in full on pp 78-94, the ‘Oath of a freeman’ (c.1630) and the ‘Oath of an apprentice’ (c.1547) on p. 77.

⁹ The records of the Worshipful Company of Farriers are deposited at the Guildhall Library, Aldermanbury, London. The Company’s ‘Farriers books for binding apprentices’ are found in two manuscripts, Guildhall Library, Ms. 5526/1 (1619-1744) and Ms. 5526/2 (1744-1811). Cliff Webb has indexed the names of 3,708 apprentices from the manuscripts to 1800 only. See Cliff Webb (ed.), *London Livery Company apprentice registers: Volume 28 Farriers’ Company 1619-1800* (London, 1999).

¹⁰ Mike MacKay, ‘Female artisans and the Worshipful Company of Farriers (1620-1800)’ in *Vet. Hist.*, new ser., vol. 16, no. 4 (2011), pp 365-8.

¹¹ Guildhall Library, Ms. 5526/1. The names and occupations of the apprentices’ fathers are recorded in the Apprentice Binding Books. In three cases no information is given as to the fathers’ occupations, two of whom are deceased. The occupations recorded are farmer (2), carpenter, mason, tailor and tanner.

¹² Guildhall Library, Ms. 5534. Copy of Charter, etc.

¹³ R. O. Bucholz, *Office-holders in modern Britain: Volume 11 (Revised), Court Officers, 1660-1837* (London, 2006), p. 638.

There is no evidence to suggest that any of the Irish apprentices returned home, fully trained, to promote the pre-eminent equine veterinary treatments of that time. Of the nine Irish apprentices to the Farrier Company only two became freemen. The others may have completed their apprenticeship but never took up the freedom to which they were entitled or left their masters before their term expired to return to Ireland or work in Britain¹⁴ For example, the 1737 entry in the Apprentice Book for James McLoughlen, a native of New Town, Ireland, is marked ‘gone to Ireland’, suggesting that he returned home shortly after commencing his apprenticeship.¹⁵ Only one, James Bean, a farmer’s son from Rathbride, Kildare went on to practice farriery. Bean was apprenticed to Thomas Feagan, a farrier of Thames Street, on 3 October 1765.¹⁶ He became a freeman on 9 November 1772, initially in Feagan’s employment.¹⁷ Bean was later in employment as a journeyman farrier in Bristol.¹⁸ William Fitzpatrick was free from the Farriers’ Company on 30 July 1801 but took up employment as a ‘salesman’, living at 84 Minories, close to the Tower of London.¹⁹ After 1650 it was not uncommon for a freeman to practice another trade, either related or unrelated.²⁰ Perhaps Fitzpatrick sold farriery related items such as shoeing iron, instruments or equine medicines.

The Worshipful Company of Farriers was a small elite group operating in London and its environs. During the mid-eighteenth century it attempted to prosecute those ‘unskilled Quacks who assume to themselves the Name of Farrier’, that attempted to infiltrate its domain in the city. In truth, these ‘common’ farriers, horse-doctors and grooms had, for centuries, administered medical care to horses throughout Britain and Ireland. Within thirty years the Farrier Company was itself overtaken by the ‘scientific farriery’ of the LVC, eventually re-adopting its craft role.²¹ Outside of London, ‘professional’ farriers, who had undergone apprenticeships similar to those of their elite London counterparts, headed the hierarchy of horse healers. As the farriery trade was largely unregulated, others who treated horses, such as shoeing-smiths, blacksmiths, horse doctors and horseleeches frequently styled themselves farriers. It was suggested that as their practice was similar to that of their more celebrated counterparts, such

¹⁴ See Webb, *London Livery Company*, p. v.

¹⁵ Guildhall Library, Ms. 5526/1.

¹⁶ Guildhall Library, Ms. 5526/2.

¹⁷ Guildhall Library, Ms. 5528 (Farriers London Alphabet Book).

¹⁸ Guildhall Library, Ms. 5525 (Farrier Company Freedom Book).

¹⁹ Guildhall Library, Ms. 5525.

²⁰ Webb, *London Livery Company*, p. v.

²¹ Bell, ‘Days of the farriers’, p. 6.

individuals were more than entitled to call themselves common farriers.²² However, the reputation of the farrier was often tarnished by the ignorance of others. For example, George Caley, the naturalist, observed that ‘every blacksmith pretended to be a farrier’ but few had any knowledge of the physiology of the horse and might as well ‘style themselves physicians and surgeons.’²³ In truth, the skills of provincial farriers were not as rudimentary as portrayed by their more distinguished London counterparts, as many underwent legally required apprenticeships, usually seven years.²⁴

In the eighteenth-century farriery was seen as a ‘laborious’ occupation, requiring strength, so boys were not usually bound to a master farrier until aged fifteen, the teacher receiving a premium of between £2 and £6. The young trained farrier earned ‘moderate profits’ of 12s to 15s per week. The estimated cost of establishing in business varied from £50 to £400. Joseph Collyer believed that remuneration ultimately corresponded to the level of knowledge and skill possessed by an individual. Collyer suggested that those who could read and write, had knowledge of the anatomy of the horse and were acquainted with the ‘excellent’ contemporary publications on the diseases of horses, could ultimately become a successful farrier capable of understanding and curing the diseases of horses. However, not all practitioners reached such standards as farriers were ‘generally very illiterate’, carrying out work that was ‘coarse and clumsily performed.’²⁵ Captain William Burdon noted that farriery was an essential trade to society and some were ‘good sensible men.’ However, parents, who could afford education, seldom bound their sons to the trade. Therefore, master farriers were obliged to take whatever apprentices were available, regardless of their education.

²² S. A. Hall, ‘The state of the art of farriery in 1791’ in *Vet. Hist.*, new ser., vol. 7, no. 1 (1993), pp 10-1; Norman Comben, ‘From farriers to veterinary surgeons: The early history of veterinary publishing in the English language’ in *Vet. Hist.*, new ser., vol. 11, no. 1 (2000), p. 49.

²³ William Withering, ‘Further notice of the late Mr. George Caley’ in *Magazine of Natural History*, vol. 3, no. 5 (May, 1830), p. 228. See also Robert Kerr (ed.), *General view of the agriculture of the county of Berwick* (London, 1813), p. 407; Richard Mason, *The gentleman’s new pocket farrier* (5th ed., Richmond, 1830), p. 68.

²⁴ For an overview of the characteristics of apprenticeship see Joan Lane, *Apprenticeship in England, 1600-1914* (London, 1996), pp 1-28.

²⁵ Joseph Collyer, *The parent’s and guardian’s directory, and the youth’s guide in the choice of a profession or trade* (London, 1761), pp 136-7; George Kearsley, *Kearsley’s table of trades, for the assistance of parents and guardians, and for the benefit of those young men, who wish to prosper in the world* (London, 1786), p. 7; R. Campbell, *The London tradesman. Being a compendious view of all the trades, professions, arts, both liberal and mechanic, now practiced in the cities of London and Westminster* (London, 1747), p. 237.

Therefore, many were ‘totally incapable of Improvement’ and subsequently left their master, ‘fully contented’ with a few antiquated recipes.²⁶

Modern veterinary historians generally repeated the depiction of the farrier as ignorant, illiterate and incompetent.²⁷ However, Joan Lane’s research concluded that this perception of farriers was to a large degree inaccurate and that the majority were in fact competent, skilful, literate practitioners who were highly valued by their clients. She argued that farriers were very close in status to their medical counterparts, both servicing similar classes of wealthier clients. However, the farrier had no opportunities to develop his status and income through institutional employment. Lane contended that this general view of incompetency originated with ‘the views of those who condemned farriery 200 years ago.’²⁸ According to Michael MacKay, the printed claims about farriers were not necessarily a true representation of the competency of all farriers. In the competitive market of equine medical care other farriery writers, horsemen and medicine vendors used the farrier as an ‘easy target’ to focus attention on their own interests. He further argued that the politics of veterinary authority was often hierarchical. Physicians and formally trained human surgeons, who wrote on farriery, often criticised the general ignorance of the farrier, whilst the farriers accused medical men of being ignorant regarding horse doctoring.²⁹

Dr Henry Bracken claimed that few farriers were qualified to even drive a nail and urged his readers to desist from employing ‘those common brutes, the common farriers...because none of them understand common sense.’³⁰ Those who promoted the LVC, in an effort to garner respect for their own ‘Science’, argued that the farriers came

²⁶ William Burdon, *The gentleman’s pocket farrier* (Dublin, 1795), preface. (NLI, Call Number: Dix Dublin 1795). The work was first published in London in 1732. Other Dublin editions published in 1733 and 1753. See also William Osbaldiston, *The universal sportsman* (Dublin, 1799), p. 165 (NLI, Call Number: Dix Dublin 1799); John Blunt, *Practical farriery; or, The complete directory, in whatever relates to the food, management, and the cure of disease, incident to horses* (Dublin, 1773), p. iv.

²⁷ For example, see D. W. Wright, ‘London farriers and other veterinary workers in the 18th century’ in *Vet. Hist.*, new ser., vol. 5, no. 1 (1987), pp 17-26; Lise Wilkinson, *Animals and disease: An introduction to the history of comparative medicine* (Cambridge, 1992), p. 10.

²⁸ Joan Lane, ‘Farriers in Georgian England’, in A. R. Michell (ed.), *History of the healing professions: Parallels between veterinary and medical history* (Wallingford, 1993), pp 101-10.

²⁹ Michael Hubbard MacKay, *The rise of a medical specialist: The medicalization of elite equine medical care, 1680-1800* (Ph.D. diss., University of York, 2009), pp 61-2. Online at <http://etheses.whiterose.ac.uk/14229/1/625453.pdf>

³⁰ Henry Bracken, *The traveller’s pocket-farrier; or, a treatise upon the distempers and common incidents happening to horses on a journey* (Dublin, 1743), p. 108.

from ‘an age of general ignorance and barbarism.’³¹ John Lane, a farrier, argued that his profession was ‘perfectly innocent’ of ignorance and brutality and claimed medical men and veterinary surgeons ‘professed much...performed little.’³² John Lawrence, a writer and early proponent of ethical animal treatment, attributed the shortcomings of ‘old grooms and farriers’ to the influence of farriery writers of previous centuries, especially Gervase Markham.³³ Markham, a soldier, scholar, agriculturalist and horse-breeder was best known as a voluminous writer on farriery, horsemanship and animal husbandry, responsible for a total of thirty-six first editions. *Markhams Maister-Peece*, which ran to twenty editions between 1610 and 1723, was written to assist the ‘Smith, Farrier or Horse-leech’ yet was compiled from authors as far removed as the Athenian historian and soldier, Xenophon, whose treatise *On Horsemanship* was written almost two millennia earlier.³⁴ Because of its popularity numerous copies of *Maister-Peece* have survived, including an 1668 tenth edition in Marsh’s Library, Dublin.³⁵ Markham held a captaincy in Ireland under the command of the Earl of Essex c1599.³⁶

Farriers in eighteenth-century Ireland

The previous section has highlighted that farriery was essentially an early form of veterinary practice, with some professional standards. What follows highlights that there was a movement of practitioners seeking training and work throughout Britain and Europe, and sometimes settling in Ireland. The farrier was arguably most prominent in Ireland during the eighteenth-century, a period of opportunity with changing socioeconomic factors providing a wider range of employment for the profession. In general the term farrier appears to have been more dominant in Britain than in Ireland. Jim Byrne, MRCVS, argued that the term farrier was used in areas with a high concentration of equine related activities, such as Kildare, with blacksmith used predominately throughout the rest of the country. However, those who dealt almost

³¹ Veterinary College, *An account of the Veterinary College, from its institution in 1791* (London, 1793).

³² John Lane, *The principles of English farriery vindicated* (London, 1800), p. 6.

³³ John Lawrence, *A philosophical and practical treatise on horses* (London, 1796), pp 9-11.

³⁴ G. E. Fussell, *The old English farming books from Fitzherbert to Tull, 1523 to 1730* (London, 1947), p. 2; Frederick Poynter, *A bibliography of Gervase Markham, 1568?-1637* (Oxford, 1962); Charles F. Mullett, ‘Gervase Markham: Scientific amateur’ in *Isis*, vol. 35, no. 2 (Spring 1944), p. 108. For an insight into early Greek and Roman equine texts see Anne-Marie Doyen-Higuet, ‘The Hippiatrica and Byzantine veterinary medicine’ in *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, vol. 38 (1984), pp 111- 120.

³⁵ This copy has the name ‘John Keating’ written on the title page.

³⁶ Lesel Dawson, ‘The Earl of Essex and the trials of history: Gervase Markham’s ‘The dumbe knight’’ in *The Review of English Studies*, vol. 53, no. 211 (August, 2002), p. 348.

exclusively with shoeing and showed a high degree of skill in treating lameness and its causes often either assumed or were given the term farrier.³⁷ A small number of surviving blacksmith's account books, dating from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, indicate that the work of the blacksmith was generally confined to the manufacture and application of horseshoes and the repair of farm implements.³⁸ However, one late eighteenth-century ledger shows that the blacksmith, attending to the horses at Townley Hall, county Louth, was involved in bleeding, blistering and rowelling the animals.³⁹ In his study of forges in the Foxrock district of Dublin, Pádraig Laffan noted that the farrier's role, whether as an adjunct to blacksmithing or not, was to care for horses in more ways than just replacing their shoes. He suggested, from his experience, that 'the diminutive description of horseshoer might be applied to someone who did no horse doctoring or smithing.'⁴⁰

In any case, horses became more valuable because of the emergence of new scientific agriculturalists, an expanding and lucrative horse racing sector and the development of the turnpike road system.⁴¹ This new road system created more horse traffic, but its hard surface led to new problems, with horses' feet requiring extra attention.⁴² Consequently, a 'more humane' attitude by horse-owners towards the treatment of their animals led to an increased demand for skilful and reliable farriers. Those who could afford to do so regularly employed 'specialists' to look after their sick animals.⁴³ Farriers were needed to meet the needs of prominent horse-owners, and arrived from Britain and elsewhere having undertaken an apprenticeship or gained

³⁷ Interview with Jim Byrne, MRCVS, Skibbereen, County Cork, 3 March 2012. CD 38, Author's Collection.

³⁸ NLI, Ms. 3,514. Accounts of Robert Jones, a blacksmith in account with Mrs Mary Obins, 1757 – 1762; NLI, Ms. 22,449, Filgate Papers. Account of C. [?Harker], blacksmith, for repair work done on the farm of William Filgate, of Lissrenny, county Louth, c. 1845-1849.

³⁹ NLI, Ms. 11,923. Townley Hall Papers. Blacksmiths' accounts, 1796-8.

⁴⁰ Pádraig Laffan, *Forges, farriers and smiths within easy riding distance of Foxrock* (Dublin, 1991).

⁴¹ See James Kelly, 'The pastime of the elite: Clubs and societies and the promotion of horse racing' in James Kelly and Martyn J. Powell (eds), *Clubs and societies in eighteenth-century Ireland* (Dublin, 2010), pp 409-26; Martyn J. Powell, 'Hunting clubs and societies' in James Kelly and Martyn J. Powell (eds), *Clubs and societies in eighteenth-century Ireland* (Dublin, 2010), pp 392-408; Diarmuid Ó Gráda, 'The rocky road to Dublin: Transport modes and urban growth in the Georgian age, with particular reference to the turnpike roads' in *Studia Hibernica*, vol. 22/23 (1982/83), pp 134-48.

⁴² William Taplin, *The gentleman's stable directory: Vol. II* (3rd ed., Dublin, 1793), pp 66-7.

⁴³ Joan Lane, 'Farriers in Georgian England', pp 100-2; Peter Edwards, *Horse and man in early modern England* (London, 2007), p. 64; In eighteenth-century Ireland it was also the moneyed class who had greater access to the attention of the medical man and to proprietary medicines. See James Kelly, 'Bleeding, vomiting and purging: The medical response to ill-health in eighteenth-century Ireland' in Catherine Cox and Maria Luddy (eds), *Culture of care in Irish medical history, 1750-1950* (London, 2010), p. 30.

experience either in the army or in the stables of wealthy horse owners.⁴⁴ For example, Pat Kennedy, a Dublin Farrier, claimed to have studied farriery in England, Ireland and France.⁴⁵ Jonathan Patrick offered his services to country gentlemen and noblemen, having served as principal farrier in Sir James Caldwell's Corps of Light Dragoons.⁴⁶ Some arrived in Ireland to establish a private practice, others to work for prominent horse owners. Arguably, those that travelled to Ireland were of a higher-class than that described by Captain Burdon. Aspirations to establish business in Ireland required ambition, courage, contacts, money and business acumen. The new arrivals also displayed a high level of literacy, using the medium of newspapers to advertise their services. In 1700 the Irish newspaper industry was in a fledgling state with publishers merely interested in the price obtainable and the numbers sold. Advertisements only featured sporadically mainly offering rewards for lost property, runaway soldiers or servants. However, it soon became apparent that advertising paid dividends to both the newspaper and the advertiser of a product or service.⁴⁷ This was particularly true for those involved in the emerging medical marketplace. A diverse range of products and services to cure all the ills of mankind were on offer from 'physicians, apothecaries, surgeons, mountebanks, empirics, and commercial retailers.'⁴⁸ Similarly, those involved in the treatment of animal disease began to avail of the opportunity to promote their services through the medium of newspaper advertising.

A perusal of early Irish newspapers suggested that Richard Rumbolt, 'Bred at the Mews in London' was the first practitioner of animal medicine to advertise in an Irish newspaper, in 1708. The fact that he was born in the Mews of London indicated that he had been involved with horses since childhood.⁴⁹ Rumbold initially came to Ireland to serve as stud-master to Captain Richard Fitzpatrick. Fitzpatrick was a

⁴⁴ There is no evidence in the records of the Worshipful Company of Farriers that those farriers that who came to Ireland from Britain, as discussed below, had seen apprenticeships with the companies master farriers.

⁴⁵ *Saunders's News-Letter*, 26 February 1776.

⁴⁶ *Saunders's News-Letter*, 17 March 1781.

⁴⁷ Robert Munter, *The history of the Irish newspaper, 1685-1760* (Cambridge, 1967), pp 55-66.

⁴⁸ For an overview of the human medical marketplace in the Eighteenth century see James Kelly, 'Health for sale: mountebanks, doctors, printers and the supply of medication in eighteenth-century Ireland' in *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, vol. 108C (2008), pp 21-39.

⁴⁹ In both London and Dublin, the mews were long ranges of stables, which ran behind those streets inhabited by the noble and wealthy. Perhaps Rumbold implied that he was born near the Royal Mews where the monarch's horses were stabled. See Delabere P. Blaine, *An encyclopedia of rural sports* (London, 1870), p. 710; Ruth McManus, 'Windows on a hidden world: Urban and social evolution as seen from the mews' in *Irish Geography*, vol. 37, no. 1 (2004), pp 37-59.

quintessential example of a wealthy individual who could afford a highly skilled and experienced individual to care for his horses. He was an accomplished captain in the British navy and in 1696 was granted substantial lands at Grantstown, in his native Queen's County. He was later raised to the Irish peerage as 1st Baron Gowran.⁵⁰ Rumbold also appeared to excel in his profession as he claimed to have served as chief farrier and stud-master to both the Dauphine of France and the Duke de Vendôme. In addition, he claimed to have travelled extensively, at the request of 'the Nobility', throughout the Berber Coast of north Africa, purchasing horses. In addition to breaking and training horses he claimed to be 'capable of curing all External or Internal Distempers incident to Horses.' Furthermore, he stressed that he desired no payment until a horse was perfectly cured and would not undertake to cure an animal that he felt was incurable.⁵¹ Rumbold's newspaper notice was certainly elaborate for the first decade of the eighteenth-century and clearly written to impress potential clients of the wealthy horse owning fraternity. Rumbold was not alone in dropping the names of former influential and important employers to attract new clients of a certain social standing. For example, in 1773 Bryan Beirne, a horse-shoer and farrier, commenced business at Chequer Lane, Dublin, having arrived from London, where he had worked for, amongst others, the Duke of Norfolk and his Majesty's Farrier.⁵² Others used the names of those who were more familiar to potential clients. In 1760 Robert Robson, a farrier late of Philadelphia, solicited potential customers in Dublin by declaring that he had cured the horses of Messrs. Dixon and Reddy, residents of the city.⁵³

Prominent farriers, seeking private practice, usually formed some connection with hotels or inns. Such establishments, because of their association with the coaching and postal business, usually had a forge and adequate stabling for horses attached. They also offered a constant supply of potential clients. Coaching horses or those of country gentlemen visiting town, required water, food, shoeing and treatment for lameness or injury.⁵⁴ For example, by 1708 Richard Rumbolt was based at the Farrier's Arms adjacent to the Curragh of Kildare, where he offered stabling for horses at 12s per week,

⁵⁰ See James M. Rigg, 'Fitzpatrick, Richard (d.1727)' in Leslie Stephen (ed.), *Dictionary of national biography, Vol. XIX* (London, 1889), p. 191; John Lodge and Mervyn Archdall, *The peerage of Ireland, Vol. II* (Dublin, 1789), pp 346-7.

⁵¹ *Dublin Intelligence*, 9, 12 October 1708.

⁵² *Saunders's News-Letter*, 5 July 1773.

⁵³ *Dublin Courier*, 21, 23, 25, 30 April 1760.

⁵⁴ Marcia Evans, *The place of the rural blacksmith in parish life, 1500-1900* (Taunton, 1998), pp 1, 7; Alfred Hedges, *Inns and inn signs of Norfolk and Suffolk* (Huntington, 1976), p. 72.

and entertainment for their owners. In addition, he offered to travel to the stud of any ‘Nobleman or Gentleman’ within twenty miles of the Curragh.⁵⁵ John Smyth, a Newry innkeeper, had ‘the best horse-shoer and farrier in the North’ attending his establishment.⁵⁶ In such situations caring for the horse’s hooves and legs was imperative. Stones or other foreign objects were removed from the hooves and shoes applied. Although the farrier was primarily concerned with the horse’s foot and the conditions that caused lameness, several other conditions were treated. For example, Pat Kennedy informed the public that he cured the maladies of horses ‘internal and external’ with knowledge both ‘natural and acquired.’⁵⁷ Peter Venharen, a farrier, formerly of London, who practiced at the Strand, Dublin, claimed to cure successfully ‘the Convulsions, Stag-evil, Pol-evil, Farcin, Fisterlows, Spint, Spavins, Curbs and Ring-bone, Quiter-bone, Wine-gall, Canker, fasy-nott and all Diseases in Horses.’ He maintained that several gentlemen ‘in this Kingdom’ would testify to this.⁵⁸ William Curtis, also from London, simply claimed to cure the disease of horses.⁵⁹ Patrick Reaf, Leixlip-Bridge, offered a new treatment, ‘never attempted by any Man, but himself’ for the condition ‘stumbling or tripping.’ He would not treat a horse that was previously treated by another farrier for that condition.⁶⁰

The activities of the eighteenth-century Irish based farrier were not confined to horse shoeing and treating equine diseases. William Lee sold horses at Phrapper Lane.⁶¹ In 1776 William Moore, Church Street, Dublin sold horses ‘engaged sound and free from vice.’⁶² Others engaged in the sale of horse medicines, which were prepared either from traditional recipes or from the numerous recipes found in eighteenth-century farriery manuals, in which there was no shortage of technical information for the aspiring manufacturer, from the active ingredients to the required mixtures and doses. Several of these books were either re-published or reprinted in Dublin. The British Copyright Act of 1709 was not observed by the Irish Parliament and not legally recognised. Therefore, Irish booksellers, free from copyright issues, commissioned local printers to reprinted publications first published in Britain. Because of lower

⁵⁵ *Dublin Intelligence*, 9 October 1708.

⁵⁶ *Belfast News-Letter*, 24 February 1758.

⁵⁷ *Saunders’s News-Letter*, 26 February 1776.

⁵⁸ *Dublin Journal*, 25 May 1742.

⁵⁹ *Saunders’s News-Letter*, 6 June 1795.

⁶⁰ *Dublin Journal*, 30 July 1748.

⁶¹ *Saunders’s News-Letter*, 13 July 1774.

⁶² *Saunders’s News-Letter*, 16 February 1776.

production costs in Ireland the Irish book-buyer enjoyed substantially cheaper re-prints than the British originals. London booksellers labelled their Irish counterparts as ‘pirates.’⁶³ John Reeves’s *The Art of Farriery*, re-printed in Dublin in 1759 for Hulton Bradley, Dame Street, carried recipes to cure over seventy equine conditions. The publication was successful as it gave the reader what he or she desired. The ingredients he recommended were easily obtainable, mainly vegetable simples and common products such as tar, epsom salts, treacle and pigeon-dung, which, when finely powdered was an ingredient of a ‘plaister’ [plaster] for the farcy.⁶⁴ In 1788, William Sizer, a Belfast horse farrier, prepared a variety of horse medicines, including ‘all kinds of drugs, balls and purging pills...eye-water for inflammation [sic], ointment for scab and mange.’⁶⁵ In 1778 Robert Purcil’s ‘Royal Bath Horse Infirmary’, at Lower Abbey Street, Dublin, accommodated a medicine shop from which prepared medicine chests, with printed directions for their use, were delivered to country residences. The infirmary also housed stables, ‘Nurseries’, a laboratory and various baths. Purcil, a horse farrier, had previously conducted an infirmary for a Dr Bartlett in Chelsea and promised horse owners a ‘compleat System of Preservation’ for their animals.⁶⁶ A small number also purported to have some knowledge of the diseases of cattle. The aforementioned Robert Robson also claimed to understand ‘curing horned cattle.’⁶⁷

Owners of larger estates or stables employed grooms in great numbers to care for their horses. In 1775, Jonathan Swift, when advising such gentlemen on the appropriate skills needed in a servant, claimed that ‘every good groom ought to be...a Piece of a Farrier.’⁶⁸ Therefore, those seeking positions giving general care to horses regularly promoted their knowledge of farriery. One individual advertised his services as ‘A Groom, Huntsman and Compleat Farrier.’⁶⁹ In 1749 John Dunleavy, a ‘groom and Farrier’ of Smithfield, Dublin, advertised his services in curing a wide range of horse’s ailments on a ‘no cure, no pay’ basis.⁷⁰ In 1780, an individual ‘just arrived from

⁶³ Máire Kennedy, ‘Reading the Enlightenment in eighteenth-century Ireland’ in *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, vol. 45, no. 3 (Spring 2012), p. 356.

⁶⁴ John Reeves, *The art of farriery both in theory and practice* (Dublin, 1759). The book was originally published in London in 1758.

⁶⁵ *Belfast News-Letter*, 18, 21 November 1788.

⁶⁶ *Saunders’s News-Letter*, 25 May, 12 June 1778.

⁶⁷ *Dublin Courier*, 21 April 1760.

⁶⁸ Jonathan Swift, *Directions to servants in general* (London, 1745), p. 67.

⁶⁹ *Saunders’s News-Letter*, 6 October 1780.

⁷⁰ *Pue’s Occurrences*, 14 March 1749.

Yorkshire' sought a position 'as Groom and Farrier, or Stood-Groom.'⁷¹ Others had even more credentials. One individual had experience as a farrier, tail-setter, gelder and spayer, in both Ireland and England.⁷² Another, who sought the position of coachman, informed prospective employers that, on employing him, they would no longer need a farrier, as he was perfectly capable of curing 'all Disorders incident to Horses.'⁷³ However, not all prospective employers sought such a diverse range of skills. A Dublin gentleman seeking a groom and footman stressed that it was 'not necessary' he should be a farrier, but a good horseman.⁷⁴ Louise Curth argued that many prominent farriers began their careers in lesser positions.⁷⁵ The aforementioned Jonathan Patrick began his as the as 'principal Feeder' and Stud-Master to the Earl of Antrim.⁷⁶

The British portrayal of farriers as ignorant was largely replicated in Ireland. John Wynn Baker, the agriculturist, believed that farriers were amongst the most ignorant and superstitious individuals he had encountered. He noted from personal experience and loss that they were 'so fortified with impudence and importance that they will attempt anything, to pick a gentleman's pocket.' However, during a period of illness to his horses, when eight animals died, Baker continued to employ a farrier. This suggested that the farrier's was the best expertise available and that Baker had no option but to employ such an individual.⁷⁷ The aforementioned Robert Purcil employed staff from Britain. He criticised the 'ignorance and empiricism' of the local farriers and claimed that the service he offered would be far superior both in terms of cost and safety to animals.⁷⁸ In the early nineteenth-century an original correspondent to *The Irish Farmer's Journal and Weekly Intelligencer* was equally critical, describing farriers cures as 'compounds of the most violent and dangerous drugs' generally combined in such a way that the ingredients were calculated to counteract each other. He encouraged horse-owners to consult 'useful' farriery books on the subject, 'particularly *White's*.'⁷⁹ Jeremiah O'Hanlon urged those involved in the training and management of horses to

⁷¹ *Saunders's News-Letter*, 6 October 1780.

⁷² *Saunders's News-Letter*, 22 March 1785.

⁷³ *Saunders's News-Letter*, 22 December 1786.

⁷⁴ *Saunders's News-Letter*, 31 March 1779.

⁷⁵ Louise H. Curth, *A plaine and easie waie to remedie a horse': Equine medicine in early modern England* (Leiden, 2013), pp 73-4.

⁷⁶ *Saunders's News-Letter*, 20 March 1781.

⁷⁷ John Wynn Baker *Experiments in agriculture in the year 1764* (Dublin, 1765), p. 127.

⁷⁸ *Saunders's News-Letter*, 25 May 1781.

⁷⁹ *The Irish Farmer's Journal and Weekly Intelligencer*, 21 August 1812. The work referred to is most likely, James White, *A compendium of the veterinary art; containing an accurate description of all the diseases to which the horse is liable* (London, 1802).

avoid the treatments of ‘ignorant imposters’ that depended on charms and quackery. He believed that cheap English veterinary books, quickly put together for Irish circulation, fuelled this quackery. He described them as ‘a quantity of mischievous works... written by non-professional men...anything being deemed good enough for this country.’ This statement can be seen as an attempt by O’Hanlon to promote his own publication, as there is no evidence to suggest that any cheap veterinary books were especially created for the Irish market. He was equally critical of the medicines being sold in Ireland, which he claimed were of inferior quality and the worst that the London markets could produce.⁸⁰

Manufacturers and sellers of patent horse medicines used the farrier name in whatever way that might lead to personal gain. In the later decades of the eighteenth-century, J. Magee, 41 College Green, Dublin, sold ‘Patent Horse Medicines’ prepared by William Radley in London. He advised his customers to purchase these products and to desist from employing the common farrier with ‘limited’ knowledge and a ‘farrago of medicines.’⁸¹ He also sold Goulard’s Original Extract of Saturn. Originating in Montpellier, the product claimed to cure ‘every external disorder, or accident, incident to the human and brute creation.’⁸² For use in equines the product was marketed as being widely used by farriers. Apparently, some farriers were ‘astonished by its surprising effects’ and introduced it immediately into their practice. It soon entered into general use among farriers.⁸³ Any study of eighteenth-century Irish based farriers relies considerably on newspaper reports, advertisements and a small number of contemporary accounts of their work. There was undoubtedly a cohort of individuals who relied on traditional cures or recipes in their treatment of equine diseases. However, there was also a group of competent individuals, with experience in Britain or the army, who administered medical treatment to the horses of those who could afford their services. Curth argued that any farrier known for mistreating horses or whose patients frequently died was ultimately unlikely to stay in practice. She believed

⁸⁰ Jeremiah O’Hanlon, *The horse and its diseases* (Cork, 1864), preface. It was generally accepted that poorer quality medicines were regularly sold to the Irish Market. As early as 1735 Charles Lucas had called attention to this fact in his pamphlet *A scheme to prevent frauds and abuses in pharmacy*.

⁸¹ *Dublin Evening Post*, 21 December 1880.

⁸² *Saunders’s News-Letter*, 28 February 1777.

⁸³ *Saunders’s News-Letter*, 8 June 1784.

that the most successful practitioners were those with good communication skills, capable of acquiring new clients and ensuring repeat business.⁸⁴

Many Irish based eighteenth-century farriers acquired a good reputation, which resulted in lucrative work and recognition in the community.⁸⁵ Their inclusion in death notices and obituaries suggested that some acquired significant wealth and a certain status in society. For example, in 1799, *Saunders's News-Letter* announced the death of William Reaf, smith and farrier, late of Nassau St, Dublin. Two years previously, Reaf had retired to Leixlip after fifty years in the farriery business. The newspaper reported that he had 'arrived to a degree of perfection in his trade before unknown in this country, by which he acquired an ample fortune'⁸⁶. On their deaths, Mathew Cody, Waterford and James Hewit, Belfast, were each described as an 'eminent Smith and farrier.'⁸⁷ In 1757 the death notice of the Widow Meares, Oxmantown, Dublin described her as a 'Smith and Farrier.'⁸⁸ Historically women had taken the role of mistresses of the forge on the death of their farrier husband. Farrier's wives could be seen as informally trained artisans because of their almost constant interaction with their husband's craft. Women played an integral management role in the daily function of their husband's business and household looking after everything from accounts to staff.⁸⁹ Newspaper reports occasionally displayed a farrier's wealth. When John Kelly, a Donnybrook smith and farrier, was robbed near his home the thieves relieved him of a large sum of money and his watch, 'a handsome double-cased silver one, with gold chain, seals and key.'⁹⁰ Others displayed access to money. In 1803 a farrier, a bleacher and a lime burner announced that they were to open a bank in Clonskeagh, issuing from one shilling to twenty in notes in lieu of silver. They also had plans to open others at Donnybrook and Milltown.⁹¹

Although the farrier headed the hierarchy of animal-health practitioners during the eighteenth-century, apart from the small group that operated in London, there was

⁸⁴ Curth, *A plaine and easie way*, p. 85.

⁸⁵ Reeves, *The art of farriery*, preface. John Reeves introduced himself to his readers as having 'acquired reputation by his success in curing the various Diseases of Horses' during many years in the practice of farriery.

⁸⁶ *Saunders's News-Letter*, 17 April 1799.

⁸⁷ *Freeman's Journal*, 19 September 1769, *The Volunteer's Journal*, 6 February 1786.

⁸⁸ *Pue's Occurrences*, 3 September 1757

⁸⁹ Mike MacKay, 'Female artisans', pp 371-3.

⁹⁰ *Freeman's Journal*, 23 September 1816.

⁹¹ *Freeman's Journal*, 14 April 1803.

no regulation or organisation of practitioners. Those that practiced in Ireland did so very much as individuals, using whatever skills they had acquired from apprenticeship or experience. Compared to its human counterpart animal health care was in a very primitive state. The eighteenth-century saw medicine become more institutionally based, increasingly state funded, and wedded to a more scientific and analytical approach to disease. In Ireland, voluntary hospitals, county infirmaries, medical supply dispensaries for the poor, the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons, and various medical guilds, schools and societies, were established or grew in importance.⁹² However, in Europe, there was a recognition that a more scientific and humane approach to animal health care was needed, which could only be provided by specialist training in institutional settings. As a result, the first veterinary schools were established.

The Institutionalisation of veterinary science

The French veterinarian Michel Lapras attributed the creation of formal veterinary training systems to the ‘conjunction’ of different cultural, economic, political and human factors.⁹³ Since the seventeenth century, a new interest had evolved in a scientific approach to animal health and wellbeing. For example, in Ireland, Michael Harward condemned the widespread superstitious practices employed by Irish cattle-keepers, which resulted in great losses. He urged them to adopt the skills of the ox-leech. However, of such practitioners, he found ‘very few that bestow any pains in that noble Science.’⁹⁴ Although particular interest was shown in equine health, with a great need to properly train those who cared for military horses, losses through cattle plague acted as the greatest catalyst in the foundation of the first veterinary schools. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, sanitary conditions were deplorable throughout Europe, resulting in cattle plague spreading from the east. The bovine plague reached

⁹² See James Kelly, ‘The emergence of scientific and institutional medical practice in Ireland, 1650-1800’ in Greta Jones and Elizabeth Malcolm (eds), *Medicine Disease and the state in Ireland* (Cork, 1999), pp 21-39; Andrew Sneddon, ‘State intervention and provincial health care: The county infirmary system in late eighteenth-century Ulster’ in *Irish Historical Studies*, vol. 38, no. 149 (May, 2012), pp 5-21; Mary Ann Lyons, ‘The role of the graduate physicians in professionalising medical practice in Ireland, c. 1619-54’ in James Kelly and Fiona Clark (eds), *Ireland and medicine in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries* (Farnham, 2010), pp 17-38. Lyons noted the emergence of a new breed of graduate physician, from the seventeenth-century, who advocated university training and denounced unlicensed quacks and mountebanks, which led to an increasing impetus to provide official medical training facilities in seventeenth century Dublin.

⁹³ Michel Lapras, ‘Lyons, the cradle of veterinary training and of veterinary sciences’ in A. Mathijssen, (ed.), *The origins of veterinary schools in Europe-A comparative view* (Utrecht, 1997), p. 8.

⁹⁴ Harward, *Herds-man’s mate*, p. A2

France in 1714 with enormous losses of cattle recorded during the following decades. The economic losses were widely recognised. For example, a desire for healthy stock came within the scope of the physiocrats, a group of eighteenth-century Enlightenment French economists, who believed that the wealth of nations was derived solely from the value of agriculture. Accordingly, in 1762, Claude Bourgelat founded the *École Vétérinaire* in Lyon, where ‘the principles and the methods of curing livestock diseases would be publicly taught.’⁹⁵

Bourgelat initially hoped to found a school of equine medicine, as he recognised the need to break with traditional farriery, headed by organised groups of farriers or *maréchaux*. However, he only received Royal assent and the financial support of the French Government on the understanding that he would educate veterinarians equipped with the knowledge to tackle major outbreaks of livestock disease. As his Lyon school quickly gained a reputation in the fight against animal diseases, a second school was opened at Alfort, Paris, in 1765.⁹⁶ During the following decades new veterinary schools were established throughout the continent, many by former pupils of Bourgelat.⁹⁷ The majority of these schools, such as Hannover and Utrecht, were founded with government support on the realisation that there was an economic need to safeguard a productive and healthy animal population.⁹⁸ In Britain, it was not the government, but the Odiham Agricultural Society, particularly Thomas Burgess, that held such views.⁹⁹ The Odiham Society subsequently supported Charles Vial de Saint Bel (Sainbel), a graduate of Lyons, and an assistant at Alfort, to establish the first English-speaking veterinary school, in London, in 1791. Sainbel became its first Principal. The foundation of the college, although supported by noblemen, gentlemen and eminent

⁹⁵ Christophe Degueurce, ‘Claude Bourgelat and the creation of the first veterinary schools’ in *Comptes Rendus Biologies*, vol. 335, no. 5 (May, 2012), pp 334-42; Lapras, ‘Lyons’, pp 8-9.

⁹⁶ Caroline C. Hannaway, ‘Veterinary medicine and rural health care in Pre-Revolutionary France’ in *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, vol. 51, no. 3 (Fall, 1977), p. 432.

⁹⁷ See Robert H. Dunlop, ‘International dispersal of Bourgelat’s veterinary vision’ in *Argos: Bulletin van het Veterinair Historische Genootschap*, no. 30 (2004), pp 470-8.

⁹⁸ Peter Leeftang, ‘An attempt to summarize and to compare’ in A. Mathijssen, (ed.), *The origins of veterinary schools in Europe- a comparative view* (Utrecht, 1997), pp 70-3.

⁹⁹ Derek Spruce, ‘Thomas Burgess of Odiham and veterinary science’ in *Vet. Hist.*, new ser., vol. 7, no. 1 (1992), pp 5-9.

medical men, was entirely dependent on private subscriptions.¹⁰⁰ In turn, William Dick, a graduate of the London School founded the Edinburgh Veterinary School in 1823.¹⁰¹

During the first half of the nineteenth-century those that practiced as veterinary surgeons in Ireland had come to do so by various means. The majority attended the colleges in London or Edinburgh, a small number attended continental schools, whilst other merely assumed the title, having experience in the Army, or apprenticeship in farriery or some other equine related activity. This firmly places the vet in similar circumstance to the medical man, with various forms of ad-hoc education available in the eighteenth and early nineteenth-century, and with an interest in training in Europe.¹⁰² There is only indirect evidence to suggest that any Irishman travelled to study at the continental veterinary schools. However, a small number of veterinarians who received their veterinary instruction in France subsequently practiced in Ireland. In October 1787, Arthur Young visited *l'Ecole Veterinaire* at Alfort, where a complete veterinary course lasted four years. He was impressed with the facilities and remarked that 'there are at present about one hundred *élèves* from different parts of the kingdom (France), as well as from every country in Europe, except England.'¹⁰³ In 1776 John Mills, an Honorary Member of the Dublin Society, noted that almost every country in Europe sent pupils to the Lyon school.¹⁰⁴ In February 1830, *The Veterinarian* reported the death of Thomas Irwin Ganly [occasionally Ganley] whilst stationed as veterinary surgeon with the Eleventh Light Dragoons in India. The obituary writer noted that Ganly received his education, 'we have heard him say', at the Alfort Veterinary School, before settling in Dublin.¹⁰⁵ Ganly did see practice in Dublin, where, in 1826, he

¹⁰⁰ Charles Vial de Sainbel, *The works of Charles Vial de Sainbel, Professor of Veterinary Medicine. To which is prefixed a short account of his life* (London, 1795), pp 5-30; L. P. Pugh, 'Thomas Burgess, D.D., F.R.S., 1756-1837-Bishop of Salisbury' in *Veterinary Record* (Hereafter cited as Vet. Rec.), vol. 70, no. 16 (19 April, 1958), pp 337-42.

¹⁰¹ Alastair A. MacDonald, Colin W. Warwick and W. T. Johnston, 'Locating veterinary education in Edinburgh in the nineteenth century' in *Book of the Old Edinburgh Club*, new ser., no. 6 (2005), p. 43.

¹⁰² See Laurence Brockliss, 'Medicine, religion and social mobility in eighteenth and early nineteenth century Ireland' in James Kelly and Fiona Clark (eds), *Ireland and medicine in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries* (Farnham, 2010), pp 73-108; Peter Froggatt, 'Irish students at Leiden and the renaissance of medicine in Dublin' in *Journal of the Irish College of Physicians and Surgeons*, vol. 22 (1993), pp 124-32; Marcus Ackroyd, Laurence Brockliss, Michael Moss, Kate Retford and John Stevenson, *Advancing with the Army: Medicine, the professions and social mobility in the British Isles, 1790-1850* (Oxford, 2007); M. D. Warren, 'Medical education in the 18th century' in *Postgraduate Medical Journal*, vol. 27, no. 308 (June, 1951), pp 304-11.

¹⁰³ Arthur Young, *Travels during the years 1787, 1788 and 1789* (London, 1792), p. 67.

¹⁰⁴ John Mills, *A treatise on cattle* (Dublin, 1776), p. v.

¹⁰⁵ Anon, 'Professional obituary' in *Veterinarian*, vol. 3, no. 2 (February, 1830), pp 119-20; *The Globe*, 1 January 1830.

counted Dr Daniel Murray, Archbishop of Dublin, among his clients.¹⁰⁶ Nonetheless, his stay in Ireland was short-lived. On 20 March 1827, the *Dublin Morning Register* carried notice of an auction of all the contents of his house and forge, including fifty volumes of books, at Clarendon-street ‘FOR NON-PAYMENT OF RENT.’¹⁰⁷ Ganly travelled to London where he obtained the diploma of the London College before joining the army.¹⁰⁸ There is little doubt Ganly had some connection with the Alfort College. In 1827 he informed *The Lancet* that he was an *élève libre* or extern pupil at Alfort for three years from 1821.¹⁰⁹ Furthermore, around the time of his death was published his translation from French of a treatise on the teeth of a horse by his former teacher at Alfort, François Narcisse Girard.¹¹⁰ There is no evidence as to Ganly’s birthplace. A reviewer of his translation described him as ‘one of the best informed and most experienced veterinary surgeons in Great Britain.’¹¹¹

In February 1826 Monsieur Hypolite Du Moulin, a French veterinary surgeon, placed a single, but substantial, notice in the *Freeman’s Journal* indicating that he had established at Merrion-Row, Dublin, a ‘Surgical and Medical Infirmary’ for the recovery of sick horses. Du Moulin undoubtedly came to Ireland to seek his fortune on the advice of family members. During the 1820s there were several individuals of that name in the Stephen’s Green area including Peter G. Du Moulin, a law agent to the French Consulate in Dublin, who shared a contact address with the veterinarian at 44 Stephen’s Green.¹¹² Although the notice was placed to highlight his business, it is arguably noteworthy as an indicator of veterinary practice in the city at that time. Moulin believed that the veterinary art was still in its infancy in Ireland, a country ‘abounding with every species of Cattle’ and suggested that the shortage of regular veterinary surgeons was injurious to the country’s economy. Therefore, he believed his establishment would attract attention and merit success. Apparently, he was persuaded to come to Ireland by friends who noted that ‘the degree of real professional talent’ was

¹⁰⁶ The papers of Dr Daniel Murray contain a letter (File 30/9:1826, Ordinary, no. 21), dated 24 November 1826, from Ganly to Murray, where the vet reports on the charge for Murray’s horse, in his care. See Mary Purcell, ‘Dublin Diocesan Archives: Murray Papers’ in *Archivium Hibernicum*, vol. 36 (1981), p. 87.

¹⁰⁷ *Dublin Morning Register*, 20 March 1827.

¹⁰⁸ *London Evening Standard*, 18 June 1828.

¹⁰⁹ T. Irwin Ganly ‘Veterinary surgery’ in *The Lancet*, vol. 8, no. 199 (23 June, 1827), pp 375-7.

¹¹⁰ Thomas Irwin Ganly, *A treatise on the teeth of the horse, translated from the French of M. Girard* (London, 1829); See *Bell’s Life in London and Sporting Chronicle*, 1 November 1829.

¹¹¹ Anon, ‘Medical literature: A treatise on the teeth of the horse’ in *Monthly Gazette of Health*, vol. 14, no. 168 (1 December, 1829), pp 763-4.

¹¹² *Saunders’s News-Letter*, 10 December 1825.

insufficient for the necessities of a large city. He observed many lame and blind horses, which he attributed to the ignorance of farriers or ‘*ci-devant*’ grooms. He believed their over-use of patent medicines merely exacerbated certain conditions that could be easily treated by ‘judicious and timely’ applications. Monsieur Du Moulin proposed to practice veterinary medicine according to ‘the principles and practice of the French Veterinary School’ by introducing innovative procedures and treatments. It appears his French principles found no favour with the Dublin clientele. There is no evidence of a sustained practice in the city.¹¹³

Not all of those who practiced as veterinary surgeons had attended a veterinary college. According to Robin Bone the title ‘Veterinary Surgeon’ originated with the first graduates of the LVC in 1794, in an apparent attempt to distinguish themselves from unqualified individuals. It was subsequently taken by all veterinary graduates.¹¹⁴ However, a proportion of the unqualified quickly assumed the title. As early as March 1795, when only eleven gentlemen had received an LVC certificate, the College Governors complained that ‘many persons’ who were practicing farriery throughout the country were falsely claiming to have graduated from the College ‘in order to acquire reputation.’¹¹⁵ *The Farrier and Naturalist*, of 1828, noted that the term ‘Farrier’ had never been regarded as one of much dignity. Therefore, veterinary surgeon was assumed by ‘more intelligent and fastidious practitioners of modern times, anxious to dissolve all connexion with ignorant and unscientific pretenders to the art.’¹¹⁶ In his study of veterinary practice in mid-nineteenth-century Cheshire, Stephen Matthews argued that ‘unqualified’ vets could be loosely divided into two groups, competent individuals who read the professional press and had expertise to rival the best of the qualified, and the common farrier or blacksmith, cow-leach or quack.¹¹⁷

¹¹³ *Freeman’s Journal*, 27 February 1826.

¹¹⁴ Robin Bone, ‘The first use of the title ‘Veterinary Surgeon’’ in *Vet. Hist.*, vol. 17, no. 4 (2015), pp 430-4; Earlier accounts claimed the title originated with the British army, in 1776, to distinguish the equine practitioner from the human surgeon. See Pattison, *British veterinary profession*, p. 1; B. V. Jones, ‘A name with a heritage’ in *Vet. Rec.*, no. 168 (2011), pp 331-2.

¹¹⁵ See *Leeds Intelligencer*, 23 March 1795; *Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette*, 26 March 1795; The early graduates of the LVC were presented with a certificate that stated they had attended the course and were considered ‘qualified to practice the veterinary art.’ See Royal Veterinary College, *The Royal Veterinary College London 1791-1991: Two hundred years of the British veterinary profession* (London, 1991), pp 4-5. A copy of an early certificate is reproduced on page 5.

¹¹⁶ Anon, ‘Preface’ in *The Farrier and Naturalist*, vol. 1, no. 1 (January, 1828), p. iii.

¹¹⁷ Stephen Matthews, ‘Rural Cheshire’, pp 147-8.

In Ireland, unqualified practitioners who assumed the title were primarily of the same ilk as the experienced, ambitious farriers that arrived from Britain a century earlier to seek new opportunities. Outside of this group only a small number of individuals represented themselves as veterinary surgeons. For example, a Kerry contributor to the *Irish Farmers' Journal* of 1846 described himself as a small farmer, smith and veterinary surgeon.¹¹⁸ Trade directories occasionally listed individuals as veterinary surgeons who otherwise made no claim to the title. Charles Muldoon is listed as a veterinary surgeon in the *Triennial Directory* of 1840.¹¹⁹ Thomas Rooney, Moore St, Dublin, was one of six veterinary surgeons listed in *Pigot's Directory*, published in 1820.¹²⁰ In *Wilson's Dublin Directory* for the same year Rooney was listed as a 'smith and farrier.'¹²¹ These men were arguably farriers or blacksmiths who, for the directories, either assumed the title or were erroneously given it from unreliable information gleaned from people with 'local knowledge.'¹²² Although individuals themselves might lay no claim to be veterinary surgeons they might be perceived as so in their community or facetiously referred to as such. In December 1824, the *Cork Constitution* announced the death of John Shannahan, 'an eminent veterinary surgeon', implying he was a drunkard who had renounced his Catholic faith. The rival *Cork Chronicle* subsequently announced that Shannahan, the farrier, was alive 'stout and strong.' In a letter to that paper Shannahan, or someone pretending to be Shannahan, expressed his feelings on the affair:

This is to let you noe that I am alive, and that I did not turn me cote as the blagard Orange Pepers of Kork says, neither am I anything as they well nose but a farrier, no inveterate surgeon, thank God.¹²³

Ireland's first veterinary surgeons: Qualified and unqualified

The earliest list of 'examined and approved' veterinary surgeons appeared in the *First Number of Veterinary Transactions*, published by the LVC in 1801. Included was

¹¹⁸ *Irish Farmers' Journal*, 14 January, 1846.

¹¹⁹ *The New Triennial and Commercial Directory for the years 1840, 41 & 42, of the cities of Limerick, Waterford and Kilkenny* (Limerick, 1840), p. 74.

¹²⁰ *Pigot's commercial directory of Ireland, Scotland & c., for 1821-22 & 23* (Manchester, 1820). p. 78.

¹²¹ *Wilson's Dublin directory for the year 1821* (Dublin, 1821), p. 116

¹²² Although no study of the collection and compilation of historic Irish trade directories has been undertaken other studies have shown that information collected from those with local knowledge, such as clergymen, postmasters and Boards of Guardians could be unreliable. See P. J. Atkins, 'The compilation and reliability of London directories' in *London Journal*, vol. 14 (1989), pp 35-46.

¹²³ *Freeman's Journal*, 5 January 1825.

Samuel Ferguson, 'Ireland', who qualified in 1796.¹²⁴ This entry suggested that Ferguson was the first Irishman to receive a veterinary diploma. There is no evidence to suggest that he returned to Ireland. It appears he joined the British army, which, although disciplined, harsh and regimented, offered young men a chance to escape poverty, travel, and earn a regular wage.¹²⁵ Furthermore, an army officer son potentially offered a family respect and status.¹²⁶ The establishment of the Army Veterinary Service in 1796 saw the authority of the Farrier Major replaced by the veterinary surgeon.¹²⁷ In 1802, all army vets, like the army medical men, were awarded commissioned rank. However, their rate of pay did not match that of the medical man and was considered the lowest amongst officers in his Majesty's service.¹²⁸ Little had changed by the middle of the century. In 1858, a Dublin father, who considered educating his son for the position of veterinary surgeon to a cavalry regiment, concluded that the outlay for such an education would not subsequently see an adequate return.¹²⁹ Evidently, Samuel Ferguson's military career was less than impressive, 'superseded, being absent without leave' from the 9th Light Dragoon in January 1802.¹³⁰ There is no evidence that Ferguson subsequently entered private practice, the path chosen by most ex-army vets. Several settled in Ireland, of whom Henry Hogreve (London, 1806), was arguably the most celebrated. Hogreve, a native of Germany, saw service in both the Peninsular War and at Waterloo.¹³¹ In 1839, he established a practice at Post-Office Lane, Ennis, his wife, Honoria Lysaght, being a native of county Clare.¹³²

¹²⁴ Veterinary College, *The first number of veterinary transactions* (London, 1801), pp 46-8.

¹²⁵ Richard Holmes, *The British soldier in the age of horse and musket* (London, 2001), pp 114-5, 326.

¹²⁶ J. E. Cookson, *The British armed nation, 1793-1815* (Oxford, 1997), p. 226.

¹²⁷ For the history of Army farriers and the genesis of the Army Veterinary Services see Frederick Smith, *A history of the Royal Army Veterinary Corps, 1796-1919* (London, 1927), pp 5-111; G. R. Durrant, 'A brief history of the Royal Army Veterinary Corps' in *Vet. Hist.*, no. 11 (1978), pp 3-5.

¹²⁸ Henry E. Carter, 'A short history of the British Army Veterinary Services' in *Vet. Hist.*, new ser., vol. 9, nos. 2 & 3 (1996), p. 40; An Army Veterinarian, 'Army Veterinary Department' in *Veterinarian*, vol. 4, no. 2 (February, 1831), pp 93-4.

¹²⁹ Paterfamilias, 'Army veterinary surgeons: Their pay and position' in *Veterinarian*, vol. 31, no. 1 (January, 1858), pp 12-5. He estimated that £557 11s 9d would be expended before his son would 'receive a penny of pay.'

¹³⁰ *Kentish Chronicle*, 12 January 1802; William Cobbett, *Cobbett's Annual Register: Vol. 1* (London, 1802), p. 1098.

¹³¹ North Ludlow Beamish, *History of the King's German Legion* (London, 1838), p. 547; H. G. Hart, *The new annual Army list for 1841* (London, 1841), p. 422; *Naval & Military Gazette*, 2 December 1837; Anon, 'List of veterinary surgeons actually serving in regiments, April 1831' in *Veterinarian*, vol. 4, no. 5 (May, 1831), p. 297.

¹³² See *Clare Journal*, 29 December 1864; *Limerick Chronicle*, 11 April 1810, 14 December 1839. Honoria Lysaght was, the daughter of Francis Lysaght, late of Moy-Castle, and a cousin of the poet and patriot Edward Lysaght.

The first qualified veterinary surgeons to settle in Ireland were Thomas Peall (London, 1796) and George Watts (London, 1797), brought to Ireland in 1800 to take up veterinary professorships at the ‘Veterinary Institution’ of the Dublin Society.¹³³ Peall had previously seen practice in Gloucester and was subsequently listed as ‘veterinary surgeon (Livestock)’, to the Horse Infirmary, College St., Bristol.¹³⁴ Furthermore, prior to his arrival in Ireland, he had already delivered public veterinary lectures at Hetling House, Bath, the first headquarters of the Bath and West Society.¹³⁵ Watts had joined the army upon graduation and subsequently resigned his post to work for the Dublin Society.¹³⁶ The positions with the Society were due to commence on 1 December 1800.¹³⁷ However, the vets had barely commenced their employment when the Society’s aspirations of introducing veterinary education to Ireland were shattered as the new Parliament of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland refused to honour a grant of £15,500 to the Society, part of which was assigned towards the project.¹³⁸ Therefore, their contribution to the Society was limited. Evidence suggests that the gentlemen, especially Watts, intended to establish a private practice in Dublin, regardless of any contract with the Dublin Society.

In October 1800, two months before he was to take his position with the Society, Watts was already in private practice and re-locating from Hamilton Row to Great George’s Street.¹³⁹ A month later, the Dublin Society resolved that, in the first year, the Professors be allowed to use its forge and ancillary buildings at Hawkins Street for their own gain, once they covered their expenses.¹⁴⁰ It appears this arrangement was subsequently extended due to lack of progress with the veterinary school. Two years later Peall and Watts solicited business for the ‘Veterinary Institution’ at Hawkins

¹³³ For the purpose of this study the college trained veterinary surgeons of the first part of the nineteenth-century are identified by placing their college followed by year of graduation in brackets. For example, Peall graduated from the London College in 1796. This is to distinguish the college trained vets from those who merely assumed the title and whose names did not appear on a veterinary register.

¹³⁴ *Gloucester Journal*, 13 November, 1797; *Matthew’s complete Bristol directory [for 1799]* (Bristol, 1799).

¹³⁵ *Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette*, 1 May 1800. See also Philip Bryant, Susan Bennett and Ted Collins, *The story of the ‘Bath and West’: Innovation and application* (Shepton Mallet, 2002), pp 1-6.

¹³⁶ War Office, *A list of the Officers of the Army and of the Corps of Royal Marines: Volume 48* (London, 1800), p. 62; *Saunders’s News-Letter*, 2 October 1800. Watts served with the Third Regiment of Dragoon Guards.

¹³⁷ *Proceedings of the Dublin Society* (Hereafter cited as *Proc. Dublin Soc.*), xxxvii, 13 November 1800.

¹³⁸ *Morning Post*, 11 February 1801; Hartigan and Evans, ‘Veterinary Institute’, p. 10.

¹³⁹ *Saunders’s News-Letter*, 2 October 1800.

¹⁴⁰ *Proc. Dublin Soc.*, xxxvii, 13 November 1800.

Street, which incorporated the forge and hospital stable.¹⁴¹ The Society closed the forge by mid-1803. Peall, whilst retaining his allowances and use of the forge equipment, was given permission to pursue other interests until proper buildings for a veterinary establishment were provided.¹⁴² The closure of the forge saw Watts's connection with the Society unofficially end. For the next six years Watts was paid a £50 allowance for his salary, which the Society's Economy Committee eventually discontinued on 15 February 1810.¹⁴³

Thomas Peall and George Watts subsequently opened a large establishment at 22 Aungier Street that boasted stabling for fifty horses, a pharmacy, forge, and a spacious covered area for exercise.¹⁴⁴ The partnership lasted a little over two years. On 26 November 1806, the Ordnance Office in London announced that Peall was appointed Veterinary Surgeon to the Corps of Royal Artillery Drivers.¹⁴⁵ Consequently, on 25 March 1807, the partnership was officially dissolved by 'mutual consent.'¹⁴⁶ George Watts retained the practice at Aungier Street until his death in November 1858.¹⁴⁷ Apparently, he died worth £40,000, independent of freehold property. Although a prominent veterinarian, he was even more notable for his involvement in horseracing and the breeding of thoroughbreds. On his death, *Saunders's News-Letter* described Watts as a 'celebrated' veterinary surgeon and 'the Father of the Irish Turf.' The newspaper further acknowledged that 'he, as the partner of the late Mr. Peile [sic], introduced the scientific veterinary system into Ireland and raised the profession from the nostrum of the farrier to the proud position it now occupies, sought after by educated gentlemen.'¹⁴⁸ Pat Hartigan argued that Watts and Peall played a major role in advancing the veterinary profession in Ireland. Peall making the greater contribution to our 'intellectual heritage', Watts, 'the more immediate and more durable contribution.' Hartigan claimed that, because of his marriage to Harriet Mackinnon, sister of Major-General Henry Mackinnon, and sporting interests, Watts was fraternising with the upper echelons of society, the class that could employ veterinary surgeons.

¹⁴¹ *Dublin Journal*, 25 November 1802.

¹⁴² *Proc. Dublin Soc.*, xxxix, 4 August 1803.

¹⁴³ *Proc. Dublin Soc.*, xlvi, 15 February 1810.

¹⁴⁴ *Freeman's Journal*, 31 May 1804.

¹⁴⁵ *Caledonian Mercury*, 06 December 1806.

¹⁴⁶ *Saunders's News-Letter*, 6 April 1807.

¹⁴⁷ *Dublin Evening Mail*, 1 December 1858.

¹⁴⁸ *Saunders's News-Letter*, 2, 7 December 1858. See also *Bell's Life in London and Sporting Chronicle*, 5 December 1858; Anon, 'Obituary: Death of Mr. George Watts' in *Veterinarian*, vol. 32, no. 1 (January, 1859), pp 58-9.

Subsequently the sons of this horse-owning fraternity were attracted into the profession, helping to overcome some of the social barriers encountered in Britain.¹⁴⁹

Although George Watts dominated the veterinary landscape of early nineteenth-century Dublin, the city's 'veterinary surgeons' were predominantly of the unqualified ilk, merely assuming the title. Watt's earliest unqualified contemporary was Thomas Wimbush, who regularly advertised his extensive veterinary practice from 1804 until his death by drowning in the Royal Canal in 1823. His newspaper notices also advertised his 'Blackening for Boots.'¹⁵⁰ Although nothing is known about Wimbush, he may have come from a livery-keeping family of Swallow-street, London.¹⁵¹ According to Woods and Matthews, in early nineteenth-century Britain individuals pursued different avenues before assuming the title of veterinary surgeon. Some were farriers or had a background in another equine related activity. Others undertook periods of apprenticeship within family practices or with another veterinary surgeon. A percentage of such apprentices intended to receive a college education but were deterred by personal circumstances. Not all college entrants subsequently qualified. Some failed their exams, others left college without taking any exams and then advertised their services with some mention of a connection with the LVC.¹⁵²

Newspaper advertisements give some indication as to the professional backgrounds of those who assumed the title in Ireland. A number of individuals claimed connection to the London College. Take, for example, George Parris, who established a Limerick practice in 1830. He sought public favour based on 'his long practice' in London both at the LVC and with Joseph Goodwin, Veterinary Surgeon to his Majesty, at Carlton Palace. Parris subsequently claimed to have entered the London College in 1816 where he was a resident pupil for five years, three of which were spent as 'senior Pupil' to Principal Coleman, and private lecturer.¹⁵³ In 1816 the duration of the veterinary course was a matter of months. Therefore, one must question why Parris studied for five years yet never took the final exam. Rodolphus E. Bootiman similarly

¹⁴⁹ Patrick J. Hartigan 'George Watts (1772-1859): Veterinary surgeon, soldier and turfite' in *Ir. Veterinary Jn.* vol. 53, no. 1 (January, 2000), pp 14-22.

¹⁵⁰ *Saunders's News-Letter*, 17 April 1804, 23 February 1810, 18 June 1823.

¹⁵¹ See *Morning Post*, 20 May 1802. The newspaper advertisement says that Swallow-street, the location of Wimbush's Livery Stables was 'near Oxford-street.'

¹⁵² Abigail Woods and Stephen Matthews, 'Little, if at all', pp 35-7; Anon, 'Unqualified Practice' in *Veterinarian*, vol. 4, no. 10 (October, 1831), pp 583-8.

¹⁵³ *Limerick Chronicle*, 19 May 1830, 11 July 1849; *Southern Reporter and Cork Commercial Chronicle*, 1 October 1840.

claimed to be ‘From the Veterinary College, London.’ He had previously worked with veterinary surgeons in Glasgow.¹⁵⁴ In 1817, J. Wilkinson arrived in Dublin having spent three years in Scotland under an engagement of a ‘Society of Noblemen and Gentlemen Agriculturists.’ He intended to cure horses and black cattle.¹⁵⁵ John Watts arrived in Ireland as ‘assistant’ to his brother, the aforementioned George. He subsequently established his own practice in a disused brewery at Great Britain Street on the strength of ‘many years practice and experience in the veterinary art.’¹⁵⁶ Not all those who assumed the title came from farriery backgrounds. In 1799 William Derrick was proprietor of ‘Livery Stables’ at no. 3 Granby Place. A decade later, following a period of insolvency, the business, which predominantly sold horses, was known as ‘Derrick and Co’s Veterinary Surgeons and Livery Stable-keepers.’¹⁵⁷

Woods and Matthews described the boundaries between qualified and unqualified vets as ‘extremely blurred’, with the latter group posing significant competition to the qualified men. They argued that a formal veterinary education was rarely seen as an end in itself.¹⁵⁸ Many of the college graduates, like their unqualified counterparts, pursued apprenticeships. A rare apprenticeship indenture, dated 1833, indicates that the master undertook to provide the apprentice with clothing, accommodation and medical care. In return obedience and good behaviour was required from the apprentice including an assurance ‘not to haunt or frequent ale houses.’¹⁵⁹ Several veterinary surgeons that practiced in Ireland saw apprenticeships in Britain. In 1826, John Walton (London, 1825) arrived in Dublin with the ‘experience of nine years practice under an eminent Veterinary Surgeon in Liverpool.’¹⁶⁰ The previous year the unqualified John Irwin established a practice in Belfast. He later claimed to have served an apprenticeship of seven years in England.¹⁶¹ Both men had indeed served long apprenticeships. Did Walton’s College Diploma afford him a major advantage over an unqualified man such as Irwin? To answer this question, one must examine the scope

¹⁵⁴ *Saunders’s News-Letter*, 7 November 1810, 16 March 1813. The 1810 Advertisement gives the name R. E. Bootineau, most likely a printing error; *McFeat’s Glasgow directory for 1809* (Glasgow, 1809), pp 14, 133.

¹⁵⁵ *Freeman’s Journal*, 7 September 1817.

¹⁵⁶ *Dublin Evening Post*, 25 July 1818; *Saunders’s News-Letter*, 22 July 1819.

¹⁵⁷ *Saunders’s News-Letter*, 4 March 1799, 31 July 1806, 3 June 1808.

¹⁵⁸ Woods and Matthews, ‘Little if at all’, p. 35.

¹⁵⁹ See Norman Comben, ‘Farriers’ and veterinary apprenticeship indentures’ in *Vet. Hist.*, new ser., vol. 7, no. 4 (1993), p. 148.

¹⁶⁰ *Dublin Evening Mail*, 30 November 1826.

¹⁶¹ *Belfast News-Letter*, 13 February 1824, 17 August 1830.

of veterinary instruction offered at the early veterinary colleges, especially the LVC, which was in existence for more than thirty years before William Dick established a school in Edinburgh.

When the LVC was established in 1791, based on the plans of Sainbel, it proposed to deliver instruction on the diseases of all farm animals. Three years training was deemed sufficient for this complete education. Entry levels were basic, pupils should be between fifteen and twenty- two years of age, be proficient at reading and writing, and were expected to be ‘capable, assiduous and well inclined.’ The founders also hoped to admit pupils from different countries for the purpose of disseminating the veterinary art.¹⁶² When the founding Principal, Sainbel, died in August 1793, a dual appointment was made of William Moorcroft, a graduate of Lyon and the only formally trained British veterinary surgeon at that time, and Edward Coleman, a trained human surgeon. Moorcroft quickly returned to his Oxford St practice leaving Coleman, who admitted to having no veterinary experience, in sole charge.¹⁶³ The LVC was now almost bankrupt, depending on inadequate private subscriptions that came predominantly from members of the medical profession and elite horse owners. However, war with France resulted in an urgent need for veterinary expertise in the Army. Consequently, the Government gave a grant of £1,500 to the LVC, and Coleman reduced the required period of instruction to as little as three months. The provision of a short course was meant to be a temporary measure, predominantly to re-train human surgeons to meet military veterinary needs. However, increased industrialisation resulted in opportunity for civilian veterinary surgeons. In response Coleman extended the shortened course to all students. During his tenure as principal,

¹⁶² Veterinary College London, *Veterinary College, London, established April 8, 1791 for the reformation and improvement of farriery and the treatment of cattle in general* (London, 1791), pp 9-13. A copy of this book survives at the National Library of Ireland; See also Charles Vial de Sainbel, *A plan for establishing an institution to cultivate and teach veterinary medicine* (London, 1790).

¹⁶³ Cotchin, *Royal Veterinary College*, pp 13-40; Pattison, *British veterinary profession*, p. 5; Gary Alder, *Beyond Bokhara: the life of William Moorcroft, Asian explorer and pioneer veterinary surgeon, 1767-1825* (London, 1985), p. 32. Coleman subsequently published *Observations on the structure, economy, and diseases of the foot of the horse, and on the principles and practice of shoeing* (2 vols., London, 1798 & 1802). However, his friend, Bransby Blake Cooper, on employing Coleman’s shoeing methods remarked that ‘no cat in pattens could go more lame.’ See Bransby Blake Cooper, *The life of Sir Ashley Cooper, Bart.* (London, 1843), p. 194.

which lasted until 1839, the duration of the course remained at a few months and, as a result, the standard of student remained low.¹⁶⁴

According to W. Arthur Cherry, a London vet, practitioners who depended on the ‘smattering of dogmatic theory’ taught at the college ultimately failed, as clients were generally discerning when their own interests were concerned. He argued that those who had acquired knowledge of all aspects of the profession had done so by ‘other ways and other means’, and that a proper veterinary education could only be achieved by increased periods of college study intermingled with periods of apprenticeship.¹⁶⁵ In conclusion, it is unlikely that, in a short course of instruction, college students learned anything beyond the treatments and procedures already in use by competent farriers and cow doctors. In his study of non-academic veterinary practitioners in Flanders at the end of the eighteenth-century, Filip Van Roosbroeck argued that the treatments of these individuals was ‘theoretically sophisticated’ and in line with the contemporary methods of the licentiates of the first veterinary schools. Treatments included bleeding, the appliance of setons, and the administration of medicines compounded from the latest exotic and chemical ingredients.¹⁶⁶ Nor were the treatments of college-trained vets any more humane than those of the unqualified. College instructors might have offered the student a better understanding of animal physiology and of the aetiology and pathology of disease but such knowledge rarely translated into skills desired in the marketplace.¹⁶⁷

There were both tensions and cordial relations between the qualified and unqualified veterinary surgeons in Ireland during the first half of the nineteenth-century. A contributor to *The Veterinarian* of 1831 noted that there was no law to prohibit the unqualified individual from ‘telling lies, or from practicing as a veterinary surgeon.’¹⁶⁸ Therefore, numbers of unqualified individuals increased and this rankled with those who had undergone formal college training and felt they were entitled to the

¹⁶⁴ S. A. Hall, ‘The struggle for the charter of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons’ in *Vet. Hist.*, new ser., vol. 8, nos. 1 & 2 (1994), pp 3-5; John Clabby, ‘A short history of the Royal Army Veterinary Corps [Abridged]’ in *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Medicine*, vol. 69 (February, 1976), p. 93.

¹⁶⁵ W. Arthur Cherry, ‘On the present condition of the veterinary profession’ in *Veterinarian*, vol. 20, no. 2 (February, 1847), pp 89-94.

¹⁶⁶ Filip Van Roosbroeck, ‘Caring for cows in a time of rinderpest: Non-academic veterinary practitioners in the county of Flanders, 1769-1785’ in *Social History of Medicine*, vol. 32, no. 3 (August, 2019), pp 502-22.

¹⁶⁷ Fisher, ‘The European Enlightenment’, p. 47.

¹⁶⁸ Anon, ‘Unqualified practice’, p. 583.

distinction.¹⁶⁹ One such individual, James Riley, (London, 1826) established a practice in Belfast shortly after graduation. He informed potential clients that he was the only ‘Professional Man’ in the province of Ulster and, therefore, hoped to be remunerated for ‘his long study and great expense at the Veterinary College.’ He further noted that since the death of James Gill (London, 1909) two persons ‘presumptuously’ commenced business calling themselves veterinary surgeons. He believed that these individuals held ‘erroneous ideas’ to think that they could impose themselves on the horse loving citizens of the city.¹⁷⁰ James Gill was the only qualified veterinary surgeon in the city since 1810.¹⁷¹ His death generated much competition, some unfriendly, in the city to service the needs of horse-owners. His wife, Martha, informed clients that despite reports ‘very industriously circulated in Town’ that she was to retire, she intended to continue in the business of horseshoeing and the preparation and sale of horse medicine.¹⁷² Three veterinary surgeons, Joseph Cochrane (London, 1820), John Irwin and Edward Wimbush arrived in the city.¹⁷³ Before Riley’s arrival Cochrane had left for Navan and quickly found himself before the Insolvent Debtors Court.¹⁷⁴ Riley’s protestations found little effect as Irwin and Wimbush continued to practice during the following years.¹⁷⁵

In Dublin a similar attempt was made by the college-educated men to enlighten the public as to the advantages of employing them over ‘unauthorised Persons.’ In truth this attempt had more to do with tensions between the Watts brothers than any effort to protect the ‘veterinary surgeon’ title. The disquiet appeared to have its origin in an ‘erroneous impression’ that George Watts had changed his residence in consequence of his brother’s aforementioned new practice. Evidence suggested that the split was initially amicable with George supplying his brother with materials. However, errors with deliveries and loss of clients conceivably forced George to attempt to manage any threat to his business.¹⁷⁶ John Watts would certainly have posed a threat. Hitherto, his name is unknown in Irish veterinary history. However, although unqualified, his success as an innovative veterinary surgeon and businessman in Dublin and later in

¹⁶⁹ Hall, ‘The struggle for the charter’, p. 4.

¹⁷⁰ *Belfast Commercial Chronicle*, 27 May, 23 September 1826.

¹⁷¹ *Belfast News-Letter*, 1 May 1810.

¹⁷² *Belfast News-Letter*, 6 January, 14 May 1824.

¹⁷³ *Belfast News-Letter*, 13 January, 13 February, 23 March, 4 May 1824, 27 October 1826.

¹⁷⁴ *Dublin Mercantile Advertiser*, 27 November 1826.

¹⁷⁵ *Belfast News-Letter* 10 November 1826.

¹⁷⁶ *Saunders’s News-Letter*, 12 June 1819, 22 January 1820.

Limerick suggested that he acquired great wealth and reputation, comparable to any of his contemporaries. By 1831 he was residing at Ryvale House, Leixlip and subscribing to such prestigious events as the Dublin Bay Regatta.¹⁷⁷ Like his brother, John's marriage to Maria, daughter of William Shaw of Celbridge and sister of the Viscountess Mountmorris, gave him access to the higher social classes.¹⁷⁸ By 1851 he had returned to Britain and held properties at Broadwood Hall, Shropshire and South Park, Middlesex.¹⁷⁹ In 1852 the marriage of his youngest daughter, Maria, to W. French Clay, a medic of the Bombay Army, was widely reported in both the Irish and British press.¹⁸⁰

Within months of his brother's departure from the Aungier Street business George Watts posted notices that he was 'THE VETERINARY SURGEON' [sic] and advised clients that he had no interests in any other veterinary establishment. He then joined forces with James Darley (London, 1799) to inform the public that they were the only persons practicing in Dublin with authority from the LVC. Others, calling themselves veterinary surgeons, had abused public confidence with a belief that they were duly authorised to practice the veterinary art.¹⁸¹ On 20 May 1820 *Saunders's News-Letter* reported that a valuable horse's neck was broken by 'some mismanagement' at one of the veterinary establishments in the city. Within days George Watts, Darley and Richard Johnston (London, 1820) placed a notice that the incident did not occur at any of their concerns and that they were 'the only Graduated veterinary Surgeons, in private practice in Dublin.'¹⁸² Johnston's inclusion is interesting. Two months earlier, John Watts, because of an increased workload, had taken into partnership the newly qualified Johnston, acknowledging that the latter's diploma, reproduced in the newspaper advertisement, afforded him 'knowledge of the many recent improvements in the Art.'¹⁸³ The partnership was dissolved 'by mutual consent' in March 1821 when Johnson established his own practice.¹⁸⁴ Such partnerships were not uncommon. In 1838 Mr. Campbell, an established but unqualified

¹⁷⁷ *Dublin Evening Mail*, 27 April 1831.

¹⁷⁸ *Dublin Evening Mail*, *Limerick Reporter*, 13 November 1840. Shortly after their arrival in Limerick Maria died at the age of thirty-one leaving Watts with three young children. She is buried in Cahernarry Cemetery, Limerick. See <http://historicgraves.com/graveyard/cahernarry/li-chny>.

¹⁷⁹ *Census Returns of England and Wales, 1851*, Class: HO107, Piece: 1703, Folio: 420, Page: 5, GSU Roll: 193611.

¹⁸⁰ *Morning Post*, 1 May, *Dublin Evening Mail*, 3 May, *The Advocate*, 12 May 1852.

¹⁸¹ *Saunders's News-Letter*, 22, 26 August 1818, 16 June, 22 July 1819, 22 January 1820.

¹⁸² *Saunders's News-Letter*, 20, 24 May 1820.

¹⁸³ *Dublin Evening Post*, 1 April 1820.

¹⁸⁴ *Saunders's News-Letter*, 28 March, 17 April 1821

practitioner in Cork, entered into a partnership with F. W. Price (1835), a recently qualified gentleman from England. Campbell announced that Price was the ‘only regularly qualified’ veterinary surgeon in Cork city.¹⁸⁵ It appears, therefore, that any disfavour towards Dublin’s unqualified individuals in 1820 came largely from George Watts. In truth, veterinary surgeons, with or without the diploma, in order to improve their individual lot, could and did work together. Stephen Matthews argued that both groups were more concerned with maintaining their economic position than with any struggle for recognition, as debated in the veterinary press.¹⁸⁶ Furthermore, the numbers of veterinary surgeons in Ireland, either qualified or unqualified, was small, so they tended to live in harmony. In Britain, competition was greater and it was common for vets to under-cut or bad mouth the competition, or to attempt to steal cases under the care of that competition.¹⁸⁷ Therefore, there is no evidence to suggest that the campaigns against the unqualified men in Belfast or Dublin had any adverse effect on their business. The lack of distinction between qualified and unqualified was reflected in public reaction to them. In essence, what the client wanted was the best man for the job.

The services offered by the early nineteenth-century veterinary surgeon differed little from those offered by the prominent farriers of a century earlier. Both settled in cities or larger towns where they were predominantly engaged in looking after the draught horses of commerce and those of the wealthier members of society. As veterinary surgeons their primary task was to engage in clinical work, administering direct medical treatment using simple surgical and manipulative techniques.¹⁸⁸ Closely related to clinical work was the examination of horses at sale for defects, including lameness, poor sight and respiratory problems. In Britain, it was standard practice that vendors of valuable horses gave a warranty to potential buyers, declaring that the horse was ‘sound.’¹⁸⁹ Warranty at sale was rarely given in Ireland, as highlighted in 1873 by

¹⁸⁵ *Southern Reporter*, 14 December 1837, 24 March 1838.

¹⁸⁶ Stephen Matthews, ‘Rural Cheshire’, p. 147.

¹⁸⁷ Woods and Matthews, ‘Little if at all’, p. 42.

¹⁸⁸ For an overview of equine diseases commonly treated by early nineteenth-century veterinary surgeons, and their popular treatments, see Thomas Peall, *Observations, chiefly practical, On some of the more common diseases of the horse* (Cork, 1814), pp 21-127; James Hunter, *A complete dictionary of farriery and horsemanship, containing the art of farriery in all its branches, compiled from the best authors* (Dublin, 1796).

¹⁸⁹ Richard Lawrence, *Observations on the causes which occasion unsoundness in horses* (Birmingham, 1809), p. 29; William Youatt, *The horse with a treatise on draught* (London, 1831), p. 361.

Captain Owen Slack, a purchaser of army horses, who informed a House of Lords Committee that such was ‘never known’ in Ireland, where an animal was always examined by a veterinary surgeon before a sale was finalised. The Committee report questioned the honesty and competence of the Irish vets in examining for soundness. Slack, when questioned by Lord Straithnairn if he had ever heard of a ‘certain class of very disreputable’ veterinary surgeons that warranted horses ‘improperly’ in Ireland, concluded that any improprieties ‘may be from want of knowledge, they may mean to do very well.’¹⁹⁰ Nevertheless, prominent vets habitually attended at Irish fairs, especially at the three ‘Great’ fairs, Ballinasloe, Cahirmee and Spancil Hill, where they examined for soundness, purchased horses and doctored injured animals.¹⁹¹ For example, in 1844, the Dublin papers reported that four or five of the ‘Metropolitan’ vets, including Watts, Johnston and Ferguson travelled to Ballinasloe to afford purchasers the assistance of their professional services.¹⁹² Vets attended the local fairs in a similar way. An onlooker at Moy fair in Tyrone noted that there was ‘a row of vits [vets] an’ when you bought a horse you could have him examined to see if he was soun’ for five shillins.’¹⁹³

Both qualified and unqualified vets examined horses for soundness. The task was lucrative, reflecting its importance. In 1804, Peall and Watts charged 11s 4½d for a ‘professional opinion on general soundness in all cases of buying and selling.’ An opinion in ‘ordinary cases’ merely cost 5s 5d.¹⁹⁴ In 1840, John Watts charged 10s 6d for his ‘opinion.’¹⁹⁵ However, with differing views on what constituted soundness, disputes were ‘eternally dragging’ veterinary surgeons into courts of law.¹⁹⁶ Irish newspapers regularly carried reports of cases where vets either defended their opinions or were called as witnesses in cases where a warranty was disputed or absent. For example, in 1806, the opinion of Thomas Peall, on a horse with a cataract, was taken over that of a human physician and an apothecary. The *Dublin Evening Post* stated that the case confirmed in the ‘most unequivocal manner, the superior value of Mr. Peall’s

¹⁹⁰ *Report from the select Committee of the House of Lords on Horses*, pp 194-5, H.C. 1873 (325), xiv, 1.

¹⁹¹ See Michael Shine, ‘Cahirmee horse fair’ in *Mallow Field Club Journal*, no. 19 (2001), p. 11; Denis A. Cronin ‘The great Munster horse-fair of Cahirmee, county Cork’ in Denis A. Cronin, Jim Gilligan and Karina Holton (eds), *Irish fairs and markets* (Dublin, 2001), p. 135.

¹⁹² *Dublin Evening Post, Dublin Evening Packet and Correspondent*, 5 October 1843.

¹⁹³ May Blair, *Hiring fairs and market places* (Belfast, 2007), p. 188.

¹⁹⁴ *Saunders’s News-Letter*, 2 July 1804.

¹⁹⁵ *Limerick Chronicle*, 2 December 1840.

¹⁹⁶ William Percival, ‘Soundness in horses’ in *Veterinarian*, vol. 2, no. 11 (November, 1829), p. 452.

testimony and judgement' on such matters.¹⁹⁷ Such cases were taken by all strata of society, illustrating the value and importance of horses. In 1829, Dublin vets, Dycer, Walker and Walton were involved in a case, where Lord Plunkett, having bought two geldings from the Bishop of Kilmore, subsequently sought damages of £500, claiming the animals were unsound. The newspapers reported that the interest created by the rank of the parties resulted in a 'tremendous' rush to gain admission and the court being 'exceedingly thronged' for the eight-hour duration of the case. The jury quickly returned in favour of the Bishop, as Plunkett took the animals without warranty.¹⁹⁸ In 1841, a case involving Mr. Cripps, an Aldermen of Limerick, who had previously sold a horse to Captain Smyth of Manchester, without warranty, had a similar outcome, the jury finding in favour of Cripps. Although the case was straightforward it was reported in the *Veterinarian* for derogatory comments made about the veterinary profession by Mr. Henn, Council for Cripps. When the unqualified John Watts and two Manchester vets testified that the animal was indeed unsound, Henn claimed that 'he could bring double the number of veterinary surgeons to swear anything.' In the *Veterinarian*, William Youatt vehemently defended the profession and argued that vets were more likely to adhere to the truth than their legal counterparts. He admitted that the status of the veterinarian did not match that of the legal man, but noted that his profession was growing and would not yield to the likes of Henn 'in scientific attainments, gentlemanly conduct, or honourable feeling.'¹⁹⁹

The precarious practice of the nineteenth-century Irish veterinary surgeon

The veterinary surgeon of the early nineteenth century rarely earned enough to survive from clinical work alone. Therefore, income from other sources was important, demonstrating the precarious livelihood of the vet. This extra income predominantly came from other equine related activities, only possible and profitable in larger urban settings.²⁰⁰ A perusal of Limerick newspaper advertisements from the early decades of the nineteenth-century highlighted the range of activities undertaken by the veterinary surgeons in that city, where James Deacon (London, 1808), James Corbet (London,

¹⁹⁷ *Dublin Evening Post*, 5 August 1806.

¹⁹⁸ *The Pilot, Dublin Morning Register*, 8 June, *Dublin Evening Post*, 11 June 1829.

¹⁹⁹ Y., 'Cripps v Smyth' in *Veterinarian*, vol. 14, no. 5 (May, 1841), pp 291-96.

²⁰⁰ *Leinster Express*, 11 August 1843. The report, copied from the *Irish Farmer's Journal*, noted that it was unfortunate for Irish farmers that veterinary surgeons were usually to be found only in the vicinity of large towns, 'the only place where such persons can at present be remunerated for devoting their time to the profession.'

1837), and Charles Fraser (Edinburgh, 1841) practiced alongside a number of unqualified men, George Parris, John Watts, Frederick Pollon and Mr. Evans. The shoeing of horses continued to be the mainstay of the profession. Forges provided both income and opportunity. A gentleman who brought his horse to be shod was likely to seek doctoring for his animal in the future. In 1830, George Parris arrived from London and opened a 'Veterinary Forge' where he pledged to shoe horses 'on the most approved principles.' Parris stabled sick or lame animals in his 'Veterinary Infirmary.'²⁰¹

Accommodation was also provided for the horses and carriages of visitors to the towns and cities.²⁰² Providing livery again offered the vet further opportunities to shoe or doctor animals. In 1828, Mr. Evans offered 'good livery at 14 shillings per week.' John Watts provided an 'extensive and suitable Covered Place' for the accommodation of gentlemen's carriages.²⁰³ By 1832, Parris afforded 'Travellers and Lodgers' the ultimate package, providing both visitors and their animals with accommodation at his Paris Hotel and adjoining livery stables.²⁰⁴ Others became involved in the sale of horses, carriages, gigs and jaunting cars. In 1835 James Deacon proposed establishing 'public sales by auction...as at Tattersall's, London and Dycer's, Dublin.'²⁰⁵ Charles Fraser helped his clients to acquire hired help by keeping a register of grooms and other 'men servants' requiring employment.²⁰⁶ The majority of the early Limerick vets were involved in the breeding of thoroughbreds, horse racing, or judging at local shows. For example, in 1845 'Diamond', the property of Parris, stood at Hyne's livery stables, Ennis. The cost of servicing a gentleman's mare was £2, a farmer's mare 30s, and 2s 6d to the groom.²⁰⁷ Charles Fraser was involved in organising the Limerick Steeple Chase in 1843.²⁰⁸ James Corbet was amongst the judges of the horses when the Royal Agricultural Improvement Society of Ireland (RAISI) held their annual show at Limerick in 1846.²⁰⁹

²⁰¹ *Limerick Chronicle*, 19 May, *Limerick Evening Post and Clare Sentinel*, 21 May 1830.

²⁰² See Donal Horgan, *The Victorian visitor to Ireland: Irish tourism 1840-1910* (Cork, 2002), p. 64.

²⁰³ *Limerick Evening Post and Clare Sentinel*, 11 July 1828; *Limerick Chronicle*, 21 November 1840.

²⁰⁴ *Limerick Herald*, 6 March 1832.

²⁰⁵ *Limerick Chronicle*, 19 September 1835.

²⁰⁶ *Limerick Reporter*, 7 September 1841.

²⁰⁷ *Clare Journal*, 17 April 1845.

²⁰⁸ *Limerick Reporter*, 14 March 1843, 26 March 1844.

²⁰⁹ *Dublin Evening Packet*, *Dublin Evening Post*, 15 August 1846.

The sale of homemade animal medicine also formed part of the vet's income. Those who attended veterinary schools received some instruction on *materia medica*, including knowledge of common plants and herbs.²¹⁰ However, many recipes were acquired during apprenticeships or from the pages of contemporary veterinary books. Chemists and druggists derived medicines from similar sources. For example, in 1831 the Limerick Medical Hall compounded veterinary medicines 'from recipes of White, Clater and other Veterinary Surgeons.'²¹¹ Medicines were orally administered as drenches or balls. Embrocations or lotions were applied to the skin. The range of such products was demonstrated in an extensive advertisement posted by William Miles (London, 1836), a Cork vet, in 1842-43.²¹² Administering medicines orally could be injurious to the operator's hand, which led to the development of such instruments as balling gags, balling guns and stomach pumps.²¹³ While the majority of medicines were sold locally, others, like George Watts' lauded 'Embrocation', which removed various skin blemishes, found a wider audience and popularity over many decades. Following Watts' death in 1858, the embrocation was subsequently prepared by several commercial companies, both in Ireland and Britain, including Barclay & Sons, London and William Cooke, Gorey.²¹⁴ In 1884, the rights to the 'trademarks or labels' of the Embrocation resulted in a court case between two Dublin companies, Harvey and Co. and Boyd and Goodwin.²¹⁵ During the following decades both companies continued to manufacture and market the products, Boyd and Goodwin as the 'Original Watts', Harvey as 'Harvey's Watts.' The latter produced hundreds of testimonials as to their efficiency from as far afield as India, Ceylon and South Africa.²¹⁶ The Embrocation was advertised as late as 1942.²¹⁷

²¹⁰ Veterinary College London, *Veterinary College*, p. 11.

²¹¹ *Limerick Evening Post*, 28 October 1831.

²¹² Charles Thompson (ed.), *The county and city of Cork almanac, 1843* (Cork, 1843). *Cork Examiner*, 7 November 1842.

²¹³ See John O'Connor, 'Some veterinary instruments of historical interest' in *Ir. Veterinary Jn.*, vol. 52, no. 10 (October, 1999), p. 562; David Wright, 'Notes on balling guns' in *Vet. Hist.*, new ser., vol. 6, no. 1 (1989), pp 13-22.

²¹⁴ *Liverpool Daily Express*, 1 December 1868; *Cork Examiner*, 18 September 1869; *York Herald*, 11 June 1870; *Freeman's Journal* 6 July 1877.

²¹⁵ *Dublin Daily Express, Belfast News-Letter*, 8 March 1884.

²¹⁶ Stratten & Stratten, *Dublin, Cork and south of Ireland, a literary, commercial and social review past and present* (London, 1892), p. 65; Harvey and Company, *The horse owner's handy notebook, or common diseases of horses and other animals, with their remedies* (17th ed., Dublin, 1908), pp 11-96.

²¹⁷ *Western People*, 13 June 1942.

Another long-lived and celebrated product was Olden's Application, developed c.1830 by Robert Olden, a Cork wax and tallow chandler. Astutely and widely advertised the product was well received. Initially Olden claimed it healed cuts, bruises and sores in both horses and humans.²¹⁸ Over the following years the claimed attributes of the Application steadily increased to include restoring a horse's hair, treating gangrene, foot rot in sheep and sore teats in cows.²¹⁹ Its success prompted Olden to pursue veterinary studies at the Edinburgh College where he took a particular interest in the medicines and chemicals 'lately introduced and adopted' by the British and continental veterinary schools.²²⁰ In April 1839, Robert Olden, along with his son Robert Jun., qualified as veterinary surgeons at Edinburgh, with the younger Olden receiving the prestigious Silver Medal, given annually to the most distinguished student.²²¹ Another son, George (Edinburgh, 1845), subsequently joined the family practice, established at Winthrop Street, Cork.²²² Veterinary products that carried the Olden name long outlasted the practice, which evidently terminated on the death of Robert Jnr. in 1876.²²³ The Application was advertised until the 1930s, manufactured by various Cork chemists. In 1892, the compiler of *Stratten's* noted that F. W. Russell, grocer of Patrick Street, continued to sell 'large quantities' of the product, which was regarded as 'invaluable' and had gone 'far to obviate in many cases the services of the veterinary surgeon.'²²⁴

The first generation of Irish based veterinary surgeons settled predominately in either Dublin or Belfast, urban centres only a boat trip from Britain, with large equine populations that offered considerable opportunities for work.²²⁵ The aforementioned James Deacon was the first qualified vet to set up practice outside of the two major

²¹⁸ *Dublin Evening Packet and Correspondent*, 7, 21 July, *Southern Reporter and Cork Commercial Courier*, 4 August 1831; *Bell's Life in London and Sporting Chronicle*, 6 October 1833; Harry Harewood, *A dictionary of sports; or, companion to the field, the forest and the riverside* (London, 1835), p. 363.

²¹⁹ *Dublin Evening Post*, 6 December, *Southern Reporter and Cork Commercial Courier*, 24 December 1836.

²²⁰ See *Dublin Morning Register*, 28 November 1836; *Limerick Standard*, 24 October, *Southern Reporter and Cork Commercial Courier*, 25 November 1837.

²²¹ *Caledonian Mercury*, 2 May 1839.

²²² *Southern Reporter and Cork Commercial Courier*, 3 October 1839, 4 August, 5 September 1840; *Laing's Cork mercantile directory for 1863* (Cork, 1863), p. 78; *Cork Examiner*, 24 August 1861.

²²³ *Cork Examiner*, 13 April 1876. Wills and Administrations 1876, p. 572

²²⁴ Stratten & Stratten, *Dublin, Cork & south of Ireland*, pp 206-7; *Cork Examiner*, 5 September 1931.

²²⁵ For example, see Rob Goodbody, *Irish historic towns atlas, no. 26, Dublin, Part III, 1756-1847* (Dublin, 2014), p. 7.

urban centres, settling in Limerick in 1809.²²⁶ The first comprehensive list of graduates of the London College appeared in the *Rules and Regulations of the Royal Veterinary College*, published in 1831. Seven of the fifteen Irish based veterinary surgeons listed were based in Dublin, with one practitioner each in Ballinrobe, Belfast, Carlow, Clonmel, Kildare, Limerick, Londonderry and Longford.²²⁷ Nineteenth-century veterinary surgeons freely advertised their services in local newspapers and these notices offer an excellent insight into how a fledgling practice might develop (or indeed, fail), the practitioner's background, the services on offer and the potential clientele. Dublin or Belfast offered vets a large equine population and, therefore, anticipated business. Consequently, new veterinary businesses were immediately established in the practitioner's own premises. Those wishing to establish practice in provincial towns, where veterinary surgeons were hitherto unknown, were less likely to take such risks. Accordingly, the forges and stabling attached to hotels proved very attractive to a veterinary surgeon upon arrival in a town, where he hoped to potentially establish a permanent practice. Stagecoaches, carters and country visitors stopped to rest and horses needed to be shod and doctored. If enough business were procured the veterinary practitioner could move to a permanent establishment: if not, potential business could be sought elsewhere. Other studies have shown that combining the dual veterinary-hostelry role was quite common in early nineteenth-century Britain.²²⁸

Establishing a veterinary practice in mid nineteenth-century Ireland took patience and determination. For example, Peter Murray, a native of Tulla, Clare, established a veterinary practice in Tralee in 1848. Its development is illustrative of how many veterinary practices evolved in the larger provincial towns at that time. On arrival he indicated that it was his intention to make Tralee his place of residence, should he meet with 'sufficient encouragement.' During the first year he formed connections with three different hotels.²²⁹ By 1853 he had established a permanent practice in the town, having also opened a temporary premises in Killarney, in order to solicit business from a wider area.²³⁰ As the first trained vet in Tralee town he had opposition from the local farriers, especially John Lawlor, in business for over thirty

²²⁶ *Limerick Chronicle*, 5 April 1809.

²²⁷ Royal Veterinary College, *Rules and regulations of the Royal Veterinary College* (London, 1831), pp 18-21.

²²⁸ Joan Lane, 'The English provincial veterinarian and his practice' in *Vet. Hist.*, vol. 6 (1975-6), p. 16.

²²⁹ *Kerry Evening Post*, 24 May, 11 November 1848, 24 January 1849.

²³⁰ *Tralee Chronicle*, 23 March 1850; *Kerry Evening Post*, 19 March 1853.

years. On Murray's arrival Lawlor advertised his 'Horse Shoeing and Farriery Establishment', which subsequently became a 'Veterinary' establishment, employing sober, industrious men, brought to Tralee from Dublin and Limerick 'at great expense.'²³¹ Murray was one of the few mid-nineteenth century Irish veterinarians who managed to sustain a practice over a long period, working in Tralee until his death almost sixty years later.²³²

Evidence suggests that recognition and wealth for the nineteenth-century Irish veterinary surgeon rarely came from veterinary practice, but, as in the case of the Watts brothers, from marriage connections, success in the thoroughbred industry or exceptional medicine sales. It appears that the majority of practitioners struggled financially, veterinary practice being generally transitory, involving re-location on several occasions to seek new opportunities and a livelihood. For example, in a ten-year period George Johnson (London, 1828), brother of the aforementioned Richard, saw two spells of practice in Dublin interrupted by time in Belfast, followed by a Cork practice, where he specialised in compounding horse medicines.²³³ However, having spent only a few months in that city he was appointed veterinary surgeon to the 7th Hussars and subsequently served with distinction in India.²³⁴ Even those who found some stability in a locality were required to neglect the home business to avail of more lucrative opportunities, buying or inspecting horses at distant fairs. Occasionally, to satisfy regular customers, efforts were made at partnerships, which were rarely successful and usually short-lived. For example, in Limerick, John Watts entered into partnerships with both James Corbet and George Parris, the former subsequently described by Corbet as 'unfortunate.'²³⁵

George Parris was representative of a nineteenth-century vet, who despite inventiveness and a constant search for new opportunity, struggled to achieve stability and success. The failure of his previously mentioned hotel venture resulted in the seizure of his entire concern by a judgment of the Tholsel Court of Record.²³⁶ At that

²³¹ *Kerry Evening Post*, 16 December 1848; *Kerry Examiner*, 8 March 1853.

²³² See *Kerry Sentinel*, 16 January 1904.

²³³ *Dublin Morning Register*, 8 December 1828, *Belfast Commercial Chronicle*, 25 May 1831, *Saunders's News-Letter*, 22 January 1836, *Southern Reporter*, 16 March 1837.

²³⁴ *Dublin Evening Packet*, 1 June 1837.

²³⁵ *Limerick and Clare Examiner*, 29 April 1848, 19 May, 16 June 1849.

²³⁶ Limerick Archives holds a digital copy of a Volume recording details of cases brought before the Tholsel Court, 19 April 1811-30 October 1833 (L/OC/6/5). See <https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/archives.limerick.ie/Digital+Archive/Government+Collections/L.OC+Limerick+OI>

time Parris claimed to have annual contracts to shoe three-hundred horses, at 35s each.²³⁷ On the strength of this business and recognition through horse breeding and other cultural pursuits, such as the Phrenology Society, he subsequently rebuilt the practice at Thomas Street.²³⁸ Nor did his skills as a vet go un-noticed. Although the *Veterinarian* had previously described his treatment of gripe as a ‘dangerous practice’, the Limerick press subsequently described Parris as a ‘skilful anatomist’, his home-made instruments as ‘ingeniously constructed.’²³⁹ As a result, it appears he came to the attention of a small wider audience in neighbouring counties who wished to avail of his services. He appeared to be swayed by the requests of such gentlemen but ultimately gained little. In 1840, ‘at the request of many influential Gentlemen’ he established a practice at Patrick Street, Cork, leaving the Limerick business under the management of an assistant. Within two months the Cork premises was closed, apparently to ‘comply’ with the wishes of his Limerick clients.²⁴⁰ The year 1843 saw employment with Viscount Gort and ‘Professional’ tours throughout Galway and Kerry, the *Kerry Examiner* describing Parris as ‘the veterinary tourist from Limerick.’²⁴¹ It appears that Parris eventually conceded that fully engaging with his Limerick clients was paramount. His remaining years of practice in the city involved a period as veterinary surgeon to the local garrison of the Royal Horse Artillery.²⁴² In July 1849, he announced that he would deliver a lecture titled ‘Animal Vegetative Laws’ to the RAISI, of which he was a member, at the Dublin Cattle Show. He humbly informed that Society that the ‘only donation’ he could give was his thirty years of practical experience.²⁴³ Paris died in 1854 aged fifty-nine.²⁴⁴

Summary

Prior to the foundation of the LVC, in 1791, the health care of animals, especially horses, was entrusted to horse-doctors, blacksmiths and farriers. Farriers could roughly

[d+Corporation/L_OC_6_5Watermarked.pdf](#). The Parris case is on pp 581, 584. See also *Limerick Chronicle*, 19 January, *Limerick Evening Post*, 5 February 1833.

²³⁷ *Limerick Evening Post*, 1 February 1833.

²³⁸ *Limerick Chronicle*, 18 February 1835, 31 March 1838, 15 August 1846, 11 March 1848.

²³⁹ Anon, ‘Spasmodic colic in the horse’ in *Veterinarian*, vol. 2, no. 2 (February, 1829), pp 74-5; *Limerick Chronicle*, 10 June 1843; *Limerick Reporter*, 3 September 1844.

²⁴⁰ *Southern Reporter and Cork Commercial Chronicle*, 1, 27 October, 26 November 1840.

²⁴¹ *Limerick Reporter*, 10 February, *Kerry Examiner*, 28 March, 7 April, *Galway Vindicator and Connaught Advertiser*, 14 June 1843.

²⁴² *Limerick Chronicle*, 1 April 1846.

²⁴³ *Limerick Chronicle*, 11 July, *Limerick Reporter*, 13 July 1849.

²⁴⁴ *Limerick Reporter*, 6 January 1854.

be divided into three groupings, members of the elite Company of Farriers, which operated in London, 'professional' farriers, who had undertaken apprenticeships similar to their London counterparts, and self-styled farriers, horse-doctors and blacksmiths who assumed the title. Early eighteenth-century Irish newspaper advertisements suggested that individuals from the latter two groupings came to Ireland, either to work in the stables of well-to-do gentlemen, or to establish in private practice. Evidence suggests that many were quite successful, mainly engaged in horse-shoeing, clinical work, and the manufacture and sale of medicines. However, compared to its medical counterpart, veterinary practice was primitive and disorganised. The first steps in improving animal health care came with the establishment of the veterinary schools, initially in France. The first veterinary surgeons to arrive in Ireland differed little from the farriers, predominantly treating horses. In fact, many were no more than farriers, merely assuming the more respectable title of veterinary surgeon. Nor is there any evidence to suggest that the college trained vet was more competent than the unqualified man. Because of the convictions of its Principal, Edward Coleman, the instruction at the London College was meagre. Therefore, the unqualified man, with experience and a favourable apprenticeship, was often superior in knowledge and skill to his college counterpart. Although there was some friction between the qualified and unqualified in Ireland, both groups were generally more concerned with maintaining their economic position, and as a result often worked together. For many establishing and maintaining a practice, especially outside of larger urban settings, proved difficult. The early nineteenth-century vet found it hard to make a living from clinical work alone and was required to engage in other horse related activities, such as horse sales and livery. He often saw new opportunities in other districts, but if he pursued same risked losing his core business. The client wanted an efficient and consistent service, whether from a veterinary surgeon, farrier or local horse-doctor, and was unwilling to wait for a practitioner who was not fully committed to that task.

Chapter 2: Cattle Practice in the Nineteenth-Century

Little long-term investment in cattle health

Ireland is generally seen as more suited climatically to pastoral agriculture, partly due to the maritime climate, with a high rainfall, and low summer and high winter temperatures.¹ However, on occasion, as during the French wars when Irish agricultural produce found a ready market in Britain, the acreage under tillage expanded. The termination of the Napoleonic War saw a shift back from tillage to pasture. This shift was accelerated in the wake of the Great Famine, driven by demand for livestock and meat products in the British market.² Cattle numbers doubled from 2.7 million in 1848 to 5 million in 1914. Although sheep numbers fluctuated greatly, they rose from 2 million to 3.6 million during the same period. In 1845, the livestock sector accounted for about one-third of the value of agricultural output, by 1914 it contributed three-quarters of the total value.³ This transformation was not straightforward. Whilst recovering from the Great Famine, Ireland saw two agricultural depressions, the first from 1859 to 1864, the second, from 1877 to 1879, which helped provoke the Land Wars. Both were driven by a series of crop-damaging wet seasons, which saw poorly nourished cattle and sheep starving and susceptible to livestock diseases, such as liver-fluke and sheep-rot.⁴

Despite the domination of pastoral farming, and occasional widespread outbreaks of livestock disease, the Irish veterinary surgeon of the nineteenth-century was rarely called upon to treat sick farm animals. The Agricultural Revolution of the eighteenth and early nineteenth-century was slow to progress in Ireland and a

¹ Crotty, *Irish agricultural production*, p. 4.

² See Liam Kennedy and Peter. M. Solar, *Irish Agriculture: A price history from the mid nineteenth-century to the eve of the First World War* (Dublin, 2007). This study examines the price effects of epic events such as the French Wars, the Great Famine and the Land Wars; Cormac Ó Gráda, 'Irish agricultural output before and after the Famine' in *Journal of European Economic History*, vol. 13, no. 1 (1984), pp 149-64; Michael Turner, *After the famine: Irish agriculture, 1850-1914* (Cambridge, 1996). See, in particular Chapter 2, 'Agricultural Change', pp 15-64; Frank Armstrong, 'Beef with potatoes: Food, agriculture and sustainability in modern Ireland' in *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, vol. 115C (2015), pp 418-20.

³ Joseph Lee, *The modernisation of Irish Society 1848-1918*, p. 10.

⁴ J. S., Donnelly 'The Irish agricultural depression of 1859-64' in *Irish Economic and Social History*, vol. 3 (1976), pp 33-54; Sam Clark, 'The social composition of the Land League' in *Irish Historical Studies*, vol. 17, no. 68 (September, 1971), pp 449-51.

widespread ignorance of the principles of scientific farming prevailed. Contemporary accounts of poor management, insufficient fodder and inadequate housing suggested that cattle-keepers, who failed to provide the basics necessary for good animal health, were unlikely to seek veterinary assistance when illness struck.⁵ Arthur Young suggested that even the wealthier graziers neglected their stock in favour of a grand lifestyle and argued that works of improvement would be ‘mortifying to their sloth.’⁶ Take, for example, the state of livestock farming in Kerry when Peter Murray (Edinburgh, 1844) established a practice there. Murray’s arrival in 1848 coincided with an agricultural survey conducted by James Grant, a land steward and agriculturalist. Grant found that stock was generally sold in a wretched condition, being little more than skin and bone. £2 was the average price for such cattle whereas £10 could be generated if the cattle had been fed on grass and turnips before being disposed of. Grant claimed that the finest turnip land in Britain or Ireland was lying uncultivated, producing ‘dock-roots and briars.’⁷

The majority of Irish livestock owners had little long-term investment in cattle health and, therefore, rarely sought veterinary advice, resorting to cow-doctors, superstitious practices and home remedies, or simply cutting their losses by slaughtering the animal for meat.⁸ Even if livestock-keepers wished to avail of the vet’s services, few were available. In 1863 the RCVS classified its ‘Present Members’ according to their locations. Out of 1,509 college-educated vets only thirty-six practiced in the whole of Ireland. In contrast, Scotland had 165 trained practitioners, whilst 118 saw Army service. The returns from many of the English counties far outnumbered those of Ireland. For example, Yorkshire had seventy trained men. Of the Irish college trained vets nine were Dublin based, four in both Cork and Belfast, two in each of Limerick, the Curragh, Waterford and Armagh, whilst Kildare, Ennis, Dundalk, Monaghan, Tralee, Parsonstown, Clonmel, Drogheda and Enniskillen had one vet each. Two others furnished no address.⁹ Accordingly, it is hardly surprising that an 1860

⁵ Anon, ‘Agriculture’ in *The Dublin Penny Journal*, vol. 1, no. 1 (30 June, 1832), pp 3-4; Henry Dutton, *Statistical survey of the county of Clare with observations on the means of improvement* (Dublin, 1808), pp 110-1.

⁶ Arthur Young, *A tour in Ireland: Vol. II* (Dublin, 1780), p. 21.

⁷ James Grant, *Review of agriculture in Kerry* (Tralee, 1850), p. 15.

⁸ John Sproule, *A treatise on agriculture, suited to the soil and climate of Ireland* (Dublin, 1839), p. 595.

⁹ Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, *Register of members, from January, 1794 to December, 1862, Inclusive* (London, 1863), pp 62-75.

correspondent to the *King's County Chronicle* noted that in the rural districts of Ireland a licenced veterinary surgeon was 'a rare and exceptional resident.' In general, it was only at leading horse fairs that vets were to be met with outside of urban settings. Therefore, the writer claimed that both the medical and surgical treatment of cattle was generally entrusted to the village-farrier or cow-doctor.¹⁰ Hamilton Geale, a Trinity educated barrister who held three thousand acres in counties Limerick and Cork, similarly noted that Irish cattle keepers were totally dependent on quacks 'in grappling' with cattle disease. In county Limerick, where livestock were an important source of income to the 'landed gentry', he had personally seen and lamented the complete absence of the scientific treatment of diseases of cattle.¹¹

Cattle keepers in rural districts had little access to a college-trained veterinary surgeon. However, there was no shortage of potential bovine patients in the urban domain of the trained practitioner. During the nineteenth-century dairies were plentiful in urban centres, providing milk for the local population. In 1801, it was estimated that 1,600 milch cows were kept within a four-mile radius of Dublin city centre. Cow numbers had fallen from an estimated seven thousand in the previous years because of a shortage of feed grain. The surplus cows were consigned to the butcher.¹² As the population of the city subsequently grew so also did cow numbers. According to the statistics collected by *Dairy World*, of 1893, Edinburgh, with 22,000 cows, was said to have the largest number of cows of 'any city in the world.' Dublin was second with 11,000.¹³ Notwithstanding such large cow numbers there is no evidence to suggest that veterinary surgeons, qualified or not, played any significant part in their veterinary care. Sick animals were either slaughtered for human consumption or treated by their owners or cow-doctors. William Jenkinson, a native of Tandragee, county Armagh, was a cow-doctor and medicine vendor who provided veterinary services to dairymen in Dublin city. In 1816 he placed a notice, with testimonials, in the Belfast press, claiming that he had discovered 'a never-failing remedy' for the Murrain in cattle. The prescription was available for 20s, but only when enough subscriptions had arrived that might amount

¹⁰ *King's County Chronicle*, 14 November 1860.

¹¹ *Dublin Evening Mail*, 15 July 1864; For Beale's pedigree see Edward Walford, *The county families of the United Kingdom* (London, 1869), p. 397; U. H. Hussey de Burgh, *The landowners of Ireland* (Dublin, 1878), p. 178.

¹² Joseph Archer, *Statistical survey of the county Dublin* (Dublin, 1801), p. 58-60

¹³ See Anon, 'Cows in cities' in *Veterinarian*, vol. 66, no. 6 (June, 1893), p. 365.

to ‘a fair remuneration.’¹⁴ In 1819 Jenkinson, on the request of his ‘Friends (Members of the Farming Society)’, established a premises at 61 Great Britain Street, Dublin, where he prepared and sold medicines for the cure of diseases incident to cattle and sheep. Medicines were available at the establishment or might be posted to the country.¹⁵ The following year he published a little-known treatise that suggested he doctored cows in Dublin dairies. He described curing a cow belonging to Mr. Molloy, a dairyman of Marshall’s Lane. The animal’s swelled body prompted crowds to come to see her out of curiosity.¹⁶

During the nineteenth-century cattle owners were reluctant to use the veterinary services of the qualified man, as a widespread belief prevailed that college vets had little ability in treating anything other than the horse. Additionally, farmers were unwilling to pay the fees for the services of a veterinary surgeon. The *Irish Farmers’ Gazette*, dated 30 January 1858, noted that many farmers agreed that it would be desirable to have access to properly trained veterinarians. However, there were ‘too many’ that held a low estimation of the college man’s ability whilst fully believing the ‘absurd assertions’ of a herdsman or local cow-doctor.¹⁷ The veterinary surgeon was commonly seen as merely a horse-doctor, an assumption that was hardly surprising as equine pathology dominated the college curriculum. Only a few Irish-based vets professed to be anything other than horse-doctors, with adequate knowledge of cattle diseases. Newspaper notices posted by two vets, the unqualified James Shaughnessy, Kildare, and Samuel Hodges (London, 1832), Downpatrick, suggested a clear distinction between a veterinary surgeon and an individual who doctored cattle. Both claimed to be a ‘Veterinary Surgeon and Cattle Doctor.’¹⁸ Any knowledge of bovine diseases came predominately from experience. In 1830 John Irwin, because of his seven-year apprenticeship in England, claimed to be the ‘only Veterinary Surgeon in Ireland who understands the diseases of Black Cattle.’¹⁹ Edward Dycer similarly claimed experience of extensive cattle practice in Roxburgshire and Northumberland.²⁰ George Hayden (London, 1846), an early Galway vet, claimed experience of the entire

¹⁴ *Belfast Commercial Chronicle*, 6 July, 10 August, *Belfast News-Letter*, 5 July, 9 August 1816.

¹⁵ *Dublin Evening Post*, 12 June 1819.

¹⁶ William Jenkinson, *A treatise on the disorders in cattle and sheep* (Dublin, 1820), p. 86.

¹⁷ *Farmer’s Gazette*, 30 January 1858.

¹⁸ *Westmeath Journal*, 11 March 1830; *Downpatrick Recorder*, 24 January 1846.

¹⁹ *Belfast News-Letter*, 31 August 1830.

²⁰ *Dublin Evening Mail*, 1 February 1841.

management of seven hundred dairy cows at the largest dairy establishment in London. He had witnessed an outbreak of pleura-pneumonia first hand and was so confident as to its treatment that he offered to waive his fees if a cure were not affected.²¹

The veterinary surgeon's shortcomings regarding non-equine practice were best highlighted by the admissions of Thomas Peall, Professor to the Dublin Society. In 1811, whilst quartered at Ballincollig Barracks, Peall was requested by the Royal Cork Institution (RCI) to investigate a fatal outbreak of 'Water Murrain' amongst cattle near Middleton. He admitted that he had no practical experience of cattle disease and no other guide to direct him other than 'the imperfect one of analogy.' He subsequently concluded that the animals had died from suffocation caused by a rapid inflammation of the glands around the mouth and throat. Although unable to 'positively' determine whether the disorder was contagious he suggested that it was prudent to remove the diseased cattle from the herd. He also recommended the application of a strong blister to the affected parts, accompanied by topical bleeding. Peall, owing to his own shortcomings, was slow to criticise local 'cheap and innocent' treatments, which, in reality, differed little from his own. On the other hand, he was highly critical of certain superstitions that were causing 'great alarm' in the diseased district. Farmers had resorted to patrolling their lands in fear that neighbours would enter thereon with cattle that had died of the disease. Peall explained that a superstitious notion prevailed that by doing so herd owners would free their own land from the infection and transfer it to that of their neighbours. He denounced such practices as having 'not the smallest foundation in truth and reason', fearing they might lead to feuds and animosities and urged 'capable' individuals, presumably the scientific men of the Institution, to enlighten those involved.²² In the following issue a letter from William Allen, Kanturk, highlighted that the cow-doctors had a better understanding of the disease than Peall. Allen knew the condition as Blain, in Irish *Builg*. He explained how his 'very understanding' herdsman had successfully treated the condition by rubbing salt into cuts under the animal's tongue, bleeding and fumigation with damp straw.²³ In 1820, in his capacity with the Dublin Society, Peall received an enquiry from a member regarding foot rot in his Merino sheep. The disease was rampant in the breed, so much

²¹ *Galway Mercury and Connaught Weekly Advertiser*, 15 January 1848.

²² Thomas Peall, 'On the disease of horned cattle called the water murrain' in *Munster Farmer's Magazine*, vol. 1, no. 4 (January, 1812), pp 323-7.

²³ William Allen, 'On the murrain' in *Munster Farmer's Magazine*, vol. 2, no. 5 (April, 1812), pp 10-2.

so that very few were exhibited at the Farming Society's sale that year.²⁴ The enquiry led to three lectures and the subsequent publication of *A Treatise on the Foot-rot in Sheep*. In the book Peall freely admitted that when first consulted he knew nothing of the subject, as the treatment of sheep had not 'been taken up at the Veterinary College of London.'²⁵

In an effort to treat cattle, the vet often improvised. In 1828, a correspondent to the *Veterinarian* wrote about the dilemma facing any newly qualified practitioner attempting to establish a country practice without knowledge of the diseases of cattle or sheep. He wondered what first impression such an individual might leave when called upon by a 'well-informed and wealthy grazier.' He concluded that if the practitioner attended the case he would probably disgrace himself, and if he honestly confessed his ignorance the client would think little of his professional abilities and was unlikely to call on his services again.²⁶ Another contributor to that journal claimed that vets overcame such obstacles by applying equine treatments to other animals, modifying traditional methods, or by gleaning knowledge from veterinary textbooks. However he believed the majority learned the hard way by being submitted for a period to a course of 'self-degradation and blundering practice, which he is ashamed to think of.'²⁷ Pupils of the London College were advised to receive private instruction elsewhere in the city on the diseases of cattle.²⁸ Private veterinary instruction began in 1828 when William Youatt, an ardent critic of the London College, delivered an introductory lecture on the diseases of farm animals other than the horse.²⁹ He argued that this subject was 'utterly neglected' at the London School and claimed that contemporary books on cattle disease, often employed in practice, were 'the ridicule of the continental schools and the disgrace of ours.'³⁰ By 1831 he had obtained permission to deliver his lectures as part of the programme at the University of London.³¹ When ill

²⁴ *Dublin Weekly Register*, 24 November 1821.

²⁵ *Freeman's Journal*, 19, 24 February 1821; Thomas Peall, *A treatise on the foot-rot in sheep* (Dublin, 1822), pp iii-ix.

²⁶ Philo-Vet, 'Veterinary education' in *Veterinarian*, vol. 1, no. 3 (March, 1828), pp 102-4.

²⁷ Anon, 'The agriculturist and the veterinary surgeon' in *Veterinarian*, vol. 11, no. 2 (February, 1838), p. 103.

²⁸ John Roberts, 'On the study of the diseases of cattle' in *Veterinarian*, vol. 2, no. 3 (March, 1829), pp 97-8.

²⁹ *Morning Chronicle*, 4 November 1828.

³⁰ William Youatt 'Substance of an introductory lecture on the anatomy and diseases of cattle, sheep, swine, dogs, &c' in *Veterinarian*, vol. 1, no. 12 (December, 1828), pp 443-50.

³¹ London University, *The London University calendar for the year 1832* (London, 1832), p. liv; *Morning Chronicle*, 31 January 1831.

health caused Youatt to discontinue his lectures in 1834 his pupils were partly catered for by William Spooner's 'School of Veterinary Anatomy', only yards from the LVC. Although both men intended to concentrate on non-equine diseases, to satisfy the general metropolitan audience, the horse, 'as oftenest coming under our notice', again became the most prominent subject.³²

A number of students that subsequently practiced in Ireland attended these private lectures. In 1838, F. W. Price (London, 1839) was practicing in Cork and informed potential clients that he had attended at Youatt's University lectures on 'the horse, cattle and all other domesticated animals.' Price was from Worcestershire where his father was a celebrated breeder of stock.³³ Hugh Ferguson (London, 1836), a Dublin born veterinarian, attended Spooner's lectures and described the professor as his 'earliest instructor in the veterinary art.'³⁴ In truth, attendance at these lectures offered little to those seeking a more rounded veterinary education. Although the *Farmer's Gazette* urged stockowners not to grudge the comparatively small expense of bringing in a 'properly-qualified' veterinary surgeon, the majority of stockowners were less than convinced by any veterinary surgeon's claims of superior competence in cattle practice and were therefore unwilling to pay the higher fees he charged for his services. Richard Henry Dyer (London, 1845), a native of Winchester, settled in Waterford in 1849. He argued that the fees charged by the qualified man, although believed expensive by Irish cattle-keepers, were 'moderate' compared to those charged in Britain. In Ireland the custom was that the veterinary surgeon, based a few miles from a case, received a flat fee of 'a pound note', regardless of the number of visits. In Britain practitioners charged for both their professional services and for every mile they travelled. Dyer believed that this proved to be substantially more lucrative. Furthermore, Irish clients expected the vet to attend a case just once, where instruction might be given as to subsequent treatment.³⁵ The system in Britain was indeed different but the veterinary surgeons

³² William Youatt, 'Introductory lecture at the University of London, Feb. 2, 1831' in *Veterinarian*, vol. 4, no. 3 (March, 1831), p. 142; Anon, 'The veterinary schools' in *Veterinarian*, vol. 8, no. 11 (November, 1835), p. 646.

³³ *Southern Reporter*, 24 March 1838.

³⁴ Hugh Ferguson, *Bloodletting as a remedy for the diseases incidental to the horse and other animals* (Dublin, 1843), preface.

³⁵ *Irish Farmer's Gazette*, 20 July 1861, 4 October, 13 December 1862.

there found their clients equally unwilling to pay in full and, therefore, ‘took what they could get.’³⁶

It was particularly difficult for the nineteenth-century college trained vet to establish a rural practice. Horses, as the predominant patients, were fewer and distributed over a large area. Unlike the towns, country areas offered few opportunities for supplementary activities such as livery and sales. Therefore, any chance of sustaining a rural practice depended greatly on securing the business of cattle-keeping clients. Studies from Britain and the continent highlighted that a veterinary qualification proved to have little value in a rural setting where traditional folk customs were still entertained and a belief in other worldly spirits and sympathetic magic played a continuing role in veterinary treatments. The college vet was viewed as an outsider. Therefore, when external aid was sought the neighbouring handyman or cow-doctor was generally consulted.³⁷ James White (London, 1797), late Veterinary Surgeon to the Royal Dragoons, suggested that the veterinary surgeon’s mode of cattle treatment was often too simple, relying on bleeding and a proper regulation of diet. In contrast, the cow-doctor generally obtained the confidence of the uneducated farmer who was fond of ‘mystery’ in medical matters and believed that for every disease there was an infallible remedy, termed a receipt. The more numerous the ingredients contained in that receipt ‘the higher opinion have they of its efficacy.’³⁸ This continued belief in tradition and mystery was highlighted in the attempts of the aforementioned Richard Dyer to develop cattle practice in Ireland.

Dyer recalled seeing Ireland for the first time in 1849 as he approached Waterford port on the steamer ‘Rose.’ He noticed hundreds of cows grazing on the distant hills and immediately envisaged hundreds of pounds worth of cattle practice annually. However, on inquiring, he was informed that veterinary surgeons did not attend cattle ‘at all’, an assertion that he scarcely believed.³⁹ Dyer was a regular contributor to the veterinary press, describing clinical cases and advocating veterinary reform that might improve the well-being of fellow veterinarians. His early

³⁶ See Artemus Secundus, ‘Our fees’ in *The Veterinary Journal*, vol. 7, no. 10 (October, 1878), pp 289-91; Woods and Matthews, ‘Little if at all’, p. 43.

³⁷ For example, see B. Robert Kreiser, “‘La cendrillon des sciences: towards the professionalization of veterinary medicine in eighteenth and nineteenth-century France’” in A. Mathijsen, (ed.), *The origins of veterinary schools in Europe- A comparative view* (Utrecht, 1997), p. 17.

³⁸ James White, *A treatise on veterinary medicine* (2nd ed., 4 vols., London, 1818), iv, 1-2.

³⁹ *Irish Farmer’s Gazette*, 4 October 1862.

communications to the *Veterinarian* gave no indication that he saw significant cattle practice before his arrival in Ireland.⁴⁰ Although his Waterford city practice was equine based Dyer took a keen interest in general agricultural improvement as an active member of both the Waterford Farming Society and the RAISI.⁴¹ He quickly realised that it was indeed a very rare occurrence to hear of a ‘practitioner’ being called to attend sick cattle. Personally, he only met with cattle cases when called as a last resort, when the animal became ‘chronic and necessarily troublesome.’⁴² Early success with ‘rot’ in sheep and ‘grass staggers’ in cows failed to yield the abundance of calls he anticipated. Dyer admitted that Irish agriculturists were prejudiced against employing vets, believing the latter were only acquainted with the treatment of horses. Personally, he could not get enough cattle practice as would supply his ‘table with salt.’⁴³ Nevertheless, he appeared determined to establish a cattle practice. In 1858, he informed local ‘Agriculturalists’ that he was interested in curing the diseases of cattle. He claimed to be the only veterinary surgeon in the district that practiced this branch of medicine and attempted to dispel any notions circulating that he knew little about cattle practice. He argued that the ‘complex system’ of cattle required the treatment of a properly trained individual. He further suggested that many of his fellow practitioners felt degraded at being ‘supposed’ to know anything about cows and would not like to ‘soil their boots in a farm-yard, the fragrance would not be suited to their olfactories.’⁴⁴ Subsequently, he regularly placed simple notices in the local press confirming his intentions. One read ‘Will Attend Sick Cattle If Required’, the other ‘May be consulted on all Cattle Diseases.’⁴⁵

Dyer’s efforts failed miserably. In 1861, he informed the *Veterinarian* that he had ‘long and anxiously sought in vain’ to establish a cattle practice in the country and had gone to great lengths to induce cattle owners to employ qualified men. He had seen cattle cases gratuitously, merely charging for the medicines, and written prescriptions, at no charge, which allowed the clients to procure the medicine from a druggist. Even

⁴⁰ For example, in 1845, whilst based in Jersey, he wrote to the *Veterinarian* describing a number of equine cases he had treated. See R. H. Dyer, ‘Cases by Richard Henry Dyer’ in *Veterinarian*, vol. 18, no. 9 (September, 1845), pp 508-11.

⁴¹ *Waterford Mail*, 1 December 1855, 8 March 1856, 12 June 1858; *Farmer’s Gazette*, 27 September 1856, 14 May 1859, 28 April 1860.

⁴² R. H. Dyer, ‘Pleuro-pneumonia in cows: Extracts from my notebook of 1850-1’ in *Veterinarian*, vol. 24, no. 11 (November, 1851), pp 619-22.

⁴³ *Irish Farmer’s Gazette*, 7 August 1858, 4 October 1862.

⁴⁴ *Waterford News*, 27 August, *Waterford Chronicle*, 4 September 1858.

⁴⁵ *Waterford News*, 22 October 1858; *Waterford Mail*, 24 March 1859.

the local farming societies, of which he was a member, failed to support his efforts. Dyer offered a number of reasons why livestock owners did not avail of the services of the qualified vet. He believed that prominent livestock keepers preferred to hire a ‘herd’, an individual who cared for cattle in both sickness and health, than to employ a vet. The ‘country people’ relied on popular traditional curing agents such as holy water, tallow and, in particular, the application of murrain stones.⁴⁶ Dyer first arrived in Ireland in the immediate aftermath of the Great Famine, when estate clearances and land legislation resulted in a shift to pasture farming, driven by an increased demand for meat in Britain. Consequently, landlords and graziers employed skilled herdsmen to care for rapidly increasing numbers of cattle. The positions were rewarding but contracts of employment often made herds liable for losses through negligence.⁴⁷ Therefore, a good knowledge of animal health-care was beneficial to the herd and welcomed by his employer.

Farming newspapers regularly carried notices regarding such situations. For example, in 1869, the *Farmer’s Gazette* carried a notice from a Tipperary gentleman seeking a herd who understood ‘all diseases attending cattle and sheep, and their treatment.’ The position offered 15s a week, a comfortable house with a garden and two tons of coal per annum.⁴⁸ Herdsmen, purporting to have the necessary skills, placed similar advertisements. The same publication introduced an individual that ‘can castrate, bleed, physic, and is what may be called a first-rate cow doctor.’ Another was adept to deal with all eventualities, offering butchering in addition to his veterinary skills.⁴⁹ Although the *Gazette* was instrumental in introducing farmers to prospective herds, an 1858 editorial questioned if employers were really expecting to find in their herdsmen a level of veterinary knowledge that, if in reality was possessed by them, would place them above even the most eminent veterinarian.⁵⁰ An evaluation of correspondence to Irish farming papers, during the period 1845-1870, highlighted that some herds were competent, others not. For example, in 1846, a herd-owner informed the *Irish Farmers’ Journal* that he had lost twin calves, worth £50, because his herd,

⁴⁶ R. H. Dyer, ‘The veterinary profession’ in *Veterinarian*, vol. 34, no. 7 (July, 1861), pp 385-7; *Irish Farmer’s Gazette*, 13 December 1862.

⁴⁷ See John Cunningham, ‘“A class quite distinct”: Herds in the west of Ireland in the nineteenth century’ in Carla King and Conor McNamara (eds), *The west of Ireland: New perspectives on the nineteenth century* (Dublin, 2011), pp 137-60.

⁴⁸ *Farmer’s Gazette*, 18 September 1869.

⁴⁹ *Farmer’s Gazette*, 13 December 1856, 1 October 1864.

⁵⁰ *Farmer’s Gazette*, 30 January 1858.

‘not being very experienced’, hesitated in manually handling a pedigree cow prior to calving.⁵¹ Nevertheless, livestock keepers generally described their herd as careful, experienced, knowledgeable and skilled in their veterinary care of animals.⁵² It is hardly surprising, therefore, that those who could afford to employ a full time-herd had little demand for the services of the vet. An experienced herdsman became intimate with his surroundings and the stock and was therefore in a good position to maintain the herd in good health. Furthermore, if a farmer could employ an experienced fulltime herd for 15s a week why would he pay £1 for a vet to attend a single case, especially if he had little faith in the latter’s skills. According to John Cunningham, the herd was generally ‘rendered obsolete’ with the Wyndham Land Act of 1903, which facilitated the transfer of land ownership from landlord to tenant. During the following decades they themselves became successful farmers and owners of their own land.⁵³

While the prominent livestock keeper employed individuals with some specialist knowledge of animal doctoring the general masses relied on the services of a local handy-man or employed some long-standing traditional cure, often of a magical nature. From his experiences in Waterford, Richard Dyer was particularly familiar with a murrain stone, commonly known as the Curraghmore Amulet, which he described as ‘nonsense.’ The property of the Marquis of Waterford, the amulet was a simple globe of almost transparent crystal. According to tradition, it was brought from Jerusalem by one of the Le Poer family at the time of the Crusades.⁵⁴ A cure was procured by placing the object in water, which was subsequently given to a sick animal to drink.⁵⁵ Dyer first saw the amulet in the home of the steward of a ‘nobleman’, presumably the Marquis, whose cattle he had treated for blackleg. The steward explained that the stone was taken countrywide, on a guarantee of its safe return, and that ‘its effects were truly wonderful.’ However, on Dyer’s enquiry as to why he had then been called, the gentleman admitted that he had ‘no faith’ in its powers.⁵⁶ The practice of lending the object was discontinued from June 1881, when the occasional applicant for its services

⁵¹ *Irish Farmers’ Journal*, 11 February 1846.

⁵² For example, see *Farmer’s Gazette*, 9 August 1851, 11 June, 2 July 1853, 4 August 1855, 16 February 1856, 7 July 1866, 10 July, 30 October 1869.

⁵³ John Cunningham, ‘Herds and graziers in the west: Eclipsed by land reform’ in *Teagasc, farming & country life 1916* (Carlow, 2016), pp 86-7.

⁵⁴ James Buckley, ‘A county Waterford talisman’ in *Journal of the Waterford and Southeast of Ireland Archaeological Society*, vol. 7 (1901), p. 142.

⁵⁵ Charles Smith, *Ancient and present state of the county and city of Waterford* (Dublin, 1746), p. 90.

⁵⁶ *Irish Farmer’s Gazette*, 20 March 1853.

was instead furnished with a card on which was written a herbal recipe for the cure of ‘Black-Quarter.’⁵⁷

The use of murrain stones was widespread throughout Ireland during the nineteenth-century. Poll the Pishogue, a Kildare wise woman, hired out an amulet, which she claimed one was an ‘ould ancient one’ and condemned the stone of the Marquis as ‘only like a fairy musheron to the rale one.’⁵⁸ In county Tipperary the Archer-Butler stone, preserved by the Butler family of Garnavilla, near Cahir, was employed locally to cure murrain in cattle. It is currently conserved at the Hunt Museum, Limerick.⁵⁹ In Cork, the Imokilly Amulet was similarly preserved by generations of the Fitzgerald family, Seneschals of Imokilly.⁶⁰ At Ballyheigue, county Kerry, a lesser known, but no less remarkable amulet, presently remains in the possession of its original custodians. According to tradition, the stone, known as the ‘baully’ was blessed by St Erc in the sixth-century, to exclusively cure members of the Corridan family and their stock.⁶¹ Interviewed in 2017, Michael Corridan, its current custodian, said that he had personally used the stone for animals down to twenty years ago, but admitted he was unsure of its efficacy and now always called the services of the vet.⁶² The custodians of these items only lent them on a solemn promise of a safe return. The misplacement of a Cork amulet, employed in curing cattle, resulted in an amusing court hearing before Alderman Saunders, at the Cork Police Office in 1841. In her evidence, its guardian, Mrs McAuliffe, claimed that her direct ancestor,

⁵⁷ Patrick Power, ‘On a crystal ball preserved at Curraghmore’ in *Journal of the Waterford and Southeast of Ireland Archaeological Society*, vol. 13 (1910), p. 42.

⁵⁸ S. C. Hall, *Ireland: Its scenery, character, &c., Vol. II* (London, 1842), pp 269-70; *Northern Whig*, 13 January 1842.

⁵⁹ Robert Day, ‘The Archer-Butler murrain stone’ in *Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society* (Hereafter cited as *Cork Hist. Soc. Jn.*), ser. 2, vol. 10 (1904), p. 234; H. Armitage (ed.), *The Hunt Museum essential guide* (London, 2002), p. 156; *Irish Times*, 6 February 1997.

⁶⁰ See G. M. Atkinson, ‘On a stone known as “The Imokilly amulet” (*Cloch Ómra Ua Maccaille*)’ in *The Journal of the Royal Historical and Archaeological Association of Ireland*, 4th ser., vol. 3, no. 23 (July, 1875), pp 440-4; J. C., ‘Notes and queries: The Imokilly amulet’ in *Cork Hist. Soc. Jn.*, ser. 1, vol. 3, no. 32 (1894), p. 173; P. J. Hartnett, ‘The Imokilly amulet’ in *Cork Hist. Soc. Jn.*, ser. 2, vol. 5, no. 172 (1945), p. 145.

⁶¹ M. A. Hickson, ‘Notes on Kerry topography, ancient and modern’ in *Journal of the Royal Historical and Archaeological Association of Ireland*, vol. 7, no. 67 (July, 1886), p. 500; Bryan MacMahon, *Ballyheigue: Our Christian heritage* (Ballyheigue, 2012), pp 41-5; Walter L. Brenneman and Mary G. Brenneman, *Crossing the circle at the holy wells of Ireland* (Charlottesville, 1995), pp 44-5, 60; SFC 417:359-60, 377-9, 453-4, 484-6, 517; 417C:7-8; 417D:25-30.

⁶² Interview with Michael Corridan, Ballyheigue, county Kerry, 9 May 2017. CD 53, Author’s Collection. When this author visited the Corridan home, Michael Corridan produced the stone from safe-keeping in the house just as his father, also Michael, had done when the American anthropologists Walter and Mary Brenneman visited the district in 1980.

‘MacCarthy More, King of Cork’ had received the stone from the ‘good people.’ She now wished that a Con Sheehan be summoned for unlawfully detaining her property. The *Cork Constitution* reported that the case was of particular interest to a large number of the ‘lower class’ that had assembled. On the other hand, it provided amusement for those of the establishment who were present. McAuliffe’s counsel, Mr. O’Brien, who had advised her against taking the case, was particularly facetious towards his client. He joked that the case was ‘very important to agriculturalists’ and that the livelihood of Olden, the eminent veterinary surgeon, was at risk. Saunders declared that, as he had no jurisdiction in the case, other avenues should be taken to recover the stone. McAuliffe predicted that Sheehan would be ‘milk and water before nine days.’⁶³

Aristocratic clients most likely to seek veterinary advice for cattle

Whilst the poorer classes employed some long-standing treatments, often of a dubious nature, it was predominately ‘aristocratic members of improvement societies’ who favoured formal veterinary aid for their cattle, usually pedigree animals valued at several hundred pounds.⁶⁴ When the contemporary Irish vet was called to a cattle case it was usually to a valuable animal of such a prominent gentleman. Success usually merited a report to the *Veterinarian*. In 1839, John William Ions (London, 1811), a Waterford vet, attended a heifer with a dislocated neck, the property of Sir John Bautry [sic] Jones, Mullinabro. Jones was a pedigree cattle breeder and a member of the RAISI. Ions’s treatment was improvised. He applied therapies to the injury that he had previously applied to a mare, with a similar injury, the property of a Dr Conolly. Basic medicines were administered to relieve fever and constipation, and a ‘simple contrivance’ was fabricated to stabilise the neck.⁶⁵ Ions regularly contributed to the *Veterinarian* and his papers highlighted both the importance of the horse and the strata of society served by the vet. His papers on equine related diseases were written in a confident manner and treatments recommended for the horse were more progressive and scientific than those administered to cattle. Whether his patients were of the equine

⁶³ *Cork Constitution*, 20 April 1841.

⁶⁴ Woods and Matthews, ‘Little, if at all’, p. 43.

⁶⁵ J. W. Ions, ‘A case of successful treatment of dislocation of the cervical vertebrae in a heifer’ in *Veterinarian*, vol. 12, no. 7 (July, 1839), pp 446-7. See also Agricultural Society of Ireland, *List of the local agricultural societies in Ireland* (Dublin, 1835), pp 17-8; *Farmer’s Gazette*, 29 December 1860. Either Ions or the *Veterinarian* misspelt the name of Sir John Hawtry Jones. See Robert Leech, *The Jones family in Ireland* (Yonkers, 1886), pp 8, 23.

or bovine species, their owners, represented by Jones, Conolly, Captain Hasard and the Marquis of Waterford, were all from the higher echelons of Waterford society.⁶⁶

William C. Lord (Edinburgh, 1842), Mitchelstown, was a contemporary of Ion's. In 1841, whilst a student at the Edinburgh College, he informed Youatt at the *Veterinarian* that he was 'sent for' by the Earl of Kingston, who resided at Mitchelstown Castle, regarding a disease that had been affecting his cows for more than a year. Kingston's steward believed that the condition was incurable, suggesting that either he or a local practitioner had been treating the animals. Having taken the pulse and examined the animals with a stethoscope Lord discerned that the condition was pneumonia. He subsequently cured four of the five sick animals with a combination of bleeding, firing, blistering and medicines. Lord subsequently saved the surviving animals of another gentleman, to that individuals 'great astonishment.' In this case seventeen cattle had already succumbed to the condition despite using 'a great many remedies.' Youatt did not altogether agree with Lord's combination of drugs but, nevertheless, described the student as a 'zealous and scientific practitioner.'⁶⁷ His *material medica* and treatment procedures arguably differed little from those of a cow-doctor. However, diagnostic techniques, mastered at the Edinburgh College, proved decisive in a quick and precise diagnosis and, therefore, a successful outcome.

The case was characteristic of the vet's employment in cattle cases. Lord was evidently considered as a last resort when all else had failed. A number of opinions in the *Veterinarian* highlighted that farmers did not hesitate in seeking scientific veterinary advice for the 'most simple' diseases of horses. However, there was a general impression that it did not pay to doctor cattle, pigs or sheep. Farmers usually considered the cost of veterinary attendance and quickly slaughtered the animal before it lost condition. If the farmer wished to doctor the animal it was naturally left to the local practitioner and when these treatments failed the veterinary surgeon was called upon as a 'last resource.' At that point the animal was too weak to respond to treatment and inevitably died, confirming its owner's supposition that college men knew nothing of

⁶⁶ For example, see J. W. Ions, 'Ventral hernia-creasote in ophthalmia-castration with the caustic clams' in *Veterinarian*, vol. 12, no. 8 (August, 1839), pp 536-7.

⁶⁷ W. C. Lord, 'Cases of strangles in the horse and pneumonia in cattle' in *Veterinarian*, vol. 14, no. 7 (July, 1841), pp 400-2.

cattle disease and shouldn't henceforth be called to such cases.⁶⁸ William Lord saw some success in treating Kingston's cattle. Nevertheless, his accomplishments appeared to fail in offering further opportunities in his hometown or in cattle practice. On graduation, he established a 'Veterinary Infirmary' at Parsonstown, primarily engaging in equine practice.⁶⁹ He quickly joined the army and became an advocate for homeopathic veterinary medicine. He died in London in 1874, leaving a son who was practicing veterinary medicine 'upon homeopathic principles' in that city.⁷⁰

Self-doctoring livestock by consulting literature

In nineteenth-century Ireland trained vets were scarce, presumed to have little ability in treating cattle diseases, and considered expensive to pay relative to the value of stock. Consequently, cattle farmers either sourced the external aid of traditional practitioners locally, as discussed in chapter six, or attempted to self-doctor their animals. The remainder of this chapter will examine how a large amount of self-doctoring veterinary information was sourced from almanacks, newspapers, agricultural publications and contemporary veterinary treatises, and how prominent livestock owners attempted to organise this information to best meet their needs. It also argues that this information subsequently made its way into the wider agricultural community through those who laboured on estates and larger farms. Louise Curth suggested that cheap annually produced almanacs were the first true form of mass media throughout Europe, the most easily accessible and understandable source for the dissemination of medical advice, both human and veterinary. As the early almanacs, from the seventeenth-century, were addressed to a mainly agricultural society, information on the medical care of animals was pertinent, with both preventative and remedial treatments offered to readers.⁷¹ During that period, Irish almanac compilers, such as William Farmer and Ambrose White, advised on astrologically favourable times to administer physic to both humans and animals.⁷² For example, in 1665, Ambrose White's recommendation for January

⁶⁸ Anon, 'The contract system' in *Veterinarian*, vol. 44, no. 11 (November, 1871), p. 810; George Robertson, 'North of Scotland Veterinary Medical Association' in *Veterinarian*, vol. 42, no. 3 (March, 1869), p. 220.

⁶⁹ *Leinster Express*, 24 June 1842.

⁷⁰ Anon, 'Obituary: Mr. W. C. Lord' in *Homoeopathic World*, vol. 9, no. 105 (September, 1874), pp 230-1.

⁷¹ Louise H. Curth, 'English almanacs and animal health care in the seventeenth century' in *Society & Animals*, vol. 8, no. 1 (2000), pp 71-3.

⁷² For a list of Almanacs printed in Dublin during the seventeenth century see E. R. McClintock Dix, *Early Dublin-printed almanacs (seventeenth century)* (Dublin, 1918), pp 8-10.

was to ‘drench weak and sick cattle, geld cattle to rear’ (of the moon phase).⁷³ In 1678, an almanac compiled by A. Shepherd was aimed exclusively at livestock owners, offering celestial predictions, weather forecasts, and ‘Choice Medicines for Cattle.’ Simple surgical techniques and the administration of herbs and other freely available *materia medica* were advocated to treat over forty conditions. For example, ‘losse of cud’ was treated as follows, ‘let him blood in the vein in the middle of his tongue and rub his tongue and mouth with oatmeal and salt putting some between his jaw teeth.’⁷⁴ There was nothing original in Shepherd’s advice, arguably culled from Michael Harward’s more expansive *Herdsman’s mate*, published five years previously. Harward recommended the aforementioned cud treatment when a ‘beast be grown weak with this disease.’⁷⁵ The importance of the horse to an urban economy was highlighted in an almanac, published in 1711. Cardanus Rider’s *Country-man’s kalendar* was published exclusively for the Irish, and particularly the Dublin market. In addition to the usual astrological rules for ‘gardening and physick’ it carried an account of the ‘causes and cures’ of several diseases incidental to the horse. Remedies advocated were mostly concoctions of herbs and chemicals, sometimes combined with more unorthodox ingredients. A potion for short-windedness was prepared by soaking agaricus, a genus of mushroom, and the fenugreek plant in either red wine or ‘the blood of a little dog, which is not above ten days old.’⁷⁶

The second half of the eighteenth-century saw an increase in literacy rates amongst all classes, and an explosion in almanac publishing. Almanacs, now cheaply produced and easily distributed, were published in most cities and large towns, selling in substantial numbers. Titles became differentiated socially or occupationally, with

⁷³ Ambrose White, *An almanack and prognostication for the year of our Lord God, 1665* (Dublin, 1665). A copy survives in the Library of Trinity College, Dublin. Catalogue Number: V.oo.55.

⁷⁴ A. Shepherd, *Shepherd 1678: An almanac for the year of our Lord 1678* (Dublin, 1678). A copy survives at the National Library of Ireland. Catalogue Number: LO 214.

⁷⁵ Harward, *Herds-man’s mate*, pp 65-7. Harward had previously compiled *Prognostication for the year of our Lord God, 1666* (Dublin, 1666), suggesting that seventeenth-century Irish almanac compilers also doctored animals.

⁷⁶ Car. Rider, *The country-man’s Kalendar: or, An almanack for the year of our Blessed Saviour’s incarnation, 1711* (Dublin, 1711). Only one copy of the almanac has survived and is part of the Gilbert Collection housed at the Dublin City Library & Archive, Pearse Street, Dublin 2. The almanac is part of a manuscript collection of almanacs formerly owned by James Hardiman. See also Máire Kennedy, ‘A passion for books: The Gilbert Library’ in Mary Clarke, Nodlaig P. Hardiman and Yvonne Desmond (eds), *Sir John T. Gilbert, 1829-1898: Historian, Archivist and Librarian* (Dublin, 1999), pp 59, 73. Cardanus Rider was a pseudonym for Richard Saunders, an English physician and astronomer, under whose name *Rider’s British Merlin* was published in Britain from 1656 until the 1830s. See Stephen T. Knight, *Merlin: Knowledge and power through the ages* (London, 2009), p. 177.

specific almanacs produced for specific audiences, including the agricultural sector.⁷⁷ Farmers primarily consulted the almanacs for their weather predictions and for the dates of cattle and horse fairs.⁷⁸ However, the almanac was instrumental in delivering veterinary guidance, predominantly presented in concise lists highlighting the basic symptoms and appropriate treatments for the most common conditions. For example, the little-known *Country Almanack*, published in the 1830s, carried a ‘Number of valuable receipts’ for the diseases of horses.⁷⁹ In the case of cattle and sheep, receipts were usually published for murrain, blackleg, red water, scour, constipation, gripes and skin diseases. *Smith’s City and Country Almanac*, published annually from 1818-68, carried a department titled ‘Receipts for the cure of diseases in horned cattle and sheep.’⁸⁰ The treatments prescribed generally consisted of bleeding followed by purging with some concoction of herbs and ingredients sourced from a chemist. Although many of the receipts remained unchanged over the years the compiler attempted to inform the reader of the latest treatments or new problems that might arise. The 1822 edition described how to relieve an animal swelled from eating clover by either stabbing the flank with a large needle or dosing with ‘balls’ made from hog’s-lard and salt.⁸¹ Although considered by John Wynne Baker seventy years earlier, the condition was largely unknown to the general farmer as the culture of clover in Ireland was of ‘recent introduction.’⁸² In 1845 *The Irish Farmer’s Almanac*, edited by Edward Murphy, carried similar recipes ‘for a few of the more common’ diseases in horses, cattle and sheep.⁸³

⁷⁷ Niall Ó Ciosáin, ‘Almanacs’ in Murphy, James H. (ed.), *The Oxford history of the Irish book, Vol. IV: The Irish book in English, 1800-1891* (Oxford, 2011), pp 198-203. Ó Ciosáin gave a detailed account of nineteenth century almanacs, their intended audience and its level of literacy. *Nugent’s*, a disputed version of *Old Moore’s almanac*, was popular during this period and claimed a circulation of 276,000 for the 1853 edition. See Anon, ‘The book of the prophet Nugent’ in *The Saturday Review*, vol. 7, no. 172 (12 February, 1859), pp 179-80.

⁷⁸ The importance of the almanacs in advertising fair days is recorded from Milltown Malbay, Clare, where even the beggars that frequented the numerous fairs carried copies. See *First Report from His Majesty’s Commissioners for inquiring into the Conditions of the Poorer Classes in Ireland with appendix (A.) and supplement*, H. C., 1835 (369) xxxii, 620.

⁷⁹ See C. Hope, *The country almanack for the year of Our Lord 1835* (Dublin, 1834), pp 55-9.

⁸⁰ See John S. North, *Waterloo directory of Irish newspapers and periodicals, 1800-1900* (Waterloo, ON, 1986), p. 444.

⁸¹ Brett Smith, *Smith’s city and country almanack for the year of Our Lord, 1822* (Dublin, 1821), p. 123.

⁸² Wynn Baker, *Experiments in agriculture*, pp 117-49; Henry Stephens, *The book of the farm* (3 vols., Edinburgh, 1844), ii, 1218.

⁸³ Edward Murphy (ed.), *The Irish farmer’s almanac for 1845* (Dublin, 1845), pp 84-6. First published in 1844, from 1846 the almanac was titled *The Irish farmer’s and gardener’s almanack*. Murphy was introduced as ‘Landscape gardener, improver of estates, editor of the Farmer’s Gazette.’

The increased interest in scientific agriculture during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth-centuries saw the creation of a new market for specific agricultural publishing.⁸⁴ The earliest Irish agricultural periodicals were the *Irish Agricultural Magazine*, the *Irish Farmer's Journal and Weekly Intelligencer* and the *Irish Farmer's Gazette*.⁸⁵ All carried some veterinary content, predominantly reproduced from contemporary veterinary treatises or British farming newspapers such as the *Scotch Farmers' Magazine* and *Evans' and Ruffly's Farmer's Journal*. Adequate attention was paid to non-equine diseases. For example, in 1814 the *Farmer's Journal* reproduced extracts from Lawrence's *Treatise on Cattle* and carried its own papers on cattle disease, conceivably culled from other veterinary writers. In 1816, original correspondence from 'Eboracus' generated interesting debate on the causes and prevention of abortion in cows.⁸⁶ The *Farmer's Gazette*, which also encouraged veterinary debate in its 'Queries and Answers' department, was published by the Purdon brothers, specialists in agricultural publishing, and was initially edited by the aforementioned Edward Murphy.⁸⁷ During the 1880s subscribers to the paper could have their veterinary queries answered, by post, by 'the most eminent professor in the country.'⁸⁸

The popularity of the *Gazette's* veterinary content led to the publication of *Purdon's Veterinary Handbook*, c. 1870, directed at those 'who may not possess the advantage of being within reach of good professional advice.' Its content was primarily sourced from contemporary 'authorities', including Irish based veterinary surgeons Richard Dyer and Hugh Ferguson.⁸⁹ William Curry, bookseller and publisher to the RAISI, was another that was to the forefront of promoting agricultural and veterinary

⁸⁴ See Nicholas Goddard, 'The development and influence of agricultural periodicals and newspapers' in *Agricultural History Review*, vol. 31, no. 2 (1983), pp 116-31.

⁸⁵ F. A. Buttress, *Agricultural periodicals of the British Isles, 1681-1900, and their location* (Cambridge, 1950), p. 8.

⁸⁶ *The Irish Farmer's Journal, and Weekly Intelligencer*, 19 February, 12, 26 March 1814, 4 May, 22 June 1816. The newspaper, published from 1812 to 1826, was heavily patronised by both the Farming Society of Ireland (FSI) and the Dublin Society. According to Desmond Keenan it initially sold about 1000 copies weekly. See Desmond Keenan, *Ireland within the Union, 1800-1921* (Philadelphia, 2008), p. 419.

⁸⁷ Throughout its lifespan, 1842-1963, the *Gazette* absorbed other Purdon titles, the *Irish Small Farmer's Monthly* and *Irish Farmer's Almanac*, mentioned above, and in 1920, the *Irish Farming World*. For a contemporary overview of the *Farmer's Gazette* see Charles Mitchell, *The newspaper press directory* (London, 1847), pp 331-2.

⁸⁸ See *Clare Saturday Record*, 30 January 1888.

⁸⁹ R. O. Pringle (ed.), *Purdon's veterinary handbook: The diseases of horses, cattle, sheep, swine, dogs and poultry: Their causes, symptoms and treatment, collected and arranged from the best authorities* (2nd ed., Dublin, 1871), pp iii-vi.

literature, including the works of Hugh Ferguson, the prominent Dublin vet.⁹⁰ Amongst Curry's titles was the *Irish Farmers' and Gardeners' Magazine, and Register of Rural Affairs*, published between 1833-41. It was co-edited by Martin Doyle, the *nom de plume* of Rev. William Hickey, organiser of the Bannow Farm School.⁹¹ Hickey was a prolific writer on veterinary matters. Amongst his works was a treatise on poultry, which highlighted the importance of fowl to the small stockholder.⁹² During the nineteenth-century veterinary content from the evolving Irish agricultural press found a wider audience when 'abridged' in the husbandry columns of provincial newspapers. Reproducing material from the *Irish Farmer's Gazette* was widespread. For example, the *Tralee Chronicle*, *Limerick Chronicle* and *Clare Journal* all reproduced veterinary advice from the *Gazette*.⁹³ In 1897, the *Limerick Leader* took the innovative step of producing an original veterinary column, compiled by Richard Dyer. In addition to providing veterinary advice, Dyer urged farmers to seek 'good and wholesome' advice and young men to join the veterinary profession.⁹⁴ Arguably, he used the column as a platform to advertise medicines he compounded at that time, a scour treatment and a vesicant (blistering agent) for cows and horses.⁹⁵ The column was short lived as Dyer died later that year.⁹⁶ The vesicant, bearing his name, sold until at least the 1950s.⁹⁷

Livestock prescriptions that appeared in almanacs, agricultural periodicals and newspapers were regularly collected in notebooks or diaries, to be expeditiously consulted in the future. Additionally, animal owners took note of prescriptions or 'receipts' furnished by the local cow-doctor or farrier.⁹⁸ One such diary, which carried multiple hand-written cures for cattle, was compiled by Pat Mackey, owner of a

⁹⁰ For a list of agricultural titles published by Curry see *Farmer's Gazette*, 22 August 1846.

⁹¹ See Alfred Webb, *A compendium of Irish biography* (Dublin, 1878), p. 585; P. A. Doyle, 'Bannow School (1821-1826)' in *The Past: The Organ of the Uí Cinsealaigh Historical Society*, no. 1 (November, 1920), pp 122-8; Martin Doyle, *Hints for small farmers* (4th ed., Dublin 1830), p. v.

⁹² Martin Doyle (ed.), *The illustrated book of domestic poultry* (London, 1854), pp 98-108; According to Ó Gráda, 'Irish agricultural output', p. 154, by the turn of the twentieth-century the humble farmyard hen and duck were adding more to agricultural output, predominately through egg sales, than wheat, oats and potatoes combined.

⁹³ For example, see *Tralee Chronicle*, 27 April 1857, *Limerick Chronicle*, 28 November 1865, *Clare Journal*, 25 May 1885. The veterinary columns reproduced from the *Gazette* were titled 'Kerry Farmers' Chronicle', 'The Treatment of Cattle' and 'Veterinary', respectively.

⁹⁴ *Limerick Leader*, 15 February 1897.

⁹⁵ *Limerick Leader*, 16 August 1897.

⁹⁶ *Limerick Chronicle*, 9 December 1897; *Waterford Mirror*, 18 December 1897.

⁹⁷ *Irish Independent*, 22 September 1851.

⁹⁸ Michael MacKay, 'Receipt lists', medicines and the eighteenth century medical and 'veterinary' market place' in *Vet. Hist.*, new ser., vol. 14, no. 4 (2009), p. 341. According to Mackay, horse-owning gentlemen in Britain took great satisfaction in compiling easily consulted pocket receipt books exclusive to the care of horses.

prosperous Kildare farm, in the 1860s.⁹⁹ A small number of contemporary notebooks, where livestock cures were usually found amongst human cures and household hints, survive in Irish libraries. The National Library holds a notebook from the papers of the Clonbrock Estate, Galway, dating from c. 1800, and a scrapbook of Charles William O’Hara, Annaghmore, Sligo, c. 1846-1880, both of which carry cures for hounds and horses.¹⁰⁰ A notebook, dating from 1829-1845 and belonging to Mary Honner, a member of a Cork landed family, survives at University College Cork. A prescription for murrain in cattle, taken from the *Cork Constitution*, is found amongst hints for mending broken china and making a horse’s coat slick.¹⁰¹ A notebook pertaining to the Bond Estate in Connaught and Leinster, dating from c.1778-1855, contained ‘cattle scripts’ for sheep and cattle, collected c. 1850. Handwritten prescriptions for scour and ‘pissing of blood’ originated with a Dr Daly, a newspaper cutting, concerning cattle plague, from the *Times*.¹⁰² A notebook of the Rev. W. F. Boyle of Enniskerry, dating from 1938-1950, holds a recipe for calf scour, which he had received from Mrs Buckley of Phrompstown, ‘which she declared she had often used as an excellent remedy.’ He noted that J. Prunty, the herd at Phrompstown, got the prescription from the Buckley family and could give further particulars as he still used it as of January 1936. The ingredients, including powdered opium, tincture of capsicum and acetate of lead, suggested the prescription is of a much earlier origin.¹⁰³

According to Michael MacKay, the culture of receipt lists was developed when groups of gentlemen, often in agricultural societies, compiled the best recipes from their collections into book form. Additionally, local practitioners were approached to publish their prescriptions for the benefit of a Society and the public in general.¹⁰⁴ Eighteenth-century British farriers, such as John Reeves and J. Thompson, published equine works

⁹⁹ The notebook is in the possession of Mackey’s great-grandson, Mike Tomlinson, who claimed that Mackey probably had more interest in cattle than most as this stock farm was situated in what was largely a tillage district, at Ardmore, Athy. Tomlinson, Moone, Kildare, forwarded this information, with some pictures of the diary, to this author during April, 2014.

¹⁰⁰ NLI, Ms. 19,674. Clonbrock Papers; NLI, Ms. 16,738. O’Hara Papers.

¹⁰¹ University College Cork Library, Ms. U./59. Book of recipes, cures and household hints [belonging to a member of a cork landed family], 1829-1845. For a list of such items available in Manuscript Sources at the National Library of Ireland see Madeline Shanahan, *Manuscript receipt books as archaeological objects: Text and food in the early modern world* (Lanham, 2015), 174-6.

¹⁰² Trinity College Library, Ms. 4,256. Account of origins, lease book, of the...? Bond estate in counties Leitrim, Longford, Meath, Roscommon, Westmeath, c. 1778-1855, also some correspondence, maps and veterinary recipes.

¹⁰³ NLI, Ms. 16,225. A notebook of Rev. W. F. Boyle of Enniskerry, containing miscellaneous recipes and cures, 1936-1950.

¹⁰⁴ See MacKay, ‘Receipt lists’, pp 339-41.

at the request of their clients. Both saw Dublin editions.¹⁰⁵ Reeve's success demonstrated that publishing one's recipes could prove lucrative and not detrimental to the practitioner's livelihood.¹⁰⁶ In the nineteenth-century cow-doctors, such as John C. Knowlson, a West Yorkshire cattle-doctor, and James Webb, the unqualified vet to the Morayshire Farmer Club, did likewise, Webb on the 'advice' of Club members.¹⁰⁷ Although a popular success, William Youatt criticised Webb's treatise and concluded that 'such works as his must prolong the undeserved degradation of our profession.'¹⁰⁸ Nevertheless, these publications proved popular as they provided the reader with 'simple and easy' prescriptions and the basics of interpreting symptoms and administering treatments.¹⁰⁹ Contemporary medical publications, written by practitioners in a manner that the average person could understand, were also extremely popular in Ireland, as was the compilation of receipt books from medical information culled from various print forms or passed between households. Whilst some individuals had a liking for self-medication and home treatments, for others, especially in rural areas, it was a necessity because of the paucity of licenced medical practitioners until early in the nineteenth-century.¹¹⁰

During the nineteenth century, a small number of little-known works on treating cattle disease were published in Ireland, all written by local cow-doctors, arguably at the request of their clients. The aforementioned William Jenkinson dedicated his *Treatise on the disorders in cattle and sheep* to his subscribers, the 'Nobility, Gentry, Farmers, Graziers.' William Porter, printer to the FSI, published the work. Jenkinson believed there was a need for a 'plain and simple' treatise on the disorders of cattle and sheep and endeavoured to convey his ideas in a manner that might suit even the

¹⁰⁵ See John Reeves, *The art of farriery both in theory and practice: Containing the cause, symptoms, and cure of all diseases incident to horses* (Dublin, 1759), preface; J. Thompson, *The complete horse-doctor; or, Farriery made plain and easy* (Dublin, 1763).

¹⁰⁶ G. E. Fussell, 'John Reeves: A Hampshire farrier, fl. c. 1750-1780' in *Vet. Hist.*, new ser., vol. 11, no. 4 (2003), pp 401-3.

¹⁰⁷ John C. Knowlson, *The complete cow-leech, or cattle-doctor* (Otley, 1820), Introduction; James Webb, *The farmer's guide* (Elgin, 1834), pp v-viii. See also G. E. Fussell, 'James Webb of Elgin: Veterinary surgeon to the Morayshire Farmers Club' in *Vet. Hist.*, new ser., vol. 13, no. 3 (2006), pp 251-4.

¹⁰⁸ Y., 'Review-The farmer's guide' in *Veterinarian*, vol. 7, no. 8 (August, 1834), pp 445-52.

¹⁰⁹ John Donaldson, *Agricultural biography: British authors on agriculture* (London, 1854), p. 124

¹¹⁰ James Kelly, 'Domestic medication and medical care in late early modern Ireland' in James Kelly and Fiona Clark (eds), *Ireland and medicine in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries* (Farnham, 2010), pp 109-36; Kelly, 'Print and the provision of medical knowledge in eighteenth-century Ireland' in R. Gillespie and R. F. Foster (eds), *Irish provincial cultures in the long eighteenth century* (Dublin, 2012), pp 33-56.

‘humblest’ comprehension. However, there is no evidence to suggest that the book circulated beyond its subscribers or Farming Society members, probably as a consequence of the price, £1.¹¹¹ Another treatise intended for cow-keepers was Patrick Dowling’s *A practical treatise on the parturition of the cow*, published in 1836.¹¹² Evidently no copy has survived but the treatise was reviewed in *The Irish Farmer’s and Gardener’s Magazine*. According to the review Dowling intended the work to be ‘really practical’ based on sixty years of experience, forty of those on the part of his father. He claimed to have treated up to 700 cows annually. A practice focusing on parturition in such a large number of cows suggested that the Dowling family practiced as cow-doctors to the Dublin dairies. Dowling was commended for judiciously treating each disease under symptoms, the cause, and the cure.¹¹³ The treatise received some promotion as the review was reproduced in a number of newspapers.¹¹⁴ However, it found little success in the Irish market, probably overshadowed by a similarly titled tome, Skellett’s *A practical treatise on the parturition of the cow*, described as the ‘most superb’ work ever published on cow parturition in the English language.¹¹⁵ Skellett was promoted by Irish booksellers and, in contrast to Dowling’s treatise, was regularly referred to in the Irish agricultural press.¹¹⁶

Daniel Maher’s 1851 treatise, *Preservation of the cow and sheep*, was similarly based on the ‘Experience and practice of several generations.’¹¹⁷ Maher had practiced for twenty-five years, and claimed to have a certificate signed by numerous gentry whose stock he had effectively cured. The seventy-six-page work was dedicated to the Irish Agricultural Society, suggesting that the publication was put together at the behest of that organisation’s members, likely Maher’s clients. The author explained that he was now afflicted with many infirmities after a ‘long and weighty practice’ and, as he

¹¹¹ Jenkinson, *Cattle and sheep*, preface, p. 86.

¹¹² Patrick Dowling, *A practical treatise on the parturition of the cow, and the extraction of the calf, and also on the diseases of neat cattle in general, with their most approved method of treatment* (Dublin, 1835). Smith listed the work but made no comments. See Smith, *Veterinary literature*, iv, 54.

¹¹³ Anon, ‘Reviews’ in *The Irish farmer’s and gardener’s magazine and register of rural affairs*, vol. 3, no. 27 (January, 1836), pp 19-21.

¹¹⁴ *Dublin Morning Register*, *Dublin Weekly Register*, 2 January, *Dublin Evening Packet*, 9 January, *Clare Journal and Ennis Advertiser*, 14 January 1836.

¹¹⁵ Edward Skellett, *A practical treatise on the parturition of the cow or the extraction of the calf and on the diseases of neat cattle in general* (London, 1822); Smith, *Veterinary literature*, iii, 119-21.

¹¹⁶ See *Dublin Evening Post*, 11 December 1823, 17 May 1834; *Irish Farmer’s Gazette*, 30 October, 24 December 1858, 7 December 1867.

¹¹⁷ Daniel Maher, *Preservation of the cow and sheep* (Dublin, 1851). Only one extant copy of the book survives in a public collection, at the British Library, London. It is a small notebook type publication. (Reference 7295.b.46)

could no longer continue to work, felt it his duty to publish his cures for the service of the gentry and public of his neighbourhood.¹¹⁸ Although the book was detailed and well laid out it again failed to find a wide audience. Six years after its publication Dublin Booksellers, Madden and Oldham, offered copies at a sale price of 6d, reduced from 1s 6d.¹¹⁹ When a Cavan correspondent enquired of the *Farmer's Gazette* if they had a copy of the book, he was informed 'No, nor do we know if such a book is in print.'¹²⁰

A treatise similar in style and content was *The cow and sheep doctor* by Thomas C. Graham, who identified himself as a 'Cow And Sheep Doctor.'¹²¹ The similarity with Maher's treatise goes beyond composition, some passages having almost identical wording.¹²² However, it would be wrong to accuse Graham of plagiarising Maher's work, as the exact date of his first edition is unknown.¹²³ Graham appeared to be the more skilful. He alone described an embryotomy, the dissection of a dead calf within the womb, and advocated that 'nothing is so necessary in this operation as courage...no person should fear bringing a knife into the cow's body provided it be short.'¹²⁴ Neither author commented on specific cases or clients. However, the penultimate page of Graham's treatise carries a cure for rabies, which originated with John Drought, Whigsboro, and was included 'at the request of several highly respectable gentlemen' of King's County. The Drought family had an estate at Whigsboro, and in 1801 were breeders of native Irish black cattle in what was predominantly tillage country.¹²⁵ It is highly probable that Drought and his friends were Graham's clients, and subscribers to and instigators of his treatise.

All four of the previously mentioned treatises were written by Irish cow-doctors and published in Dublin. Evidence suggests that they were primarily written for the use of the gentlemen who subscribed towards their production, with little effort made to promote them amongst a wider audience. For example, Graham's book evidently

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp iii-iv.

¹¹⁹ *Irish Farmer's Gazette*, 1 August 1857.

¹²⁰ *Irish Farmer's Gazette*, 20 May 1865.

¹²¹ Thomas C. Graham, *The cow and sheep doctor* (3rd ed., Dublin, 1852). This edition cost just 1s.

¹²² For example, see both writers' initial deliberations on Dry Murrain, Graham, p. 9 and Maher, p. 17.

¹²³ A copy of Graham's work marked 'Third Edition' survives at the National Library of Ireland, Kildare Street, Dublin. (Call Number P2392). There is no evidence to suggest that editions were published prior to 1852. Only one other copy, also a 3rd Edition published in 1852, appears to survive in a public library, at Washington State University. (Reference MASC SF961.G73 1852)

¹²⁴ Graham, *Cow and sheep doctor*, pp 26-7.

¹²⁵ Charles Coote, *General view of the agriculture and manufactures of the King's County* (Dublin, 1801), pp 93-4.

appeared just once in an advertisement, posted by Dublin bookseller George Mason.¹²⁶ Furthermore, they found little favour in a market that was dominated by the contemporary British veterinary writers. Since the eighteenth-century, large numbers of British ‘do-it-yourself’ farriery and veterinary books, whether original, plagiarized or copied, were published, some with Dublin editions.¹²⁷ Amongst the most popular authors, in both Britain and Ireland, were the aforementioned Skellett, Francis Clater and William Youatt.¹²⁸ Clater was a Nottinghamshire farrier, cattle-doctor and druggist. He wrote two books, on the diseases of horses and cattle, respectively, both of which ran to several editions.¹²⁹ According to John Clewlow, William Youatt was ‘undoubtedly’ the most influential veterinary surgeon of the first half of the nineteenth-century.¹³⁰ His publications included a series of books concerning the breeds, management and diseases of *The Horse* (1831), *Cattle* (1834), *The Sheep* (1837), *The Dog* (1845) and *The Pig* (1847). He edited the *Veterinarian* for nineteen years, where he delivered constructive criticism of Coleman’s governance of the LVC. Consequently, he did not obtain his diploma until 1844, three years before his death.¹³¹ In 1839, although still unqualified, the profession honoured Youatt, particularly for his ‘literary labours.’ The idea originated with two unrelated letters received from Irish veterinarians, William Taylor, Belfast, and Hugh Ferguson, Dublin.¹³²

¹²⁶ *General Advertiser*, 5 March 1853. This free publication claimed a guaranteed circulation of twenty thousand copies.

¹²⁷ John Clewlow, ‘The cattle keeper’: plagiarism in veterinary literature’ in *Vet. Hist.*, new ser., vol. 17, no. 2 (February, 2014), pp 133-8. Clewlow listed Anon, *The complete farrier and cattle keepers guide* (Dublin, 1850?). The book was printed by C. M. Warren, 21 Upper Ormond Quay, and was one of five known plagiarised versions of Henry Barlow, *Cattle keeper’s guide* (London, 1819), which was itself a pirated edition of Josiah Ringsted, *The cattle-keeper’s assistant* (London, 1774?); Other examples of the ‘do-it-yourself’ genre published in Dublin were John Bartlet, *The gentleman’s farriery* (Dublin, 1756), first published in London, 1753, 6th ed., Dublin, 1765. Practical Farrier, *The pocket farrier, a treatise on the veterinary art, containing the material medica and pharmacopoeia* (Dublin, 1844). The latter was published by Richardson and Son, 9 Capel St., and simultaneously published in London and Derby.

¹²⁸ S. A. Bates, ‘On the treatment of calves’ in *The British Farmer’s Magazine*, new ser., vol. 11, no. 41 (1847), p. 129.

¹²⁹ G. E. Fussell, ‘Oddities of eighteenth-century farriery’ in *Vet. Hist.*, new ser., vol. 15, no. 3 (2010), pp 287-9.

¹³⁰ John Clewlow, ‘William Youatt: A revelation’ in *Vet. Hist.*, new ser., vol. 19, no. 4 (2019), p. 371.

¹³¹ G. E. Fussell, ‘William Youatt, 1776-1847’ in *Vet. Hist.*, new ser., vol. 10, no. 3 (2000), pp 69-74; The popularity of Youatt’s publications in Ireland is highlighted by the large numbers that have survived in Irish libraries. The National Library holds copies of all five editions. *The horse* carries the inscription P. Downey (1844), written in ink. The Library of the RDS houses copies of *The horse*, *Cattle* and *The sheep*. A copy of the latter found in the Special Collections at UCC bears the Bookplate of The Library of Queen’s College, Cork.

¹³² M., ‘The Youatt testimonial’ in *Veterinarian*, vol. 12, no. 9 (September, 1839), pp 595-619.

Irish farmers, veterinarians, and compilers of veterinary columns regularly consulted the works of Clater and, in particular, Youatt. Their publications were widely advertised, and regularly recommended to those with an interest in animal doctoring. For example, in 1876, the *Weekly Freeman's Journal* advised a young man, who wished to study the veterinary art but did not have the means to attend a veterinary college, to study the latest editions of Clater and Youatt.¹³³ George Stowell, Crobeg, was a landed Cork gentleman who patently consulted Clater and Youatt when doctoring his animals. In 1841, he wrote to Youatt at the *Veterinarian* regarding a case of vomiting he had observed and treated in one of his heifers, informing the veterinarian that his 'valuable book' on *Cattle* had but few mentions of vomiting.¹³⁴ Youatt liked to hear from such gentlemen. He wrote that his London practice, predominantly engaged in treating dogs and horses, offered few opportunities to observe other species. Therefore, when compiling *Cattle*, he acquired knowledge from agriculturists, vets and contributions from the readership of the *Veterinarian*.¹³⁵ Irish gentlemen, like Stowell, could easily source agricultural and veterinary publications. According to Máire Kennedy, far reaching distribution channels existed from the mid-eighteenth century to allow books, periodicals and newspaper to reach even the smaller country towns and beyond. She suggested that the networks for distributing literary works, patent medicines and luxury items followed the same model. The process was initiated with a Dublin bookseller selling his merchandise to his contacts in the principal towns who in turn distributed the items to the surrounding post towns through regular mail coaches. Kennedy gave ample evidence that the local distributor often printed the local newspaper and used this medium to advertise the products, which was the key to successful sales.¹³⁶

In consulting his private receipt book, or popular veterinary treatise, the stock-owner hoped to bypass the local practitioner or vet by preparing medicines from ingredients sourced from an apothecary, druggist or chemist. However, treating one's own cattle usually came with a warning. A contributor to the *Irish Farmer's and*

¹³³ *Weekly Freeman's Journal*, 10 June 1876.

¹³⁴ George Stowell, 'A case of vomiting in a cow' in *Veterinarian*, vol. 14, no. 7 (July, 1841), p. 383; In his correspondence Stowell described using a number of techniques and instruments advocated by Clater and Youatt, such as venting an animal to release gases and the use of a probang to remove obstructions from the animal's oesophagus. See Francis Clater, *Every man his own cattle doctor* (6th ed., London, 1825), pp 194-201; Youatt, *Cattle*, pp 414-5.

¹³⁵ William Youatt, *Cattle: Their breeds, management and diseases* (London, 1843), pp iii-iv.

¹³⁶ Máire Kennedy, 'The distribution of a locally produced French periodical in provincial Ireland: the *Magazin à La Mode*, 1777-1778' in *Eighteenth Century Ireland*, vol. 9 (1994), pp 83-98.

Gardener's Magazine was generally critical of cow-doctors, and believed self-doctoring was the better option for those who could afford to purchase veterinary books. However, he concluded that such works were of little benefit to the vast majority who were either too poor to purchase them or too illiterate to understand them, noting a gentleman who had lost fifteen yearling bullocks by relying on quacks and the 'occasional opinion' from *White's Farriery*.¹³⁷ Interestingly, the said James White (London, 1797) had little confidence in the majority of 'cattle-doctoring' books, suggesting that they were generally on a par with cattle doctors, but consulting the latter might be the less dangerous option.¹³⁸ Richard Dyer noted that in the course of his practice he had seen an intelligent gentlemen merely exacerbate an animal's sickness by employing treatments culled from individuals he met at fairs, combined with those from Clater's *Cattle Doctor*.¹³⁹ Veterinary writers occasionally made efforts to advise their readers that proper diagnosis, the correct use of genuine drugs and adequate aftercare were essential for a positive outcome.¹⁴⁰ Making the wrong diagnosis or attempting unfamiliar treatments could kill the animal. The aforementioned Patrick Dowling warned his readers that his instructions on performing difficult operations should be strictly adhered to, 'otherwise the consequences may be fatal.' The reviewer of Dowling's book emphasized the importance of correct diagnosis. He believed disorders were often mistakenly identified and improper remedies applied, which proved fatal to the animal. He argued that the knowledge of the Irish 'cow-leech' seldom went beyond simple cases, and suggested that Dowling's and similar works should be made available to 'intelligent herdsmen', to create a more efficient local practitioner.¹⁴¹ In truth, many of the remedies and techniques employed by the cow-doctors were already culled from the agricultural and veterinary books of their employers. How they were deployed depended on the experience, interest and intelligence of the practitioner.

¹³⁷ E. Carroll, 'On the murrain and blackleg in cattle' in *The Irish Farmer's and Gardener's Magazine and Register of Rural Affairs*, vol. 2, no. 2 (February, 1835), pp 82-5.

¹³⁸ White, *Veterinary medicine*, pp 2-3.

¹³⁹ Dyer, 'Pleuro-pneumonia', p. 620.

¹⁴⁰ See Robert Pearson, *Everyman his own horse, cattle and sheep doctor* (Leicester, 1811), pp iii-vii.

¹⁴¹ Anon, 'Reviews' pp 19-20.

Dissemination of veterinary content of publications to a wider audience

The final editorial of the short lived *Penny Agricultural Magazine* argued that agricultural knowledge could be generally improved if those with means distributed the publication amongst those who did not have the means or knowhow to access it.¹⁴² A Kerry correspondent to the *Irish Farmers' Journal* of 1846 held similar views. He argued that every stratum of the agricultural community should 'read, mark, learn and inwardly digest what they do read', before any considerable advances in agricultural practices could be affected. The writer admitted that the farmers of his district were backward but 'anxious for enlightenment' and most willing to adopt every means of improvement allowed to them. He noted that Mr. Herbert, Muckcross, had distributed several approved publications on practical agriculture amongst his tenants and urged other landlords and proprietors to follow suit by 'circulating gratuitously' amongst their tenantry agricultural periodicals such as the *Irish Farmers' Journal*.¹⁴³ Even in the absence of such distribution of literature, farming techniques, especially those of a veterinary nature, found their way to the small farm through those employed in the great houses. In his paper on historic veterinary practices, Joe Dineen, a Rathmore vet, demonstrated that many treatments deployed until the 1950s had originated in animal health manuals of previous centuries. Dineen believed that many of the therapies used in his native district came in with those who worked on the Herbert or Hilliard estates around Killarney. Veterinary books were purchased by the proprietors or were brought to Ireland by visitors or those returning from colonial service. Farm managers and workers were subsequently instructed on the contents and the information gradually 'percolated out that way into the locals.'¹⁴⁴ Larger estates and farms usually employed extra hands at busy times of the year.¹⁴⁵ At calving time livestock farms employed individuals with knowledge of cows and calves. For example, an account book from the estate of Major Crosby of Ardfert, dated 17 June 1865, showed J. Cournane was paid £1 16s, which included a '5-shilling night allowance on sick [in labour] cows.'¹⁴⁶

¹⁴² *Penny Agricultural Magazine*, 5 September 1840. The magazine was published in Cork during 1840 and lasted just six issues, a full set survives at the NLI. Call Number-P 1444(3). See also North, *Waterloo directory*, p. 402.

¹⁴³ *Irish Farmers' Journal*, 14 January 1846. According to North, *Waterloo directory*, p. 269, this title was published weekly during 1845 and 1846 and survived for just twenty-eight issues. An incomplete set survives at the National Library (Ir 6305 i 2).

¹⁴⁴ Joe Dineen, 'A touch of a farcy' in *Sliab Luacra*, vol. 1, no. 9 (August, 1998), pp 58-62.

¹⁴⁵ Henry Stephens, *The book of the farm* (2nd ed., 2 vols., Edinburgh, 1852), i, 17.

¹⁴⁶ Crosbie Estate Workmen's Accounts Ledger 1863–1879. The ledger is in private possession and the information was collected from Tommy O'Connor, Kerry County Librarian, who lives in Ardfert.

In turn, these individuals learned new skills that were subsequently deployed in assisting the neighbouring farmers with their cattle.

There is evidence that the libraries of Ireland's great houses carried copies of the popular veterinary manuals of the day. For example, several antiquarian veterinary books held at the National Library of Ireland either bear the coat of arms of the house where they originated or have the original owner's name written on the title page. Included is a copy of Lawrence's *General treatise on cattle*, which carries the signature of George Chalmers, Debsborough.¹⁴⁷ A copy of *The Complete Grazier*, published in 1767, bears the distinctive Fitzgerald family crest of the Duke of Leinster.¹⁴⁸ The library of Riverview House on the Kerry-Limerick border, an example of a smaller nineteenth-century country house, holds Leeney's *Home Doctoring of Animals*, popular at the start of the twentieth-century.¹⁴⁹ From the eighteenth-century there was no shortage of veterinary texts available for consultation by gentry and larger farmers. Evidence suggests that information on animal doctoring filtered out into the wider farming community and was regularly employed by local cow-doctors.

Summary

In nineteenth century Ireland few veterinary surgeons practiced in country areas. However, evidence suggests that, even when a vet was available, his skills were rarely called upon for cattle cases. The vet was seen merely as a horse-doctor, with little proficiency in the diseases of cattle. This is hardly surprising as the trained veterinary surgeon received little or no instruction on non-equine diseases at the veterinary colleges. Nor was a cattle owner prepared to pay a high fee to a gentleman whose proficiency he questioned. When the vet was called to a cattle case it was usually to doctor a valuable animal of an aristocratic client, and then only as a last resort. In most cases the animal was by then too ill to be saved, and its owner's supposition that college men knew nothing of cattle disease was confirmed. Veterinary surgeons such as

¹⁴⁷ Debsborough House, Ballynalough, Nenagh, county Tipperary, was the seat of the Bayly family in the 18th and 19th centuries. See <http://www.landedestates.ie/LandedEstates/jsp/property-show.jsp?id=4395>. This author can find no reference to Chalmers, who may have been an estate manager.

¹⁴⁸ Country Gentleman, *The complete grazier: or the gentleman and farmer's directory* (2nd ed., London, 1767). The words 'His Grace the Duke of Leinster' are written in pencil on the half-title page of the NLI copy.

¹⁴⁹ Harold Leeney, *Home doctoring of animals* (London, 1921). Riverview House was once a dower house of the Knights of Glin, subsequently owned by the Fitzmaurice and Wall families. This author got a tour of the library, in what is now a disused house, from its owner Eileen Wall.

Thomas Peall acknowledged that their knowledge of cattle disease was inadequate, and often used improvisation or amended equine treatments to reach a cure. In the main, herd owners relied on the ministrations of the local cow-doctor, or the magical powers of the murrain stone, to cure their cattle.

Those who could afford to do so employed a full-time herd who claimed a knowledge of cattle disease, or self-doctored their cattle by consulting recipes from newspapers or popular husbandry books from their libraries. Newspapers, almanacs, agricultural periodicals, and veterinary-specific publications provided readers with prescriptions for numerous diseases, the ingredients for which could be procured in the local medicine hall. A small number of veterinary treatises were written by Irish cow-doctors, evidently at the behest of their clients, but found no success in a marketplace dominated by British writers such as Clater and Youatt. Self-doctoring from literature sometimes proved fatal to the animal, as conditions were mistakenly identified and improper remedies applied. Employing a herd also brought mixed results. Some herds could simply not have acquired the skills and knowledge of animal disease they claimed to possess. However, others evidently had a fundamental understanding of sick cattle, and the appropriate treatments. Much of this knowledge was acquired whilst working previously on estates or large farms, knowledge that had probably originated in agricultural newspapers or popular veterinary books.

Chapter 3: Professionalisation of the Veterinary Surgeon

Professions have generally been described as a particular occupational category, involving a detailed and specialist education, with the focus on providing a service of some kind to the rest of society.¹ Before the nineteenth-century there were, in reality, only three truly identifiable professions, predominantly reserved for ‘gentlemen’- the church, medicine and law. However, in Britain and elsewhere, growing urbanisation, an industrialising economy, a more liberal society, and the emergence of a clear middle class, saw reforms to these ‘old’ professions, and the introduction of a range of new ones, such as engineer, teacher and veterinary surgeon.² During the nineteenth-century, professions, both old and new, strove for improved status, integrity and competence. Carr-Saunders and Wilson suggested that this social process of professionalisation occurs when an occupation acquires an ethical code, a set of established educational practices, a defined set of specialist skills, a professional body, and a process of self-regulation.³ Furthermore, a profession functions by creating a market and a perceived need for a particular kind of skilled service. It then needs to control and regulate the provision of that service in a manner that ensures that it gains, from society, status, privilege and reward.⁴ These were all issues tackled by the medical and other professions during the early nineteenth-century. It was a desire to achieve equality with his medical counterpart, in particular, that ultimately drove the veterinary surgeons to seek improved status and competence, through professionalisation.⁵

¹ See Jane Callaghan, ‘Professions and professionalisation’ in Thomas Teo (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of critical psychology* (New York, 2014), pp 1509-15.

² See Penelope J. Corfield, *Power and the professions in Britain, 1700-1850* (London, 1995), pp 1-17; W. J. Reader, *Professional men: the rise of the professional classes in nineteenth-century England* (London, 1966); H. J. Perkin, *The rise of professional society: England since 1880* (London, 1989); Charles E. McClelland, *The German experience of professionalisation* (Cambridge, 1991), p. 3.

³ A. M. Carr-Saunders and P. A. Wilson, ‘Professions’ in *Encyclopaedia of social sciences: Volume 22* (New York, 1944), pp 476-80.

⁴ Callaghan, ‘Professions’, p. 1510; Geoff Millerson, ‘Education in the professions’ in T. G. Cook (ed.), *Education and the professions* (London, 1973), p. 1.

⁵ Ivan Waddington, ‘The movement towards the professionalisation of medicine’ in *British Medical Journal*, vol. 301, no. 6754 (3October, 1990), pp 688-90. For a discussion on the development of the legal profession see Corfield, ‘Power and the professions’, pp 70-101; See also A. M. Carr-Saunders and P. A. Wilson, *The professions* (Oxford, 1933). In their book on the historical development of nineteen different professions, including veterinary, Carr-Saunders and Wilson also paid particular attention to lawyers and doctors.

Calls for reform to the veterinary profession

At the beginning of the 1820s the veterinary profession was in disarray. The LVC, which held a monopoly on veterinary education in Britain, was producing a generally low standard of graduate, as a consequence of a course based entirely on the horse, that lasted but a few months.⁶ However, neither Principal Coleman nor the Governors, all medical men, were willing to relinquish their good social life and undisputed authority.⁷ John Lawrence, an early proponent of the ethical treatment of animals, urged medical men, who entertained the idea of becoming animal-doctors, to do so as the presence of a specialist college should now remove any 'false sense of shame' associated with the work.⁸ However, Coleman saw the sons of grooms and farriers as his ideal students, to the exclusion of educated individuals, especially medical pupils.⁹ According to Smithcors the meagre instruction Coleman was capable of delivering suited such candidates. Furthermore, Coleman desired no criticism or disregard for his authority and dogma, and this attitude he could only get from poorly educated individuals of low social standing.¹⁰

Pressure on the LVC intensified in the 1820s. From 1823 William Dick's Edinburgh College, with the patronage of the Highland and Agricultural Society, offered prospective students a more continental approach to veterinary education, with instruction on the diseases of the horse, cattle, sheep, swine and dogs. From 1829, the Highland Society decided that veterinary students should study for a minimum of two years before being examined for the Society's Veterinary Certificate (HASC).¹¹ 1838 saw the first Irish graduate of the college, Edward Dycer, Dublin. By 1881, approximately 1,150 veterinary certificates had been awarded, 102 to Irish graduates.¹²

⁶ Hall, 'The struggle for the charter', p. 4;

⁷ Pugh, *Farriery to veterinary medicine*, p. 106.

⁸ John Lawrence, *A general treatise on cattle, the ox, the sheep and the swine* (London, 1805), pp 555-6.

⁹ Anon, 'The Veterinary College as originally constituted, compared with its present mismanaged and corrupt state' in *Farrier and Naturalist*, vol. 1, no. 3 (March, 1828), p. 101; Nimrod, 'Review of Mr. Percival's 'Hippopathology'' in *New Sporting Magazine*, vol. 7, no. 37 (May, 1834), p. 65; Veritas, 'Qualifications for a veterinary surgeon' in *Veterinarian*, vol. 1, no. 4 (April, 1828), pp 134-8.

¹⁰ Smithcors, *Evolution*, p. 310.

¹¹ For an overview of the development of the Edinburgh Veterinary College see Orlando Charnock Bradley, *History of the Edinburgh Veterinary College* (Edinburgh, 1923); Alastair A. MacDonald and Colin M. Warwick, 'Early teaching of the 'veterinary art and science' in Edinburgh' in *Vet. Hist.*, new ser., vol. 16, no. 3 (August, 2012), pp 246-54; MacDonald, Warwick and Johnston, 'Locating veterinary education', pp 43-50.

¹² Statistics derived from Highland and Agricultural Society Veterinary Department, *List of students of veterinary colleges recognised by Government* (Edinburgh, 1874); Anon, 'Historical account of the

Coleman and the LVC came under further scrutiny in 1828 with the publication of two new veterinary journals, the *Veterinarian* and the *Farrier and Naturalist*. Both held a common aim of voicing disquiet at Coleman and the LVC, but endeavoured to do so with contrasting styles. The latter, which lasted but three volumes, until 1830, focused on personal attacks on Coleman, its style described as ‘gross, malicious and libellous.’ In contrast the *Veterinarian*’s criticism of the LVC was constructive and informed.¹³ It regularly highlighted the lack of transparency hitherto shown by the LVC, contrasted the poor prospects of the veterinary student with those of his medical counterpart, and compared the instruction offered at the LVC with that of the continental schools, where students received practical experience during four years of study.¹⁴

Former graduates of the LVC also became increasingly critical of Coleman and his methods. Their main grievance was the complete absence of veterinary practitioners on the Examining Committee. Veterinary medicine, as taught at the LVC, was hitherto seen as an extension of human medicine, with human physicians and surgeons involved in all aspects of the organisation and management of the institution. Reformers now began to advance a vision of their field as ‘an autonomous, independent domain.’ Therefore, it was now insupportable that the human surgeon, perceived as ignorant of animal disease, could continue as the only judge of a veterinary student’s ability.¹⁵ However, subsequent calls for reform by prominent vets, such as Joseph Goodwin, the medically trained Veterinary Surgeon to the King, fell on deaf ears and even led to the LVC governors barring veterinary surgeon as subscribers, unless at their discretion.¹⁶ The death of Coleman, in 1839, gave new hope to reformers. He was succeeded by William Sewell who was also averse to change.¹⁷ However, pressure came from the

Veterinary Department of the Highland and Agricultural Society’ in *Transactions of the Highland and Agricultural Society of Scotland*, 4th ser., vol. 11 (1879), p. 181.

¹³ Bruce V. Jones, ‘British veterinary periodicals: 1828-1928’ in *Vet. Hist.*, vol. 17, no. 4 (2015), pp 350-4; Smithcors, *Evolution*, pp 343-4; J. W. Barber-Lomax, ‘The *Veterinarian*, 1828-1902’ in *The Veterinarian: An International Journal*, vol. 1, no. 1 (July, 1963), pp 9-12. This title bears no relation to the nineteenth-century journal. It commenced with vol. 1, no. 1, July 1963 and ceased with vol. 6, no. 1, April 1969.

¹⁴ For example, see Anon, ‘Veterinary periodical publications’ in *Veterinarian*, vol. 1, no. 1 (January, 1828), pp 1-9; Anon, ‘The inadequate period allowed to veterinary study’ in *Veterinarian*, vol. 1, no. 11 (November, 1828), pp 408-16; Anon, ‘Extract from the report of the proceedings of the School at Alfort, during the session of the year 1831’ in *Veterinarian*, vol. 5, no. 1 (January, 1832), p. 46.

¹⁵ For a perspective on the evolving identities and relationships of human and veterinary medicine in nineteenth-century Britain, see Woods, ‘From one medicine to two’, pp 494-523.

¹⁶ S. A. Hall, ‘The struggle for the charter’, pp 5-6; Pattison, *British veterinary profession*, pp 13-5; Anon, ‘Rejection of veterinary surgeons as subscribers’ in *Veterinarian*, vol. 2, no. 6 (June, 1829), pp 239-51.

¹⁷ Pattison, *British veterinary profession*, p. 17.

Royal Agricultural Society of England (RASE), which, in the year before Coleman's death, had pushed for instruction on the diseases of cattle, sheep and pigs at the LVC.¹⁸ As RASE now supported the LVC with an annual grant of £200, the college was eventually forced to appoint James Beart Simonds, a vet with experience of cattle practice in the farming counties of Norfolk and Suffolk, as 'Lecturer on Cattle Pathology.'¹⁹ His appointment was commended by reformers such as William Youatt, who believed Simonds was 'fully qualified' to discharge the duties of his new position.²⁰

The Charter of 1844

While these early reforms were formulating at the London School, graduates of both London and Edinburgh, led by a father and son, Thomas Mayer and Thomas Walton Mayer were calling for the recognition of the profession by Royal Charter. On Coleman's death they submitted a memorial to the LVC asking the Governors for reform in the governance of the College regarding the scope of instruction, college fees and the length of the course. This document was also forwarded, at the Mayers' own expense, to almost seven hundred veterinary practitioners known to practice throughout the United Kingdom.²¹ Amongst 290 named gentlemen that expressed overwhelming support, fifteen were based in Ireland, all but one in private practice.²² Of thirteen letters of support from Ireland eleven have survived. Whilst the majority were concise, merely conveying support and good wishes, others communicated the viewpoint of the

¹⁸ For the early history of the Royal Agricultural Society of England see Nicholas Goddard, *Harvests of change: The Royal Agricultural Society of England, 1838-1988* (London, 1988), pp 1-30; Anon, 'English Agricultural Society: Objects of the Society' in *Journal of the English Agricultural Society*, vol. 1 (1839), p. v.

¹⁹ J. R. Fisher, 'Animal health and the Royal Agricultural Society of England in its early years' in *Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society of England*, no. 143 (1982), pp 105-6; Iain Pattison, *A great British veterinarian forgotten: James Beart Simonds, 1810-1904* (London, 1990), pp 1-23. An eight-part autobiography of Simonds was published in the *Veterinarian* during 1894. The series was reprinted in *Vet. Hist.* from vol. 14, no. 4 (2009) to vol. 17, no. 1 (2013).

²⁰ Anon, 'Presentation of a testimonial to Professor J. B. Simonds by the students of the Royal Veterinary College' in *The Veterinary Record and Transactions of the Veterinary Medical Association*, vol. 3, no. 12 (July, 1847), p. 212.

²¹ John Clewlow, 'The Mayers of Newcastle-Under-Lyme and their place in the emerging veterinary profession' in *Vet. Hist.*, new ser., vol. 9, no. 1 (1996), pp 2-6; The memorial was reproduced in *Veterinarian*, vol. 13, no. 3 (March, 1840), pp 193-9.

²² A full list of the signatures to the memorial was published in *Veterinarian*, vol. 13, no. 7 (July, 1840), pp 493-500. The Irish based signatories were Herbert Hallen, 6th Dragoons, Richard Clarkson, Richard Collier, Jonathan Wainwright, George Watts Snr., George Watts Jnr., all Dublin, John W. Ions, Waterford, Joseph C. Molyneaux, Robert Molyneaux, both Kilkenny, Thomas Richardson, Clonmel, Matthew Small, George Marshall, both Newry, William Taylor, William M'Kenna, both Belfast, and John Scott, Kildare

individual. For example, William Taylor, Belfast, believed that ‘as our profession is rapidly advancing in size, importance, and respectability, it becomes absolutely necessary for its future success that the education of the student should be in accordance with its improvement.’ In his letter of support, Matthew Small, Newry, also conveyed the support of his ‘assistant and colleague...licentiate of the Edinburgh College’, G. M. Marshall. An attached advertising poster described Marshall as an experienced veterinary surgeon from York.²³ However, Marshall’s name does not appear on any list of Edinburgh graduates. An advertisement in the *York Herald*, dated April 1839, noted that Marshall had previously worked as veterinary surgeon to a coach establishment, having studied for five years under a ‘distinguished’ member of the RVC.²⁴

The Mayers’ memorial was rejected by the Governors of the LVC.²⁵ However, the process had formed the veterinary surgeons into a ‘fighting force with one aim in mind, to unite the veterinary surgeons of the British Isles and create for them a corporate body, a professional standing with legal identity.’ In November 1840, when the Privy Council was petitioned to grant a Royal Charter, conferring graduates of London and Edinburgh with the title of Member of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (MRCVS), it emphasised that any petition was worthless unless supported by Dick and the London Professors. In March 1844, after three years of negotiations with the colleges, the profession finally received formal recognition with the foundation of the RCVS.²⁶ Carr-Saunders and Wilson described the Charter as innovative as ‘it embodies an attempt, apparently unique, to raise a vocation to the rank of a profession by royal prerogative.’²⁷

The first meeting of the RCVS, held on 12 April, was attended by over fifty members of the profession, including one Irish based practitioner, William M’Kenna, Belfast.²⁸ Three days later, at a meeting in Covent Garden, the Council resolved that the examiners at London and Edinburgh should be a mixture of medical men and veterinary practitioners. Amongst the examiners selected were two army veterinarians

²³ The letters survive at the RCVS Knowledge Library, Belgravia House, 62-64 Horseferry Road, London, and were recently digitised. The two letters that do not survive are those of Hallen and M’Kenna.

²⁴ *York Herald*, 20 April 1839.

²⁵ The Governors’ reply to the Mayers is reproduced in *Veterinarian*, vol. 13, no. 8 (August, 1840), p. 543.

²⁶ Clewlow, ‘The Mayers of Newcastle-Under-Lyme’, pp 7-8.

²⁷ Carr-Saunders and Wilson, *The professions*, p. 127.

²⁸ Anon, ‘Reception of the Charter’ in *Veterinarian*, vol. 17, no. 5 (May, 1844), pp 280-307.

with Irish connections, Herbert Hallen, who supported the Mayer memorial whilst quartered in Dublin, and John Wilkinson (London, 1825), who had offered his services to the Royal Dublin Society (RDS), in 1831, to fill its vacant veterinary professorship. The meeting also agreed that all those who had qualified at London or Edinburgh prior to 8 March 1844 could apply for RCVS membership, if they wished, by presenting themselves for examination. At the meeting a list of subscribers towards the expenses of the Charter was presented. Almost 170 individuals or practices, including three from Ireland, had made donations of between 10s and £25. George Watts Jnr. had donated £5, William M’Kenna, £3 1s and the Oldens of Cork, £1.²⁹

The 1844 Charter was largely unsuccessful as it did not provide protection for the title of veterinary surgeon or outlaw unqualified veterinary practitioners. Furthermore, the RCVS, who had aimed to replace the qualifications gained at London and Edinburgh with a single qualification, membership of the RCVS, was disappointed. The Governors of the colleges, who had expected that the Charter would not be granted, were ‘piqued’, realising that their monopoly powers would be effectively ended. Both colleges called for revision of the Charter but the RCVS stood firm.³⁰ The LVC eventually agreed but Dick steadfastly refused and seceded from the RCVS in 1848. The HASC again became the sole qualification granted to Edinburgh’s veterinary graduates.³¹ However, the RCVS had established a separate examination board for Scotland, where more than half of Dick’s students were subsequently examined by these ‘Scotch’ examiners. This arrangement continued for nearly forty years.³² At the annual meeting of the RCVS, held on 6 May 1867, it was recorded that 818 gentlemen had hitherto received the HASC. Of that number 575 had taken further steps to acquire the title MRCVS. This left 233 practitioners with the HASC as a sole qualification.³³

Those that held only the HASC were regularly challenged by RCVS members on their right to use the title ‘veterinary surgeon.’ The best known case involved

²⁹ Anon, ‘First meeting under the Charter’ in *Veterinarian*, vol. 17, no. 5 (May, 1844), pp 307-15.

³⁰ A. R. W. Porter, ‘Royal charters and veterinary statutes’ in *Vet. Rec.*, vol. 134 (21 May, 1994), pp 541-3; S. A. Hall, ‘The struggle for the charter’, p. 12; Pamela Hunter, *Veterinary Medicine: a guide to historical sources* (Aldershot, 2004), p. 9.

³¹ James D. G. Davidson,., *The Royal Highland and Agricultural Society of Scotland: A short history, 1784-1884* (Edinburgh, 1984), p. 16.

³² William L. Weipers, ‘The development of veterinary education in the west of Scotland’ in *Vet. Hist.*, vol. 7 (1976), pp 9-10; Henry Carter, ‘The William Dick bicentenary’ in *Vet. Hist.*, new ser., vol. 7, no. 4 (1993), p. 131.

³³ Anon, ‘Annual meeting of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons’ in *Veterinarian*, vol. 40, no. 6 (June, 1867), p. 458.

Thomas Aitkin Dollar, a graduate of Edinburgh, who encountered opposition to his London practice from MRCVS members in that city.³⁴ The rift also resulted in some discord between veterinary surgeons practicing in Limerick, where Richard Dyer attempted to use the situation to gain advantage over a number of fellow veterinary surgeons that had forgone RCVS membership. While practicing in Britain during the 1860s Dyer was highly critical of unqualified individuals and vowed to ‘do something with such imposters.’³⁵ When he arrived in Limerick in 1870 his main competitors were Patrick B. O’Connor (Edinburgh, 1867) and Humphrey O’Sullivan-Keyes (Edinburgh, 1856). The latter had never taken the RCVS exam. In September 1871, Dyer wrote to the RCVS to enquire if O’Sullivan-Keyes was a member of that body and was informed that the name did not appear on the register.³⁶ Four years later, Dyer wrote to the *Limerick Chronicle* claiming that he was one of only two qualified veterinary surgeons practicing in Limerick as ‘two others...are not recognised at all (vide register).’³⁷ The following week the newly qualified Peter Johnstone posted an advertisement thanking his clients and stating that he had qualified in Edinburgh. Johnstone had received the HASC at Edinburgh and subsequently attained the RCVS diploma. In the same issue, O’Sullivan-Keyes replied to Dyer’s accusations and gave evidence that he had attained the HASC and was duly qualified to practice.³⁸ Hugh O’Connor, who had replaced his late brother Patrick in practice, did likewise in a later issue.³⁹ Both O’Sullivan Keyes and Hugh O’Connor had received the same veterinary education as Johnstone in Edinburgh but had not subsequently sought the RCVS membership. Dyer’s record showed that he had a genuine interest in restricting veterinary practice by unqualified individuals. However, because of his intimate knowledge of the profession, he surely knew that there was no legal impediment to either O’Sullivan-Keyes or O’Connor practicing as veterinary surgeons. Dyer’s actions can therefore be seen as an attempt to put doubt in the minds of potential clients regarding his opponent’s credentials, thereby gaining professional advantage. Nevertheless, he appeared to be following the RCVS

³⁴ Anon, ‘Obituary: John Archibald Watt Dollar’ in *Veterinary Journal*, vol. 104, no. 2 (February, 1948), p. 65.

³⁵ *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, 26 July 1867.

³⁶ Anon, ‘Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons: Quarterly meeting of the Council, held October 4th, 1871’ in *Veterinarian*, vol. 44, no. 11 (November, 1871), p. 863.

³⁷ *Limerick Chronicle*, 17 August 1875.

³⁸ *Limerick Chronicle*, 25 August 1875.

³⁹ *Limerick Chronicle*, 12 January, 31 August 1875.

position that a HASC holder should not use the term ‘veterinary surgeon’ and was essentially unqualified.

This position was highlighted in the results of a statistical report commissioned by the RCVS into the vast amounts of practice still in the hands of unqualified individuals. Some farriers and cow-doctors continued to assume the title of veterinary surgeon, which was of particular concern to RCVS members based away from the larger cities or towns, who were finding it hard to survive. In 1862, the RCVS resolved that a circular be sent to every member in Britain and Ireland requesting them to furnish the names, residence and practice details of all those ‘practicing the veterinary art without being duly qualified.’⁴⁰ The statistical returns, released at the AGM of the RCVS in May 1863, showed that the number of RCVS members in practice was 1,018, thirty-six based in Ireland. The survey, ‘with much difficulty’, identified 1,244 practitioners, eighteen in Ireland, who ‘unscrupulously’ assumed the title of veterinary surgeon. No distinction was made between the HASC holder or the cow-doctor or farrier, who merely assumed the title. It also recorded 1,189 individuals practicing as farriers, eleven in Ireland. The Committee of Inquiry believed that the true number of unqualified individuals in practice was probably double that stated in the report, and concluded that it was unfortunate that newly qualified practitioners were left seeking assistant positions instead of dispersing ‘over the different counties where the number of certified practitioners was small.’ A dissenting voice, Mr. Robinson, disapproved of complaining against farriers pursuing their occupation and urged the RCVS to ‘send a better class of man into the country.’⁴¹

The higher status of the nineteenth-century Irish veterinary surgeon

Mr. Robinson’s conclusion was echoed by others. For example, a correspondent to the *Veterinarian* claimed that ‘rat-catchers, mutton-pie-men, razor-grinders and tinkers’ had qualified from the London College and were practicing as veterinary surgeons whilst continuing in their trades. He concluded that it was, therefore, hardly surprising that horse-owners continued to seek the opinions of their grooms. On the other hand, the writer praised the skills of George Watts Jnr., who had saved the racehorse *Zany* at

⁴⁰ E. Braby, ‘Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons: Quarterly meeting of Council, held January 22, 1862’ in *Veterinarian*, vol. 35, no. 3 (March, 1862), p. 189.

⁴¹ Anon, ‘Report of annual meeting of the RCVS’ in *Veterinarian*, vol. 36, no. 6 (June, 1863), pp 360-1, 364-5.

Goodwood racecourse whilst stationed at Brighton with the Scotch Greys Regiment. He remarked that the young Watts had benefitted from the experience of his father, ‘the most eminent veterinary surgeon in Ireland.’⁴² It appears that the mid-nineteenth-century Irish practitioners were held in a much higher regard than were their British counterparts. In the ‘firm’ opinion of Pat Hartigan the higher status of the Irish practitioner was due to the influence of a number of the founding members of the profession in the country and in particular ‘to the character, competence and social mobility’ of Thomas Peall and George Watts.⁴³ Peall was held in much higher regard by the medical profession than his British contemporaries and was well known to surgeons, in both Ireland and Britain. For example, in 1821, on behalf of his friend Richard Smith, Senior Surgeon to the Bristol Academy, he made inquiries of ‘Mr. Crampton, Dr Collis, the Anatomical Professor, and several other gentlemen of eminence in Ireland’ regarding the frequency of calculus.⁴⁴

The social status of the early generations of Irish veterinarians is indeed impressive. Prior to the 1920s death notices and obituaries published in the local press were predominantly of the gentry, merchants or middle class.⁴⁵ But several nineteenth-century provincial veterinarians or their families were also sufficiently well known to warrant descriptive obituary notices in the newspapers. For example, Peter Johnstone, Limerick, was described as a member of an affluent milling family, his father being ‘a large operator and employer who developed an extensive trade.’⁴⁶ John Carmody was the son of the proprietor of Carmody’s Hotel, Ennis. The *Clare Journal* reported the cortege of Carmody’s funeral as ‘one of the largest and most representative we have seen for a considerable period.’⁴⁷ James McKenny (Albert, 1867) was a prominent Dublin vet who came from an influential and prosperous family whose wealth had initially derived from a haberdashery business and later from chemicals. Pat Hartigan wrote that ‘it says something about the perceived status of veterinary medicine in Ireland that an heir to such ambition and advancement should have opted to join a profession that in Britain had scarcely reached the first rung of the ladder of upper

⁴² W. J. D., ‘On the present degraded state of the veterinary profession’ in *Veterinarian*, vol. 5, no. 2 (February, 1832), pp 89-91.

⁴³ Hartigan, ‘George Watts’, p. 14.

⁴⁴ Richard Smith, ‘A statistical inquiry into the frequency of stone in the bladder, in Great Britain and Ireland’ in *Medico-Chirurgical Transactions*, vol. 11, no. 1 (1821), p. 14.

⁴⁵ Tony McCarthy and Tim Cadogan, *A guide to tracing your Cork ancestors* (Dublin, 1998), p. 71.

⁴⁶ *Limerick Chronicle*, 16 June 1904.

⁴⁷ *Clare Journal*, 15 February 1894.

mobility.⁴⁸ Edward Wallis Hoare (New Edinburgh, 1886), a celebrated Cork veterinary surgeon and author, was born at Carrigrohane Castle in 1863. His family had come to Ireland with Cromwell and were granted lands in Cork, Kerry and Kilkenny.⁴⁹

Others came from less prominent landed backgrounds but achieved social standing through their work, marriage and education. Peter Murray and his brother Thomas were from a farming background in Tulla, Clare, and lived for a period at Rathlahine House, New-Market-on-Fergus. Peter married Hannah Fraser, daughter of Dr James Fraser of Limerick City.⁵⁰ On his death in 1904, Peter Murray was described as ‘one of the most familiar personages ever known in Tralee...there were very few of his contemporaries who could claim that popularity which was enjoyed by the deceased.’⁵¹ Thomas Murray (Edinburgh, 1846) subsequently practiced at Partsonstown and Nenagh. Whilst in Scotland he became a member of the prestigious and learned Royal Physical Society of Edinburgh.⁵² John H. Pierce was born on a fifty-acre north Kerry farm. He went to study in Edinburgh in 1890 and did not return to Ireland until qualified, three years later, paying his way through college by picking potatoes.⁵³ W. C. Lord was the son of John Lord, Rector of Mitchelstown.⁵⁴ As previously noted, several of the early veterinary surgeons to practice in Ireland, such as John Watts, were unqualified yet achieved great success through their industry and connections. George Parris might not have achieved such success but he came from a prominent English family and retained a high social status while practicing in Limerick. When Parris died in 1854 the *Limerick Reporter* noted it was to the regret of his ‘numerous friends.’ His obituary read that he was the son of William Parris, Esq, J. P., Wynchurch, Kent.⁵⁵ William Parris appeared in the list of Freeholders of the county of

⁴⁸ Hartigan, ‘James McKenny’, pp 251-2.

⁴⁹ See Bruce V. Jones, *Twentieth-century veterinary lives* (Cirencester, 2012), pp 122-4; M. Jesse Hoare, *The road to Glanore* (London, 1975), pp 17-9; Diarmuid Ó Drisceoil, *Portrait of a Cork suburb in 1916* (Cork, 2016), p. 37; L. G. Pine (ed.) *Burke’s peerage* (102nd ed., London, 1959), p. 1146.

⁵⁰ Information collected from Mary Barrett, Cork, on 21 November 2014. Mary’s husband is a descendant of the Murrays. See also *Limerick Chronicle*, 15 August 1905.

⁵¹ *Kerry Sentinel*, 15 January 1904.

⁵² *Nenagh Guardian*, 11 July 1853, *King’s County Chronicle*, 14 February 1855, 28 May 1856.

⁵³ Interview with John D. Pierce, MRCVS, Market Street, Listowel, county Kerry, 28 November 2002. CD 2, Author’s Collection.

⁵⁴ Anon, ‘Obituary: Mr. W. C. Lord’, p. 230.

⁵⁵ *Limerick Reporter*, 6 January 1854. It appears the place name Wynchurch is an error and should read Dymchurch.

Kent from 1791.⁵⁶ These gentlemen, though self-designated veterinary surgeons, were of a higher class than the uneducated farriers who were assuming the title in Britain. They had considerable experience in business and in the treatment of horses before commencing practice. In truth, it would have taken an educated, ambitious, solvent and well-informed gentleman to leave Britain and establish a successful veterinary practice in Ireland.

Although the majority of Irish veterinary surgeons were held in a higher regard than their British counterparts, veterinary surgery in its own right did not carry a high status and was viewed more as a trade than a profession. According to John Fisher, one of the main factors that drove veterinary reform during the nineteenth century was the low status of the profession, especially compared to the ‘sister’ profession, medicine. Fisher highlighted that the 1851 Census of Great Britain placed medical practitioners in Class I. Veterinary surgeons, whether or not qualified, were in a sub-category of the agricultural Class IV for trades related to animals, ‘lumped’ with farriers, cattle doctors, cow leeches, jockeys, horse-dealers and horse-breakers.⁵⁷ The 1851 Census returns for Ireland made the veterinary profession look even more demeaning, listed in a ‘Miscellaneous’ category that also included horse-clippers, quacks and cattle-doctors. Farriers were classed with blacksmiths as metal workers. The census returned national figures of 101 veterinary surgeons, ninety-three cattle doctors, 396 farriers/horse-shoers, and 19,424 blacksmiths.⁵⁸ According to an early register of ‘qualified’ veterinary surgeons, published in 1848, there were no more than twenty practitioners based in Ireland. This suggested that the vast majority of those recorded in the 1851 Census did not hold a college diploma.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Leonard Bartholomew, *The poll for the Knights of the Shire to represent the county of Kent* (Rochester, 1791), p. 80.

⁵⁷ J. R. Fisher, ‘Not quite a profession: The aspirations of veterinary surgeons in the mid nineteenth century’ in *Historical Research*, vol. 66 (October, 1993), pp 287-8.

⁵⁸ *Census of Ireland for the Year 1851, vol. 5, Summary of Ireland, Tables of Occupation, according to the returns received*, pp 634-36. The returns showed that of those claiming to be veterinary surgeons, 48 were based in Leinster, of whom 17 practiced in Dublin city, 20 in Munster, 19 in Ulster and 4 in Connaught. Of those claiming to be cattle-doctors, the numbers returned were 44, 22, 21, and 6, for Leinster, Munster, Ulster and Connaught, respectively. Only 1 cattle-doctor was recorded in Dublin city. 196 farriers were recorded in Leinster, of whom 139 worked in Dublin, 101 were recorded in Munster, 82 in Ulster and 17 in Connaught. The concentration of blacksmiths averaged between 5,000 and 6,000 in Leinster, Munster and Ulster, with just over 2,000 recorded in Connaught.

⁵⁹ United Committee of Veterinary Surgeons, *Register of the names of certified members of the Veterinary Colleges of London and Edinburgh, list as May 1848* (London, 1848).

The categorisations in the census highlighted the gulf in status between the vet and human practitioners. For example, veterinary surgeons, unlike doctors and dentists, were not exempt from jury service on grounds of national importance and were paid less than surgeons when appearing in court cases as expert witnesses.⁶⁰ These variances were highlighted by William M’Kenna, Belfast, who along with Richard Dyer, was arguably Ireland’s foremost campaigner for veterinary reform in the mid nineteenth-century. In November 1849, he failed in his application to the Belfast magistrates to be exempted from jury duty on the grounds of being a ‘professional man.’⁶¹ M’Kenna subsequently wrote to the *Banner of Ulster* regarding the education and standing of regularly qualified veterinary surgeons. He claimed that veterinarians should not be absent from their practice and urged the public to take some interest in securing jury exemption for the profession. He argued that without the interventions of a veterinarian the lives of valuable animals might be in danger following an accident or an onset of disease. M’Kenna also criticised those who practiced as veterinary surgeons without a qualification. He explained to the reader the ‘character of education’ needed to qualify from the LVC and the costs incurred. He had been informed that it cost £27 in fees for a three-year undergraduate course at Queen’s College, Belfast. This was less than the fees paid by his son that year in London.⁶² M’Kenna valued his qualification and had gone to great lengths to obtain it. He had practiced for almost twenty years before investing the time, money and effort to travel to London where he qualified in 1835. Therefore, he questioned why others could be allowed to practice without a college diploma when he had gone to the trouble of obtaining a ‘regular’ veterinary education.⁶³

M’Kenna went to great lengths to contribute to veterinary reform. He attended at RCVS meetings in London and was a member of the North of England Veterinary Medical Association, travelling as far as Newcastle-on-Tyne to attend Association meetings.⁶⁴ One might question how M’Kenna could spend so much time travelling to Britain on such business, especially considering his concerns regarding practitioners

⁶⁰ Anon, ‘The service on juries by veterinary surgeons’ in *Veterinarian*, vol. 46, no. 5 (May, 1873), pp 337-40; Woods and Matthews, ‘Little if at all’, p. 44.

⁶¹ *Banner of Ulster*, 27 November 1849.

⁶² *Banner of Ulster*, 18 December 1849. The letter was subsequently reproduced in *Veterinarian*. See William M’Kenna, ‘Education and standing of regularly qualified veterinary surgeons’ in *Veterinarian*, vol. 23, no. 5 (May, 1850), pp 281-4.

⁶³ *Northern Whig*, 14 September 1837.

⁶⁴ Anon, ‘North of England Veterinary Medical Association’ in *Veterinarian*, vol. 37, no. 9 (September, 1864), p. 656.

being absent from their practices because of jury duty. He had three sons who also graduated from the LVC. His sons James (London, 1865) and John Alexander (London, 1863) carried on the family business.⁶⁵ William Carmichael M’Kenna (London, 1853) was in a partnership with Thomas Walton Mayer, the prominent reformer, at Newcastle-under-Lyme.⁶⁶ William M’Kenna died on 1 May 1865, a number of days after being thrown from a horse. He was leaving Belfast to travel to Britain for the annual meeting of the RCVS in London. He was fifty-eight years of age.⁶⁷

In October 1864, Richard Dyer retired from Waterford and returned to Britain, settling in Torquay. From then his correspondence with the *Veterinarian* focused not on the lack of cattle practice, but on the social position of the veterinary surgeon, suggesting that he saw a decline in same on arrival in Britain. RCVS members, corresponding to the *Veterinarian*, regularly suggested that fellow graduates did not always act in a gentlemanly manner. For example, one writer noted that there were a ‘large number who are a disgrace to the profession.’⁶⁸ On the other hand, another wrote that he knew several, ‘*sine* diploma’, who, unlike some RCVS members, read the veterinary press, were gentlemen in every sense of the word, and brought no stigma to the profession.⁶⁹ Although Dyer was critical of many fellow vets, he wrote that ‘there are some amongst us who hold and can maintain a good position in society, and are often the guests of great people.’⁷⁰ For his own part Dyer certainly did this during his time in Ireland. On arriving in Waterford, he became involved in many organisations and societies in that city. He was a member of the Waterford Mechanics’ Scientific Institute, to which he delivered lectures on such diverse subjects as chemistry and the eye, and was secretary of the Waterford Farming Society.⁷¹ At the cathedral, Dyer conducted the vocal department, played piano at the Harmonic Society and was a

⁶⁵ *Ulster General Advertiser*, 6 May 1865.

⁶⁶ *Staffordshire Advertiser*, 17 November 1855.

⁶⁷ Anon, ‘Obituary, W. M’Kenna’ in *Veterinarian*, vol. 38, no. 7 (July, 1865), p. 411; Anon, ‘Obituary’ in *The Veterinary Review and Stockowners’ Journal*, new ser., vol. 1, no. 6 (June, 1865), p. 334; *Banner of Ulster*, 2 May 1865.

⁶⁸ James Fraser, ‘Our social position’ in *Veterinarian*, vol. 43, no. 12 (December, 1870), pp 917-8.

⁶⁹ F. W. Prentice, ‘Veterinary quackery: A reply to “M.R.C.V.S.”’ in *Veterinarian*, vol. 46, no. 7 (July, 1873), p. 469.

⁷⁰ R. H. Dyer, ‘Social position of the veterinary surgeon’ in *Veterinarian*, vol. 38, no. 6 (June, 1865), p. 360.

⁷¹ *Waterford Chronicle*, 6 May 1854, *Waterford Mail*, 22, 29 May 1855; *Waterford Mirror and Tramore Visitor*, 17 February 1864.

member of the Waterford Protestant Fellow Society.⁷² On leaving the city he was presented with a testimonial, signed by the Bishop and over thirty of the leading nobility and gentry of the neighbourhood, including several members of the medical profession, noting the high opinion held in the city of both his professional abilities and private character.⁷³

The failure of the veterinary profession to reach the same social status as medical professionals irked Dyer the most. He explained that there were several reasons why the veterinarian should not entertain any idea of expediently attaining to the position held by the human physicians, who from the eighteenth-century were attempting to establish their credentials as members of the upper class and advertising their services by individual display.⁷⁴ Dyer considered the prospects of two individuals, of the same age, one attending at London University to study medicine, the other at the Veterinary College. He highlighted that upon qualification the human physician was considered a 'gentleman' and entered the house of a client, dealing with this client and having no recourse to the servants. Eventually he is introduced to the client's 'circle.' On the other hand, the veterinary surgeon visited the stable, had no recourse with the animal's owner, and dealt with the coachmen and groom who were prone to ridicule him if he appeared 'well dressed and gentlemanly.' The human patient implored the doctor to save a life 'at any cost' while the veterinary surgeon must justify the time involved and the cost incurred before he was allowed examine his patient. Dyer gave two major reasons for the low status of his profession. Firstly, socialising with the grooms, as many of his colleagues did, tended 'to keep them low in society or upon par with these people.' Secondly, he blamed the horse owner for having too much faith in his groom who took advantage of any 'weak point' his master might possess. Dyer believed potential clients required to be enlightened as to the worth of his profession before it could succeed in obtaining 'but a small share of the kindness and consideration which the physician so largely shares, together with a little more of this world's gold.'⁷⁵ The *Medical Times* concurred with Dyer. It argued that if the veterinarian were a

⁷² For example, see *Waterford Mail*, 26 June 1855, 29 March 1856, 13 January, 5 February 1862. This author can find no account of the history, composition or objectives of the Protestant Fellow Society.

⁷³ Anon, 'Testimonial to R. H. Dyer, MRCVS, Torquay' in *Veterinarian*, vol. 38, no. 10 (October, 1865), pp 727-8.

⁷⁴ See N. D. Jewson, 'Medical knowledge and the patronage system in 18th century England' in *Sociology*, vol. 8, no. 3 (September, 1974), pp 369-85.

⁷⁵ Dyer, 'Social position', pp 360-5.

gentleman and a man of science he could have no cause to complain of want of social position, and claimed that the medical man in the country town was prevented from associating with the local vet because of a lack of 'kindred tastes and culture' on the part of the latter.⁷⁶

Reform of veterinary education

Because of the large numbers of unqualified practitioners identified in the 1862-63 survey, the RCVS re-focused on preventing non-members of the body from using the title 'veterinary surgeon.' Between 1863 and 1866 it was involved in preparing a Veterinary Medical Bill, which proposed to limit the title to RCVS members. However, the fourth clause proposed to accept those who had assumed the title prior to six months previous to the passing of the Act, upon paying a fee and passing an examination. Richard Dyer wanted more from unqualified individuals. He proposed that they should produce a copy of indenture as having served three years apprenticeship with a properly qualified man, before attending two sessions at the College and then taking an examination.⁷⁷ In any case, the Bill was quickly abandoned primarily on the grounds that it did not sufficiently recognise the HASC qualification.⁷⁸ It had hoped to create a market monopoly for the qualified practitioner, but in truth the college vet was undeserving of such a position, as highlighted by the apparent failings of the profession to protect Britain from cattle plague.⁷⁹

In the 1830s and 40s the medical profession faced similar competition from unqualified individuals. However, as M. J. Petersen pointed out, scientific arguments in favour of limiting practice to the qualified were not very strong and generally viewed in terms of protection from competition rather than in terms of the superior claims of medical science.⁸⁰ These concerns gave rise to demands for minimum training requirements and a legally recognised system of registration. Consequently, the period from 1830, culminating with the Medical Act of 1858, saw medical knowledge become more scientific, medical education more systematic, and the medical profession

⁷⁶ *Medical Times and Gazette*, 2 May 1868.

⁷⁷ R. H. Dyer, 'The proposed fourth clause' in *Veterinarian*, vol. 39, no. 3 (March, 1866), pp 190-1.

⁷⁸ Pattison, *British veterinary profession*, pp 62-3.

⁷⁹ Michael Worboys, 'Killing and curing': Veterinarians, medicine and germs in Britain, 1860-1900' in *Vet. Hist.*, new ser., vol. 7, no. 2 (1992), p. 55; E. H., *The cattle plague of 1865, and its cure* (London, 1865), p. 3.

⁸⁰ M. J. Peterson, *The medical profession in mid-Victorian London* (London, 1978), p. 36.

unified.⁸¹ It was now apparent that if veterinary surgeons were to create a market monopoly in animal health care, and be regarded as professionals, a number of measures would also have to be implemented to improve their competency and raise their profile. Over the next two decades this was done by improved education, the expansion of provincial veterinary societies, the provision of mutual protection and benevolence, the procurement of state employment and the eventual achievement of legal recognition. These measures, to varying degrees, influenced the development of the profession in Ireland.

In 1867, the RCVS organised the first Veterinary Congress in London, recognising that the majority of veterinary surgeons lived in professional isolation with few opportunities to meet fellow veterinarians. It hoped the gathering would allow practitioners to discuss matters pertaining to the progress of the profession, whilst fostering feelings of unity amongst them.⁸² Speaking at the Congress, Professor George Armatage, Glasgow Veterinary College, delivered a paper on veterinary education. He attributed the ‘grovelling mediocrity’ of the profession to an ‘imperfect’ education, which lacked any practical aspect, and the inept selection of students, highlighting the importance of a preliminary examination as a means of elevating the standing of the veterinary profession.⁸³ The London College had introduced a matriculation test in 1864, and urged the RCVS to organise set matriculation for all schools. Although the Scottish schools refused to accept preliminaries organised by the RCVS, they agreed that preliminary examinations of uniform standard should be held for all prospective veterinary students. Nor would Glasgow agree to the use of independent examiners, adopting its own examination from 1868. The Rector of the Edinburgh Royal High School conducted the preliminary exam at the Edinburgh College, the College of Preceptors in London.⁸⁴ In 1870, five Irish students – M. F. Greene, Clare, J. D. Adams, Cork, J. H. Brown, Louth, J. Murphy, Cork, and W. Johnson, Waterford – were admitted as pupils of the London College having successfully undergone the Preceptors matriculation examination. In total fifty-six individuals, including an army captain,

⁸¹ See S. W. F. Holloway, ‘Medical education in England, 1830-1858: A sociological analysis’ in *History*, vol. 49, no. 167 (1964), pp 299-324.

⁸² Hunter, *Veterinary Medicine*, p. 15.

⁸³ Anon, ‘Veterinary Congress’ in *Veterinarian*, vol. 40, no. 6 (June, 1867), pp 505-14.

⁸⁴ Pattison, *British veterinary profession*, pp 69-70; *Farmer’s Gazette*, 15 January 1870.

passed the examination, six others were rejected.⁸⁵ Practical examinations for graduating students, organised by the RCVS, were introduced in 1872. Pattison described the achievement of preliminary and practical examinations as a ‘milestone in the progress of the RCVS’ with a properly educated profession now in sight.⁸⁶ Woods and Matthews questioned the direct impact of these reforms but considered their broader impact. They argued that although it seemed logical that newly qualified practitioners were more educated and practically skilled than their forbears the educational reforms may simply have exchanged one type of practical education with another. Those students who had taken an apprenticeship prior to entering a veterinary school were now less likely to do so because of the extra training, apprenticeship in addition to the college course. On the other hand, they argued that the social status of the veterinary surgeon began to rise, as the poor could not afford a three-year course or the illiterate pass a matriculation exam.⁸⁷

As no formal veterinary training was available in Ireland the British schools were in competition for prospective Irish students and regularly placed notices in Irish newspapers outlining course details and important dates. Newspaper notices usually appeared about two months before the first session commenced. For example, in August 1870, the *Belfast News-Letter* carried a notice advising those intending to attend the London College to present themselves for matriculation on 29 September. This was only six days before the lectures were due to commence. The matriculation exam carried a fee of 10s 6d.⁸⁸ The *Wexford Independent* carried a similar notice only five days before the matriculation exam, which noted that the fee for the annual session was twenty-five guineas.⁸⁹ In 1870, travelling to Britain for a veterinary education was a daunting task for the young Irish student, possibly only fifteen or sixteen years of age. Ignoring the problems of travel and homesickness, the aspiring student must have feared the matriculation exam, possibly being completely ignorant of what it might

⁸⁵ Anon, ‘Royal Veterinary College: Matriculation examination’ in *Veterinarian*, vol. 43, no. 11 (November, 1870), pp 881-2. The College of Preceptors was founded as the Society of Teachers in 1846 and then incorporated by Royal Charter in 1849. In 1998 it became the College of Teachers and remains an examining body and learned society of teachers, professors and associated professionals who work in education in the United Kingdom and elsewhere.

⁸⁶ Pattison, *British veterinary profession*, pp 70-1.

⁸⁷ Woods and Matthews, ‘Little if at all’, p. 49. For an overview of the discussions on proposed compulsory apprenticeship see Correspondences and Reports of the RCVS in *Veterinarian*, 1881-85, *passim*.

⁸⁸ *Belfast News-Letter*, 12 August 1870.

⁸⁹ *Wexford Independent*, 24 September 1870.

hold. James Donaldson, of the Edinburgh School, attributed any deficiencies that certain pupils had to the fact that ‘they had just come up from the country, ignorant altogether of the examination to which they were to be subjected.’⁹⁰ With the advent of the matriculation examinations some Irish students took preparatory courses before embarking for Britain. For example, in 1874, W. M. Fitzmaurice, a Trinity graduate and Principal of the University and Civil Service Academy, 21 Cook-Street, Cork, successfully prepared James H. Ashe for entry to the Edinburgh College and Francis Whelan to the LVC.⁹¹

In 1874, Thomas Walley, Principal of the Edinburgh College called for even higher entry standards, to equal those set by General Medical Council for medical student.⁹² This was achieved a decade later when the RCVS instituted a ‘Preliminary Examination’, which all those who sought the diploma were required to pass.⁹³ As the entry requirements improved so also did the standard and scope of instruction on offer. When James Beart Simonds became Principal of the LVC, in 1872, and immediately submitted a detailed review of the College’s educational system. For example, a new summer session offered students the opportunity to operate ‘on the dead subject.’ Students were now offered a more hands-on approach and second session students were appointed to act as monitors, clinical clerks and dressers to attend to patients under the supervision of a Professor.⁹⁴ In October 1871, M. F. Greene, a county Clare student, was amongst nine gentlemen selected as a ‘Collegiate Monitor’ having undertaken a ‘competitive examination, written and oral.’⁹⁵ By 1876 the curriculum was extended from two to three years, just a year less than the medical course. All annual examinations were still *viva voce*.⁹⁶ Over the following two decades discussions continued between the RCVS and the four existing schools, with a ‘unanimous determination’ to now provide the appropriate education for a profession with ever

⁹⁰ James Donaldson, ‘Edinburgh Veterinary College: The matriculation examination’ in *Veterinarian*, vol. 44, no. 1 (January, 1871), pp 39-40.

⁹¹ *Cork Examiner*, 9 May, 28 October 1874.

⁹² *Edinburgh Evening News*, 22 October 1874.

⁹³ Bradley, *Edinburgh Veterinary College*, p. 92.

⁹⁴ James Beart Simonds, ‘Autobiography-Part 8’ in *Vet. Hist.*, vol. 17, no. 1 (2013), pp 67-73. Reprinted from *Veterinarian* of 1894.

⁹⁵ Anon, ‘Collegiate monitors’ in *Veterinarian*, vol. 44, no. 11 (November, 1871), p. 869.

⁹⁶ Anon, ‘The new curriculum’ in *Veterinarian*, vol. 49, no. 12 (December, 1876), pp 856-8.

widening demands. A four-year course was subsequently introduced in 1895, with both written and oral examinations.⁹⁷

Organising the profession: Irish veterinary societies

The formation of societies, predominantly during the nineteenth-century, played an important part in advancing individual professions, and, in particular, in developing a sense of professional identity. For example, early medical societies provided opportunities for discussion between practitioners, and between the staff and students of schools. They also provided a channel for discussions on the political issues affecting the medical profession during the mid-nineteenth century, a period marked by the passing of a number of significant medical Acts, which profoundly affected structures and practices within the profession. The oldest society in Ireland was the Irish Medical Association, a union of physicians and surgeons, established at the Royal College of Surgeons in 1839.⁹⁸ In the second half of the nineteenth-century the Law Society of Ireland, which was established in 1830 and incorporated by Royal Charter in 1852, provided similar functions as its medical counterparts. The principal events with which the Law Society, on behalf of solicitors, was concerned were the inauguration of a scheme for education of apprentices, the independence of the solicitors' profession from the King's Inns, the achievement of an increasing degree of self-government, and the recognition of its position as the representative and regulatory body for solicitors in Ireland, which culminated in the Solicitors (Ireland) Act, 1898.⁹⁹

The earliest veterinary society was the London Veterinary Medical Society at the LVC. It was modelled on the Westminster Medical Society, and existed from 1813 to 1837.¹⁰⁰ The object of the Society was the 'advancement of veterinary science' through discussion on proposed subjects and the formation of a library of reference and

⁹⁷ Iain Pattison 'A chronological digest of British veterinary history, Part 7: 1890-1905' in *Vet. Hist.*, new ser., vol. 13, no. 1 (2005), p. 74; Cotchin, *Royal Veterinary College*, p. 120; Bradley, *Edinburgh Veterinary College*, pp 93-4.

⁹⁸ See A. B. Shaw, 'The oldest medical societies in Great Britain' in *Medical History*, vol. 12, no. 3 (July, 1968), pp 232-44; John Fleetwood, *A history of medicine in Ireland* (Dublin, 1951), pp 160, 346-7.

⁹⁹ Daire Hogan, 'The years 1852-1922' in Eamonn G. Hall and Daire Hogan (eds), *Law Society of Ireland, 1852-2002: Portrait of a profession* (Dublin, 2002), pp 43-72; Hogan, 'New beginnings' in *Law Society Gazette*, vol. 110, no. 7 (August/September, 2016), pp 44-7.

¹⁰⁰ Anon, 'Veterinary Medical Association' in *Lancet* (20 November, 1841), pp 260-2; Charles Clarke, 'Late proceedings at the Veterinary College' in *Lancet* (11 June, 1836), pp 376-8; Cotchin, *Royal Veterinary College*, p. 46; Smithcors, *Evolution*, p. 363. For an account of the Westminster Medical Society see David Zuck, 'The Westminster Medical Society, 1809-1850' in *The History of Anaesthesia Society Proceedings*, vol. 42 (2010), pp 9-25.

circulation. No person could become a member unless entered at a veterinary college as a pupil. Those who had attended regularly, submitted papers, and agreed with the regulations of the society were granted the 'Certificate of the Society', by ballot, on securing the diploma of the College. Known as 'Fellows', these individuals were allowed to attend meetings and vote. Several Irishmen appeared on the list of Fellows in the years before the Society's demise. In 1835 John Tyrell, Dublin (Graduated 1833) and Joseph C. Molyneaux, Kilkenny (1834) were listed as Honorary Fellows. Richard Johnston, Dublin (1820) and J. Watts, Dublin, were listed as Fellows. Other Irish based practitioners to hold Fellowships were James Walker (1828), Jonathan Wainwright (1830), George Johnston, Dublin, Robert Molyneaux, Kilkenny (1829), and John Scott, Kildare.¹⁰¹ Another short lived early society was the Veterinary Medical Society, founded in 1828 to repair strained relationships between individual practitioners competing for work and with differing views about the LVC. The newly established *Veterinarian* offered the society a platform to promote its objectives, and it achieved some early success. However, in 1835, when debates gave way to dissention and support dwindled the Society was abandoned. In 1836, the Veterinary Medical Association was formed, gleaning its membership from the two defunct societies.¹⁰² This Society's proceedings were initially published as part of the *Veterinarian*. However, some members objected to professional information reaching farmers and unqualified practitioners, who were acquiring 'a name for every attack of disease, and a recipe, or at best a plan of treatment.' As a result, from 1841, the *Transactions of the Veterinary Medical Association* was published, with a limited circulation among members.¹⁰³

The Veterinary Medical Association declined in importance especially with the formation of regional associations, the earliest being the West of Scotland, founded in

¹⁰¹ London Veterinary Medical Society, *Rules and regulations of the London Veterinary Medical Society* (London, 1835), pp 3-11, 20-1. The inclusion of J. Watts, presumably John Watts, on the list is interesting. It suggests that the Society allowed prominent non-college-trained practitioners to join. On the other hand, it may have been an error, to the exclusion of George Watts.

¹⁰² See Veterinary Medical Association, *Rules and regulations of the Veterinary Medical Association instituted A.D. 1836* (London, 1840); Smithcors, *Evolution*, p. 363-4; Barber-Lomax, 'The *Veterinarian*', p. 311.

¹⁰³ See Anon, 'Correspondence with the editor' in *Veterinarian*, vol. 14, no. 9 (September, 1841), pp 545-77; In 1845, the *Transactions* became part of *The Veterinary Record*, a little-known journal that survived for six volumes until 1850. This publication should not be confused with the extant *Veterinary Record*, published weekly from 14 July 1888. See Jones, 'British veterinary periodicals', pp 358-60, 366-7.

1858, Aldershot, 1861, Lancashire, 1862, and Yorkshire, 1863.¹⁰⁴ Irishmen had some involvement in these early veterinary associations. As mentioned previously, William M'kenna, Belfast, was a member of the North of England. In August 1871, Peter Johnstone, Limerick attended a meeting of the West of Scotland Association. He had graduated from Edinburgh earlier that year.¹⁰⁵ Regional associations offered practitioners the chance to discuss topical issues, liaise with their fellow practitioners, and a relatively safe environment to consider new developments in clinical practice, which might, if published in the press, fall into the hands of unqualified practitioners.¹⁰⁶ According to Barber-Lomax, regional associations were formed by vets tired of the quarrelling between the schools and the RCVS, deficiencies in veterinary education, the rivalry between HASC and RVC diploma holders, and the continuing competition from unqualified individuals.¹⁰⁷ These were all issues that irked Richard Dyer. On his return to Britain he was instrumental in establishing the West of England Veterinary Medical Association, which drew membership from eight different counties of England and south Wales within a year.¹⁰⁸ Whilst promoting the West of England, Dyer noted that he had attempted to establish an Irish veterinary society but when he mentioned the idea to an individual suitably qualified to undertake the necessary steps, he found that person's objections to the idea 'immovable.' As he was not intending to remain in the country he took the matter no further.¹⁰⁹

A veterinary association was successfully established in Ireland five years after Dyer left the country. On this occasion, the initiative came not from a country practitioner but from F. F. Collins, an Army vet based in Dublin. In January 1869, Collins circulated a letter to members of the veterinary profession resident in Ireland, either permanently or temporarily, to ascertain if they would co-operate in the formation of an Irish veterinary association. Collins had experience of associations in Britain and represented a small group of both military and civil veterinary surgeons,

¹⁰⁴ J. W. Barber-Lomax, 'The Yorkshire Veterinary Society' in *Vet. Rec.*, vol. 75, no. 40 (5 October, 1963), pp 1029-30.

¹⁰⁵ James Anderson, 'West of Scotland Medical Association' in *Veterinarian*, vol. 44, no. 10 (October, 1871), p. 750.

¹⁰⁶ T. Greaves, 'The state and prospects of the veterinary profession', in *Veterinarian*, vol. 37, no. 6 (June, 1864), pp 392-3.

¹⁰⁷ J. W. Barber-Lomax, 'The north of England Veterinary Medical Association' in *Vet. Rec.*, vol. 76, no. 21 (23 May, 1964), p. 576.

¹⁰⁸ *Cardiff Times*, 27 July 1866, *Western Daily Press*, 23 January 1867.

¹⁰⁹ R. H. Dyer, 'On the extension of provincial medical associations' in *Veterinarian*, vol. 38, no. 4 (April, 1865), p. 232;

resident in Dublin, which met to discuss the issue. This group hoped to advance the interests of the profession and adopt similar measures as the medical profession in curtailing the untrained individuals whose ‘empiricism and deficiency’ had brought undeserved disrepute to the regularly qualified and properly educated practitioner.¹¹⁰ Several members of the medical profession were present when ‘a large and influential meeting’ of the Irish veterinary profession gathered for a preliminary meeting at the RDS House, Kildare Street on 5 April. The guest speaker was the aforementioned Thomas Greaves, now President of three of Britain’s fourteen regional associations. As previously mentioned, Greaves asked those present to dismiss any disagreements that existed between them. He believed that veterinary associations, when conducted with a proper spirit, offered members a social aspect and a ‘practical and scientific’ aspect, where valuable knowledge, developed by experience, was disseminated to the group. Collins said that he had contacted every practitioner resident in Ireland and believed all had a desire to co-operate in the formation of an association. The meeting unanimously agreed that it was expedient that the Irish Central Veterinary Medical Association (ICVMA) be established. It was the first of three short-lived Irish veterinary societies to use the word ‘Central’ in its title. Seventeen members were immediately enrolled. The Honourable Montague Mostyn (London, 1866) was elected president, Matthew Murphy, David Paley, J. J. Farrall and James King, vice-presidents, Collins, secretary, and William Pallin, treasurer.¹¹¹

The first official meeting of the ICVMA convened on 9 August during the RDS’s National Horse Show. Thirteen members attended. All except Edward Ashe, Cork and James Preston, Mallow, came from Dublin and the surrounding counties. Amongst the primary objectives discussed were the ‘raising of the members of the profession to that position they should occupy’ and the encouragement of discussion on subjects of interest to the profession. The Association was also in favour of an Irish veterinary school and questioned why the country should be obliged to send potential veterinarians overseas to be trained.¹¹² It is interesting that Richard Dyer, who had returned from England, took no part in the new association. That same week he was

¹¹⁰ The ‘Circular Letter’, dated 14 January 1869 is reproduced in *Veterinarian*, vol. 42, no. 2 (February, 1869), p. 121.

¹¹¹ Anon, ‘Irish Central Veterinary Medical Association’ in *Veterinarian*, vol. 42, no. 5 (May, 1869), pp 375-81.

¹¹² *Dublin Evening Mail*, 10 August, *Farmer’s Gazette* 14 August 1869; Anon, ‘Irish Central Veterinary Medical Association’ in *Veterinarian*, vol. 42, no. 9 (September, 1869), pp 682-701.

involved with the Tipperary Union Farming Society, preparing to judge horses at their upcoming annual show.¹¹³ Evidence suggests that the ICVMA lasted little more than a year. The *Veterinarian* carried a report of the meeting of 7 January 1870 where several medical men were present as visitors. Only six veterinarians attended, letters of apology were read from several members who were ‘unavoidably prevented from attending the meeting.’¹¹⁴ There is no evidence from the few surviving reports of the ICVMA’s meetings that the group disbanded because of any rivalries or animosity between members. In truth, provincial practitioners, because of workload and insufficient communications and transport, were unable to devote their time and energy to attend at meetings. The Dublin vets were either busy with the city’s horses or attending fairs. At a meeting on 7 December 1869, John Malcolm, Enniscorthy, apologised for not devoting the time and study to a paper he was about to deliver on horse colic, because he was occupied ‘in a country practice, entailing long and fatiguing journeys.’¹¹⁵ The *Evening Freeman* carried notice of what was probably the last meeting of this Irish Central, fixed for 18 April 1870.¹¹⁶ A subsequent donation of £15 8s 2d to the National Veterinary Benevolent Society was likely a dispersal of remaining funds.¹¹⁷

A national veterinary society had ultimately failed. The promoters of the North of Ireland Veterinary Medical Society (NIVMS), established on 19 September 1878, targeted a regional membership, within a ‘reasonable distance’ of Belfast. The NIVMS was established because of ‘the apparent unimportance of the profession, in the public estimation and also the disunited condition of its members in this country.’ It had a decided Scottish influence. At the inaugural meeting Professor Walley, Edinburgh, highlighted the social, professional and political advantages that membership would bring. Walley and the other Scottish principals, Williams and McCall were regular guests.¹¹⁸ It took the same course as its southern forerunner, with poor attendance from veterinary practitioners. A meeting on 25 August 1880 was attended by a ‘large number’ of professional men, including several medical doctors. Only seven

¹¹³ *Farmer’s Gazette*, 14 August 1869.

¹¹⁴ Anon, ‘Irish Central Veterinary Medical Association’ in *Veterinarian*, vol. 43, no. 2 (February, 1870), p. 153.

¹¹⁵ Anon, ‘Irish Central Veterinary Medical Association’ in *Veterinarian*, vol. 43, no. 3 (March, 1870), p. 259.

¹¹⁶ *Evening Freeman*, 16 April 1870.

¹¹⁷ George Morgan, ‘The National Veterinary Benevolent and Mutual Defense Society’ in *Veterinarian*, vol. 44, no. 9 (September, 1871), p. 691.

¹¹⁸ Anon, ‘The North of Ireland Veterinary Medical Society’ in *Veterinary Journal and Annals of Comparative Pathology*, vol. 8, no. 6 (June, 1879), pp 426-7; *Northern Whig*, 23 December 1878.

recognisable veterinary surgeons were present.¹¹⁹ The Society eventually ran its course. Evidently, the last recorded meeting of the NIVMS was that of 3 September 1883 where Walley delivered an expansive paper on ‘Medical and Surgical Therapeutics.’ At that time Thomas Simcocks, Drogheda, was the Society’s President.¹²⁰ The North of Ireland Veterinary Medical Association (NIVMA), inaugurated on 25 January 1907, eventually replaced it.¹²¹

In January 1882, a meeting was held at the Hibernian Hotel, Dawson Street, to re-establish a veterinary association in the south of Ireland. Whilst this preliminary meeting was well attended members were again drawn from Dublin and the Leinster counties.¹²² The first regular meeting of the association, to be known as the Irish Central Veterinary Medical Society (ICVMS), was held on 30 January with a list of thirty subscribing members. Amongst those in attendance were prominent Munster veterinarians John Bell, Clonmel, and James Preston, Mallow. The President, Thomas D. Lambert, argued that the profession had long been subjected to ‘gross injustice’ but praised the founding members of the profession in Ireland, men like Peall and Watts, who had succeeded in gaining the respect of all who knew them. Lambert argued that veterinary surgeons had reason to be proud of the advances the profession had made. Irish practitioners were ‘in the foremost ranks of their profession’ and had only themselves to blame if they were not held in the high estimation that professional men ought to be. He advocated a combination of college training and practical experience in the education of veterinary surgeons. The continued importance of the horse to society was highlighted by his call that all veterinarians should study the principles and practice of horseshoeing.¹²³ In September the *Freeman’s Journal* described the ICVMS as of the ‘liveliest vitality.’ The writer was confident that it would continue to be of value to Irish veterinarians especially as their profession had now been recognised by legislation under the 1881 Act.¹²⁴ It is unclear when the ICVMS disbanded. The *Farmer’s Gazette* carried a report of the ‘annual meeting’ held on 9 January 1883, when

¹¹⁹ George Kidney, ‘The North of Ireland Veterinary Medical Society’ in *Veterinarian*, vol. 53, no. 11 (November, 1880), p. 807.

¹²⁰ H. R. Bradshaw, ‘North of Ireland Veterinary Medical Society’ in *Veterinarian*, vol. 56, no. 11 (November, 1883), pp 788-803.

¹²¹ North of Ireland Veterinary Medical Association, *Rules* (Belfast, 1910), p. 3.

¹²² *Freeman’s Journal*, 7 January 1882.

¹²³ *Freeman’s Journal*, 31 January 1882.

¹²⁴ *Freeman’s Journal*, 1 September 1882.

John Malcolm, Enniscorthy, was inducted as President.¹²⁵ The difficulties encountered by practitioners in attending veterinary society meetings was again highlighted when Malcolm was ‘pulled up’ for not fulfilling his duties as veterinary inspector to the Gorey Union. When informed of a suspected case of foot and mouth, the local police, on three occasions, had failed to contact him as he was in Dublin attending a Society meeting.¹²⁶

The Irish Veterinary Association celebrated its centenary in 1988. It was originally founded as the Veterinary Medical Association of Ireland (VMAI), adopting its current title in 1967. The inaugural meeting was held on 12 January 1888 at the RDS headquarters, Leinster House.¹²⁷ The first President was Charles Steel, Army Veterinary Department and veterinary lecturer at the Albert College. James McKenny was appointed secretary. The *Veterinarian* carried a report of the 27 December meeting, which included a list of practitioners from around the country who ‘were sent invitations to attend.’ The list included several Dublin vets, members of the Privy Council Veterinary Department, and a number of provincial vets, including Preston and Bell, previously members of the ICVMS.¹²⁸ P. J. Howard, Ennis, graduated from Edinburgh in 1895 and subsequently joined the VMAI. Following a long, successful career he was made an Honorary Associate in January 1949. On that occasion, he said that when he joined the VMAI it was ‘almost moribund... entirely a Dublin Castle inspired institution and country members had little say in its affairs.’ As a result, he was part of a breakaway group that formed the Irish Central Veterinary Association (ICVA), which held meetings countrywide and drew many members from its ‘parent.’ The inaugural meeting of the ICVA took place at Kelly’s Hotel, Mullingar, on 22 July 1897. David Fulton, a local practitioner, was elected as President.¹²⁹ Howard claimed the ICVA was instrumental in starting the fight for improved annual salaries for both part-time local authority inspectors, and the full-time staff of the Government Veterinary Department, who were only paid £20 and £200, respectively. According to Howard,

¹²⁵ *Farmer’s Gazette*, 13 January 1883.

¹²⁶ *Wexford People*, 11, 25 April, 2 May 1883.

¹²⁷ W. Kearney, ‘The history of the Veterinary Medical Association of Ireland’ in *Ir. Veterinary Jn.*, new ser., vol. 5, no. 1 (January, 1951), pp 42-5; Traolac Ó Nualláin, ‘The veterinary profession in Ireland: Origins and developments’ in *Ir. Veterinary Jn.*, vol. 43, no. 5 (September/October, 1990), pp 134-5.

¹²⁸ Anon, ‘The Veterinary Medical Association of Ireland’ in *Veterinarian*, vol. 63, no. 2 (February, 1889), pp 149-52.

¹²⁹ *Irish Independent*, 24 July 1897.

when the ICVA had ‘done its work’ it amalgamated with a revitalised VMAI.¹³⁰ The exact date of amalgamation is unclear. However, a ‘reunion’ of the associations was held in Dublin on 12 May 1920, where members witnessed surgical demonstrations, an exhibition of instruments and specimens, and ‘partook of tea.’ The gathering was pronounced as a ‘great success.’¹³¹ In November 1916 the NIVMA proposed a ‘Central Council’, representing all three existing Irish associations, which would be empowered to act in all matters pertaining to the welfare of the profession in Ireland. The VMAI considered this unnecessary as the three associations were already affiliated to the National Veterinary Medical Association of Great Britain and Ireland.¹³²

The welfare of the vet: Benevolence and defence

A 2005 study of the veterinary profession concluded that the working environment of practitioners was one that led to higher than average levels of accidents, stress and zoonotic disease.¹³³ The mid-nineteenth century practitioner worked in an all the more dangerous environment. In 1867, W. G. Naylor, a Wakefield practitioner, claimed that the profession was generally a healthy one but ‘fraught with danger.’¹³⁴ For the session 1860-61, the RCVS Council reported that the large numbers of deaths amongst the profession from glanders or from falls involving horses and vehicles had ‘formed a fearful addition to the ordinary rate of mortality amongst us.’¹³⁵ During the eighteenth and nineteenth-centuries veterinary surgeons, farriers and blacksmiths were all at risk from zoonotic infections of which glanders was the most feared.¹³⁶ The most famous veterinary casualty was Charles Vial de Saint Bel, who died from the disease only two years after founding the London College. He was unaware that the disease was

¹³⁰ P. J. Howard, ‘Half a century of veterinary experience’ in *Ir. Veterinary Jn.*, vol. 3, no. 6 (November/December, 1949), pp 371-2.

¹³¹ J. J. O’Connor, ‘Veterinary Medical Association of Ireland’ in *Vet. Rec.* (17 July, 1920), pp 35-6.

¹³² Ó Nualláin, ‘Profession in Ireland’, p. 134; Anon, ‘The Veterinary Medical Association of Ireland’ in *Vet. Rec.* (11 November, 1916), p. 199.

¹³³ Howard Kahn and Camilla V. J. Nutter, ‘Stress in veterinary surgeons: a review of and pilot study’ in G. Antoniou Alexander-Stamatios and Gary L. Cooper (eds), *Research companion to organizational health psychology* (Cheltenham, 2005), pp 293-303.

¹³⁴ W. G. Naylor, ‘Proposed rules for a Veterinary Medical Charitable Society’ in *Veterinarian*, vol. 40, no. 3 (March, 1867), p. 205.

¹³⁵ E. N. G., ‘Abstract of the proceedings of the Council of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, during the year 1860-61’ in *Veterinarian*, vol. 34, no. 6 (June, 1861), pp 338-9.

¹³⁶ Glanders is a contagious, acute or chronic, usually fatal disease of Equidae, characterized by serial development of ulcerating nodules that are most commonly found in the upper respiratory tract, lungs, and skin. The organism is infectious for people, with a 95% fatality rate in untreated septicaemia cases. See <https://www.msdsvetmanual.com/generalized-conditions/glanders/overview-of-glanders>

transmissible to man and contracted it from an infected horse during his customary rounds at the College stables.¹³⁷ In 1841, the *Veterinarian* recorded the details of the harrowing death of Alexander Wilkie, a Scottish veterinarian, who contracted the disease, through a scratch on his hand, while treating some glandered horses.¹³⁸ The disease was widespread in Ireland but there is no evidence that it claimed the life of any veterinary surgeon based here. Others engaged with horses were less fortunate. For example, John Hessian, a carrier between Dublin and Ballinasloe, became infected when, in an effort to save his horse's life, he attempted to remove the glandered glands from under the animal's jaw. He subsequently died from the 'usual repulsive symptoms.'¹³⁹ Several deaths were recorded in the north of the country. Bernard Donnelly, a horse-shoer from Armagh, succumbed to the disease, as did John Gilmore, Downpatrick, described as a 'journeyman blacksmith.'¹⁴⁰ In 1851 it was reported that diseased horses were habitually grazed along the public roads of county Fermanagh, in open defiance of police regulations, and to the great danger of 'every horse and man that may have occasion to pass.'¹⁴¹

Accidents involving horses or horse-drawn gigs or traps were a continual occurrence for Irish veterinary surgeons. Professional calls into the countryside were fraught with danger because of poor roads, inclement weather and darkness. For example, in 1897 John O'Riordan, Limerick, was killed when he was thrown from his 'Liverpool' gig on colliding with a heavy cart in the twilight.¹⁴² Rough tracks and roads also proved hazardous for the safe transportation of chemicals and medicines used in practice. In 1899 Peter Murray, Tralee, suffer serious eye injuries when the cork of a strong ammonia bottle 'shot off' and the liquid splashed into his face. Murray, then in his seventy-ninth year, was attending a sick cow in Brosna, more than twenty miles from Tralee. In intense pain, he returned to Tralee on his trap to seek medical assistance. It took almost four years before he fully recovered from the ordeal.¹⁴³ Several deaths

¹³⁷ Joan Lane, *A social history of medicine: Health, healing and disease in England, 1750-1950* (Oxford, 2001), p. 7. See also Lise Wilkinson, 'Glanders: Medicine and veterinary medicine in common pursuit of a contagious disease' in *Medical History*, vol. 25 (1981), pp 363-84.

¹³⁸ Anon, 'Obituary: Alexander Wilkie, veterinary surgeon, Forfar' in *Veterinarian*, vol. 14, no. 8 (August, 1841), p. 493.

¹³⁹ *Freeman's Journal* 27 December 1841, *Dublin Weekly Register*, 2 January 1842.

¹⁴⁰ *Dublin Evening Packet*, 14 September, *Freeman's Journal*, 15 September 1852; *Dublin Monitor*, 4 January 1842.

¹⁴¹ *Dublin Evening Packet*, 23 August 1851.

¹⁴² *Freeman's Journal*, 25 October 1897.

¹⁴³ *Kerry Sentinel*, 14 June 1899, 11 April 1903.

were recorded following falls from horses. As previously described, William M’Kenna, Belfast, died just days after being thrown from his horse. His son, William Carmichael, had died eight years earlier, at the age of twenty-seven, having also fallen from a horse, his father witnessing the accident.¹⁴⁴ The story of the M’Kenna family epitomises the premature deaths from illness and accidents suffered by many families in the nineteenth century. William M’Kenna lost his youngest daughter Jane at a young age.¹⁴⁵ His sons James and John Alexander, who carried on the family business in Belfast, also died in their prime. James M’Kenna died on 24 November 1877, aged forty-five. The *Veterinarian* announced that he was ‘the last of the M’Kenna family [sic] who held a diploma.’¹⁴⁶

A perusal of the newspaper obituaries of nineteenth-century Irish veterinarians highlighted that few lived to old age. Peter Murray, who died in his eighty-fifth year, was an exception.¹⁴⁷ Thomas Goetz claimed that in 1870 the average life span of a veterinarian in Europe and America was about thirty-six years, with death ‘a constant presence, lurking around every corner.’ The causes were inadequately tabulated and hardly understood but the greatest killers were deadly fevers, pneumonia, influenza and consumption.¹⁴⁸ The obituaries of Irish veterinarians are often vague as to the cause of death. For example, Richard Johnston, a prominent Dublin practitioner, died at the age of forty-five after a ‘protracted illness.’¹⁴⁹ William Dycer, Dublin, described as ‘endowed with strong physical as well as mental powers’ died at the aged of thirty-nine, ‘his illness was sudden, his death unexpected.’¹⁵⁰ There is little doubt that long hours working in inclement weather led to the early demise of many veterinarians. This is especially true during the latter part of the century when younger vets were becoming less reliant on urban work and were venturing into the countryside both in private practice and as veterinary inspectors. In 1894, John Carmody, Ennis, was veterinary inspector to four poor law unions in county Clare. During one of his professional trips

¹⁴⁴ *Staffordshire Advertiser*, 25 July 1857. See also *Veterinarian*, vol. 30, no. 8 (August, 1857), p. 488.

¹⁴⁵ *Belfast Morning News, Belfast Mercury*, 23 December 1859.

¹⁴⁶ Anon, ‘Obituary’ in *Veterinarian*, vol. 51, no. 1 (January, 1878), p. 56. This author can find no report on the death of John Alexander.

¹⁴⁷ *Kerry Sentinel*, 16 January 1904.

¹⁴⁸ Thomas Goetz, *The remedy* (New York, 2014), introduction.

¹⁴⁹ *Dublin Monitor*, 15 July, *Dublin Weekly Register*, 16 July 1842.

¹⁵⁰ *Freeman’s Journal*, 6 May 1860.

through the county he became ill and quickly succumbed to rheumatic fever of ‘the most aggravated type.’ He was only forty-four years old.¹⁵¹

A very thin line existed between a life of comfort and one of destitution for the nineteenth-century veterinary surgeon and his family. From c1820 James Walker had a successful veterinary and livery business at Marlborough St, Dublin. He subsequently graduated from London in 1828.¹⁵² Later that year he removed a large tumour from the foreleg of a horse. As a result, his ‘dexterity and judgement’ as a veterinary surgeon were recorded in both the Dublin and London press.¹⁵³ On 7 January 1847, the *Galway Mercury* reported that Walker, ‘once affluent and happy’, had died from ‘starvation and want’ on the street in Loughrea.¹⁵⁴ A decade earlier Walker was in a position to contribute £5 to a fund established to provide for the wife and young family of a deceased employee.¹⁵⁵ The *Tipperary Vindicator* attributed his situation to the failure of his business, which had resulted in several years of distress. It further described the late Marquis of Sligo as ‘his patron and friend.’¹⁵⁶ This suggested that Walker was employed by the Marquis, on whose death on 26 January 1845, Walker was without work.¹⁵⁷ The veterinary practitioner of the mid to late nineteenth-century needed to be fit, healthy and hard working to make ends meet and provide for a family. As noted previously David Paley was a Fellow of the RCVS and prominently involved in Irish veterinary politics. A Yorkshire native, he graduated from Edinburgh in 1859 before undertaking a successful a six-year military career. He subsequently established a successful practice at 116 Stephen’s Green, Dublin, and Lark Lodge, Curragh, forming a partnership with Francis F. Collins, another ex-army veterinarian, in 1882. Paley oversaw a successful business but sickness left him incapacitated for long periods. He died in April 1843, at forty-six years of age. The *Freeman’s Journal* described him as the ‘well-known veterinary surgeon and proprietor of racehorses.’ Despite this, his inability to work created financial problems. As a result, his wife and twelve children were left ‘almost entirely unprovided for.’¹⁵⁸ A committee, led by veterinary surgeons,

¹⁵¹ *Clare Journal, Limerick Chronicle*, 15 February 1894.

¹⁵² For example, see *Saunders News-Letter*, 27 April 1820, 9 September 1821, 28 January 1825.

¹⁵³ *Dublin Morning Register*, 17 September, *London Standard*, 20 September 1828.

¹⁵⁴ *Galway Mercury*, 9 January 1847.

¹⁵⁵ *Saunders’s News-Letter*, 19 March 1836.

¹⁵⁶ *Tipperary Vindicator*, 16 January 1847.

¹⁵⁷ *Dublin Mercantile Advertiser*, 31 January 1845.

¹⁵⁸ Anon, ‘The late veterinary surgeon D. Paley, late of 116, Stephen’s Green, Dublin’ in *Veterinary Journal*, vol. 17, no. 1 (July, 1883), pp 64-5; *Irish Times*, 20 June 1882, *Freeman’s Journal*, 2 May, *Dublin Daily Express*, 28 April 1883.

James McKenny and T. D. Lambert, and Captain McCalmont, Kildare Street Club, was formed with the object of raising funds for the family. The *Irish Times* reported the case as ‘not only deserving, but urgently demanding, prompt and full support.’¹⁵⁹ The *Clare Journal* reported that the family of the late John Carmody were left in ‘not affluent circumstances.’ A local group of friends, clergy and public representatives opened a subscription list that immediately collected £57. The largest contribution of £10 came from E. C. Winter, veterinary surgeon of Limerick.¹⁶⁰ Paley and Carmody were well known in their districts and had a network of influential friends and colleagues who subsequently garnered support for their families. Other impoverished veterinary families might not find themselves in a similarly favourable position, and would therefore benefit from the benevolence of the wider profession.

From the seventeenth-century onwards various professions, driven by rising affluence and professional solidarity, formed benevolent organisations for distressed members and their families, often at a regional level. Benevolent societies were established by such diverse groups as actors, musicians, clergy and solicitors, with medical benevolent societies most prominent.¹⁶¹ In Ireland, the extant Royal Medical Benevolent Fund Society of Ireland was established in 1842, and proved active from its inception. The annual meeting of 1890 reported that the Society had distributed £35,902 10s in relief, since its foundation. The previous year it had considered eighty-five applications, four from medical men, seventy-three from widows of medical men and eight from their orphans, and had subsequently awarded £996 10s.¹⁶² Various calls were made to establish a similar society for the veterinary profession, especially when the press reported that a veterinary family were in a distressed financial state.¹⁶³ The idea of establishing such a body was mooted as early as 1839 but found little support.

¹⁵⁹ *Irish Times, Freeman’s Journal*, 10 May, *Kildare Observer*, 12 May 1883.

¹⁶⁰ *Clare Journal*, 19 February 1894.

¹⁶¹ Peter Clark, *British clubs and societies, 1580-1800: The origins of an associational world* (Oxford, 2000), pp 115-8; Anthony B. Shaw, ‘Two centuries of medical benevolence: The Norfolk and Norwich Benevolent Medical Society, 1786-1986’ in *British Medical Journal*, vol. 292, no. 6527 (19 April, 1986), pp 1066-7.

¹⁶² Anon, ‘Royal Medical Benevolent Fund Society of Ireland’ in *British Medical Journal*, vol. 1, no. 1536 (7 June, 1890), p. 1328.

¹⁶³ For example, see A Student, ‘Veterinary benevolence’ in *Veterinarian*, vol. 23, no. 3 (March, 1850), p. 150. The writer, from Newry, on hearing that the widow of a London vet was required to become a suppliant of charity before Westminster Magistrates, claimed that it was ‘a disgrace to the profession’ that this lady, who had formerly moved in ‘a very respectable sphere’, was now subjected to the stigma of seeking public charity owing to misfortune. He, therefore, urged the veterinary body to establish a refuge for decayed members and their distressed widows. See also *London Standard*, 24 January 1850.

Similar calls were made that an association to afford veterinarians protection ‘against the consequence of certain legal transactions’ should be considered. To this end, in 1865, the Veterinary Mutual Defence Society was established. Two years later, when the idea of benevolence was again considered, it became the National Veterinary Benevolent and Mutual Defence Society.¹⁶⁴ In terms of defence the veterinary profession was ahead of its British medical counterpart, which only formed the Medical Defence Union, the world’s first medical defence organisation, in 1885. Two ‘medical defence’ organisations existed at the time, though they did not defend doctors, their function largely to protect the reputation of the profession as a whole by prosecuting unqualified practitioners.¹⁶⁵

The new Society’s first application for defence aid came from a young Irish practitioner, the aforementioned John Malcolm. He graduated from Edinburgh in 1863, establishing a practice in Enniscorthy. In May 1868, Malcolm castrated a colt that subsequently developed tetanus and died. The owner, Mr. Rowe, brought an action against him for £14, the price of the colt. Malcolm refused to pay the money claiming that he never held himself responsible for the success of any operation. On being served with a civil bill for the amount he contacted the Defence Society. The Council of the Society unanimously agreed that the case called for their most strenuous support ‘by means and advice.’¹⁶⁶ Having obtained the necessary information Alexander Lawson and George Morgan, the President and Secretary of the Society, proceeded to Ireland to act ‘as they thought best for the interests of the Society and the profession.’ The Society also got assurances from several Irish veterinarians that they were willing to give evidence at the trial if necessary. The two-day trial commenced on 14 October with a number of medical men giving evidence as to the frequency of tetanus supervening on operations in the human subject. Only a small number of the plaintiff’s proposed witnesses appeared but none of their testimonies showed that the least blame could be attached to Malcolm. At that stage the presiding judge, Mr. West, said he would have stopped the case but considered it his duty to give Malcolm an opportunity to publicly clear himself of imputation, such a serious charge having been brought against his

¹⁶⁴ J. W. Barber-Lomax, ‘The National Veterinary Benevolent and Mutual Defence Society’ in *The Veterinarian: An International Journal*, vol. 3, no. 4 (December, 1965), p. 250.

¹⁶⁵ Anon, ‘Assisting members for 125 years’ in *MDU Journal*, vol. 26, no. 1 (June, 2010), pp 8-11.

¹⁶⁶ Alexander Lawson, ‘A case for the Veterinary Defence Society’ in *Veterinarian*, vol. 41, no. 10 (October, 1868), pp 689-90.

character. Having heard Malcolm's description of the mode in which he performed the operation, West dismissed the case declaring that he could not see any conceivable grounds on which the action was brought. He concluded that there was not the least imputation on Malcolm's character and allowed £4 costs for witnesses.¹⁶⁷ At a subsequent Society meeting, held in Leeds, Morgan informed the members that the first case in which the officers found it necessary to set the machinery of the Society in motion was 'at the most distant point from its centre, viz. in Ireland, and I am proud to say that its mission was a successful one.'¹⁶⁸ In November 2001 the *Irish Veterinary Journal* carried a report on the Veterinary Defence Society and reported that its function of 'the handling of alleged claims for professional negligence made against its members' remained as it had been at its foundation in the 1860s.¹⁶⁹

It appears many vets were unable or unwilling to support benevolence. On the foundation of the National Veterinary Benevolent and Mutual Defence Society subscriptions to 'Defence' and 'Benevolence' were separate and practitioners could subscribe as they wished. Thomas Greaves, Society President, gave a personal guarantee that all subscriptions and donations to the Benevolent Fund would be set apart for that especial purpose of giving 'aid and succour to the widow and orphan left unprovided for by a deserving but unfortunate professional brother.' At that onset, the Society had only 130 members, approximately one-tenth of all qualified veterinary surgeons.¹⁷⁰ Many veterinarians, especially those based away from larger urban areas, may have been largely unaware of the Society or were unwilling or unable to pay the yearly subscriptions. Subscriptions from Irish veterinarians were few. At the inaugural meeting of the Irish Central Veterinary Medical Association in 1869 John Malcolm recalled his own positive experience of the Society and was of the firm conviction that every member of the profession should be enrolled in it.¹⁷¹ A financial report, from 10 October 1876 to 25 November 1877, showed that the 'Defence Society' raised £81 9s 10d in subscriptions. Aid was given in three cases. The largest sum, of £35, was given in the 'settlement of claim' involving Mr. Elam, Liverpool. The Benevolent Fund,

¹⁶⁷ George Morgan, 'The National Veterinary Benevolent and Mutual Defence Society' in *Veterinarian*, vol. 41, no. 12 (December, 1868), pp 871-3.

¹⁶⁸ *Leeds Mercury*, 23 October 1868.

¹⁶⁹ John McKeown, 'Veterinary Defence Society' in *Ir. Veterinary Jn.*, vol. 54, no. 11 (November, 2001), p. 588.

¹⁷⁰ Anon, 'Veterinary Congress', pp 531-4.

¹⁷¹ Anon, 'Irish Central Veterinary Medical Association' in *Veterinarian*, vol. 42, no. 5 (May, 1869), pp 378-9.

which gave no aid during the period, received only £10 8d in subscriptions. However, £91 10s 6d was raised from eighty-four donations. At most, only six Irish-based practitioners contributed during that period. £1 2s was received from Hugh Ferguson, two instalments of 10s 6d from Malcolm, 10s 6d from John Freeman, and £1 1s from both T. D. Lambert and R. H. Dyer. The largest contribution, of £3 3s, came from Matthew Murphy. Interestingly, only Malcolm practiced outside of a large urban setting, suggesting that only those with large urban equine practices could afford to donate to such projects.¹⁷² It appears that Irish medical men also showed little interest in supporting their benevolence society. In 1907, when annual membership of the Royal Medical Benevolent Fund Society of Ireland cost a guinea, £10 for life, only 445 from 2,983 registered medical practitioners resident in Ireland joined.¹⁷³

The inability or unwillingness of veterinary practitioners to subscribe to the benevolence aspect of the Society, resulted in a dependence on friends or the community to provide for the family of a deceased practitioner, as highlighted in the case a Tralee based veterinarian, John Brosnan (Edinburgh, 1860). He was gainfully employed in private practice and as a veterinary inspector to both the Tralee and Listowel Unions.¹⁷⁴ Brosnan appeared to live a comfortable middle-class existence and was in a position to contribute financially to various causes and projects. For example, in 1866 he contributed 5s to the O'Donoghue Tenantry Fund.¹⁷⁵ In 1871 he was listed as a subscriber to M. F. Cusack's book, *A History of the Kingdom of Kerry*.¹⁷⁶ Nonetheless, his death in 1882, aged forty-seven, left his wife and nine young children 'completely destitute and without means of support.' A local committee of businessmen and newspaper proprietors was formed to receive subscriptions towards the family's upkeep.¹⁷⁷ In February 1883, Thomas Walley, Principal of the Edinburgh Veterinary College, took the unusual step of appealing for donations to support the wife of that

¹⁷² Thomas Greaves, 'The National Veterinary Benevolent and Mutual Defence Society, Treasurer's financial statement' in *Veterinary Journal*, vol. 6, no. 1 (January, 1878), pp 31-2. There may have been as few as five Irish contributors as the report did not publish addresses. The contemporary veterinary register lists two Hugh Fergusons, one of Dublin, the other of Warrington, Lancashire. Ferguson, Freeman, Lambert and Murphy were based in Dublin, Dyer in Limerick, and Malcolm in Enniscorthy.

¹⁷³ Anon, 'Royal Medical Benevolent Fund Society of Ireland' in *British Medical Journal*, vol. 1, no. 2409 (2 March, 1907), p. 515.

¹⁷⁴ *Kerry Star*, 11, 25 August 1862; *Kerry Sentinel*, 1, 15 November 1878; *Tralee Chronicle*, 25 January 1879.

¹⁷⁵ *Tralee Chronicle*, 5 January 1866.

¹⁷⁶ M. F. Cusack, *A history of the kingdom of Kerry* (London, 1871), p. lxix.

¹⁷⁷ *Kerry Sentinel*, 7 November, *Kerry Independent*, 20 November 1882.

College's former pupil.¹⁷⁸ Although the response was favourable, with twenty-two subscriptions realising £25, only one contribution came from Ireland. John Bell, Clonmel, subscribed £1 1s. The largest contribution, of £6, came from the staff and students of the Edinburgh College. Walley's appreciation notice strongly suggested that Brosnan was not a member of the Benevolent and Mutual Defence Society. He also mentioned that the family of a deceased Durham practitioner had ended up in the poorhouse. Wally argued that it was not only advisable, but the duty of every practitioner, to join the Society. An individual might never require assistance but ultimately could give aid to 'others not so fortunate as himself.'¹⁷⁹

Contagious Diseases (Animals) Act and opportunities for veterinary surgeons

Mid-nineteenth-century registered veterinary surgeons had no opportunity for state employment, unlike their medical counterparts. For example, under the Medical Charities Act, 1851, supplemented by the Medical Registration Act, 1858, poor law commissioners were obliged to employ medical officers who held a licence from the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland or an equivalent body. The act guaranteed 776 positions in the dispensary system.¹⁸⁰ In Britain, veterinary reformers, such as John Gamgee and George Fleming, had long sought state positions for the profession and saw the need for veterinary expertise in the prevention of contagious animal disease, and in the inspection of meat and milk production. John Gamgee and his brother, Joseph Sampson, a human surgeon, waged a campaign to increase public awareness on the damage diseased meat could do to public health.¹⁸¹ On 13 December 1862, Gamgee broached the subject at a lecture, on the prevalence and prevention of diseases amongst

¹⁷⁸ Thomas Walley, 'Appeal on behalf of the widow and family of the late Mr. J. Brosnan' in *Veterinarian*, vol. 56, no. 3 (March, 1883), p. 224.

¹⁷⁹ Thomas Walley, 'Subscriptions on behalf of the widow and family of the late Mr. Brosnan' in *Veterinarian*, vol. 56, no. 5 (May, 1883), pp 375-6.

¹⁸⁰ Catherine Cox, 'Access and engagement: The medical dispensary service in post-famine Ireland' in Catherine Cox and Maria Luddy (eds), *Cultures of care in Irish medical history, 1750-1970* (London, 2010), p. 60.

For a brief outline of contemporary State health services in Ireland see Gordon Wolstenholme, 'The Victorian Era' in Eoin O'Brien and Anne Crookshank (eds), *A portrait of Irish medicine* (Dublin, 1984), pp 137-8.

¹⁸¹ Clive A. Spinage, *Cattle plague: A history* (London, 2003), pp 222-41; J. R. Fisher, 'Professor Gamgee and the farmers' in *Vet. Hist.*, new ser., vol. 1, no. 2 (1979/80), pp 48-53; Joseph Sampson Gamgee, *The cattle plague and diseased meat, and their relations with public health, and with the interests of agriculture* (London, 1857).

domestic animals in Ireland, at the RDS in Dublin.¹⁸² According to Anne Hardy, in identifying the risks that animal disease posed to human health, and in insisting that vets were uniquely qualified to act on same, reformers were deliberately seeking to expand the range of employment open to the profession, and to establish its ‘scientific and social worthiness.’¹⁸³ This study will focus on the Contagious Diseases (Animals) Act, 1878, which was instrumental in offering Irish veterinary surgeons the opportunity of part-time state employment, and examine how the Act was instrumental in expanding the presence of registered veterinary surgeons throughout Ireland.

In Britain, some State employment initially came when the Veterinary Department of the Privy Council was established in October 1865, initially on a temporary basis, to tackle a serious outbreak of Rinderpest (cattle-plague), which caused the loss of 400,000 animals. Various attempts to legislate for the prevention of contagious animal diseases had failed until the Contagious Diseases (Animals) Act, 1866. Under the Act local authorities were obliged to employ at least one inspector, but the tendency was to fill this roll with unqualified men with knowledge of cattle.¹⁸⁴ A separate Cattle Disease Act was passed for Ireland on 6 March 1866, being the first Statute relating to animal disease and applying specifically to the country. The Lord Lieutenant was empowered to take whatever measures necessary, including compulsory slaughter and, to arrest any outbreak of rinderpest in Ireland. A ‘Cattle Plague Account’, made up of contributions from Poor Law Unions, was established to provide compensation for cattle slaughtered due to rinderpest. From 1870 compensation was paid for contagious diseases in livestock, sheep and horses, namely rinderpest, pleuro-pneumonia, foot-and-mouth, sheep pox, sheep scab, glanders, or ‘any disease so designated by Order of the Lord Lieutenant.’¹⁸⁵

¹⁸² *Irish Times*, 15 December, *Farmer’s Gazette*, 20 December 1862. See also John Gamgee, ‘The prevalence and prevention of diseases amongst domestic animals in Ireland’ in *Journal of the Royal Dublin Society*, vol. 4 (July, 1862-January, 1863), pp 49-67.

¹⁸³ Anne Hardy, *Pioneers in the Victorian provinces: Veterinarians, public health and the urban animal economy* in *Urban History*, vol. 29, no. 3 (2002), p. 380.

¹⁸⁴ See Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, *Animal health: A Centenary, 1865-1965* (London, 1965), pp 3-84; Anon, ‘150 years of state veterinary services’ in *Vet. Rec.*, vol. 177, no. 16 (24 October, 2015), p. 407; Arvel B. Erickson, ‘The cattle plague in England, 1865-7’ in *Agricultural History*, vol. 35, no. 2 (April, 1861), pp 94-103.

¹⁸⁵ Cattle Disease Act (Ireland), 1866, 29 Vic. cap. 4; See Anon, *An Act to amend the law relating to contagious diseases amongst cattle and other animals in Ireland* (Dublin, 1866); Brian Ó Súilleabháin, ‘The evolution of the State Veterinary Services’ in *Ir. Veterinary Jn.*, vol. 47, no. 1 (January, 1994), pp 21-7.

To deal with any potential outbreak of cattle plague in the country, the Irish Privy Council established a veterinary department in March 1866, again initially as a temporary measure, with Hugh Ferguson as Director General. His title was subsequently changed to that of Chief Veterinary Inspector. Apparently, Ferguson was the only veterinary surgeon regularly employed. With as few as sixty qualified vets in the country, inspectors were generally laymen and police officers. Veterinary surgeons were occasionally engaged when required for special investigations.¹⁸⁶ One such occasion occurred but two months after the establishment of the Veterinary Department when Ireland witnessed an outbreak of rinderpest.¹⁸⁷ On 14 May 1866, a special edition of the *Northern Whig* reported that the disease had ‘appeared’ in the Drennan district of county Down, where eight cattle had died. Ferguson intervened immediately and ordered nine others to be slaughtered.¹⁸⁸ During the following weeks there were two further outbreaks within a mile of Drennan. The fourth and final outbreak, on a farm near Enfield, Meath, was confirmed by Dublin Castle on 30 June.¹⁸⁹ The outbreaks resulted in controls affecting cattle exports to Britain from the provinces of Leinster and Ulster. However, the rinderpest was quickly and effectively controlled. On 3 August Ferguson reported that the disease was under control as the regulatory period had elapsed since the Meath outbreak. As a result, Dublin Castle revoked the orders regulating the export of cattle.¹⁹⁰ The *Veterinarian* noted that in Britain the plague commenced in crowded London cowsheds and then spread rapidly. It attributed the quick arrest of the disease in Ireland to the efforts of Ferguson and his staff and the fact that it only attacked cattle ‘upon small farms in an isolated district.’ The disease was confined to nine small farms, with a total livestock population of only fifty. Twenty-nine animals, deemed infected, either died or were destroyed. The other twenty-one ‘healthy’ animals were slaughtered as a precaution.¹⁹¹

During the 1866 outbreak a mixture of Irish-based vets and British practitioners with experience of cattle plague assisted Ferguson. Amongst those who carried out post

¹⁸⁶ NLI Ms 15,505, p. 4. This twelve-page typescript is titled *The history of veterinary medicine in Ireland* and is accredited to Esmonde Little, a Dublin veterinary surgeon.

¹⁸⁷ For an overview of rinderpest relating to Ireland see Patrick J. O’Reilly, ‘Rinderpest: A review-relevance to Ireland’ in *Irish Veterinary News*, vol. 14, no. 8 (August, 1992), pp 9-12.

¹⁸⁸ *Northern Whig*, 14 May 1866.

¹⁸⁹ *Dublin Evening Post*, 2 July 1866.

¹⁹⁰ *Farmer’s Gazette*, 11 August 1866.

¹⁹¹ Anon, ‘Observations on the cattle plague in Ireland and the cattle disease in the Isle of Man’ in *Veterinarian*, vol. 39, no. 10 (October, 1866), pp 769-79.

mortems were George Olden, Cork, John Moir, Kilkenny, James M’Kenna, Belfast and William Litt, Shrewsbury.¹⁹² Newspaper reports suggest that Ferguson left the greatest responsibility with an unqualified individual, Joseph Jenks, described as ‘lately Government Inspector in Shropshire’, who played the most prominent role during inspections and post mortems.¹⁹³ In 1877 Jenks took his own life. At the inquest Hugh Ferguson deposed that he knew Jenks, who was not a qualified veterinary surgeon, since 1865. He described the deceased as ‘a veterinary inspector’s assistant under the Government’, who had subsequently lost his position due to ‘slight irregularities.’ Ferguson then employed Jenks in his private practice.¹⁹⁴ The *Dublin Evening Telegraph* reported that Jenks was well known in Dublin Circles and had played a prominent part in the inspection of cattle leaving the city’s port.¹⁹⁵ Esmonde Little wrote that, in its early years, the Irish Veterinary Department was not ‘properly organised, adequately staffed or actively engaged in the control of disease.’ Its work was greatly curtailed by the want of an adequate staff of qualified vets.¹⁹⁶ A number of articles in the *Veterinarian* from Philip T. Kirwan, Tipperary, an individual with the ‘greatest respect’ for the profession, suggested that unlike those of their British counterparts, the working conditions and terms of employment of the Irish Inspectors did not inspire much enthusiasm for the performance of the required duties. He claimed that private practice was prohibited and the appointment temporary, with the Inspector likely to be discharged at any time on a week’s notice. Additionally, the Inspectors, particularly those on port duties, were liable to be chaperoned by policemen. He claimed many of the required duties were worthier of the latter than a member of ‘a learned profession.’¹⁹⁷ Kirwan’s greatest criticism focused on the lack of paid leave, claiming that Inspectors had to undergo a series of ‘petitions, signatures, and grumblings’ in order to secure a day’s leave of absence. If leave was granted, pay was stopped even when the absence was caused by an illness related to the job. He also claimed Irish Inspectors were not paid for Sundays, but were often required to work.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹² *Evening Freeman*, 9 June 1866.

¹⁹³ *Dublin Evening Mail*, 25 May, 14 June 1866.

¹⁹⁴ *Freeman’s Journal*, 20 November 1877.

¹⁹⁵ *Dublin Evening Telegraph*, 19 November 1877

¹⁹⁶ NLI Ms 15,505, p. 5.

¹⁹⁷ P. T. K., ‘Veterinary inspectors in Ireland’ in *Veterinarian*, vol. 49, no. 5 (May, 1876), pp 315-7.

¹⁹⁸ Philip T. Kirwan, ‘Veterinary inspectors in Ireland’ in *Veterinarian*, vol. 49, no. 1 (January, 1876), pp 20-21.

Two months later the *Veterinarian* carried a memorandum from Hugh Ferguson outlining new regulations for Veterinary Inspectors in Ireland. They were now entitled to twelve days of paid leave annually. Additionally, if required to work on any of six agreed public holidays the Inspector would receive double pay. Those with a year's service were also, if certified by a physician, entitled to paid sick leave. In total Inspectors were entitled to a maximum twenty-eight days paid holidays and sick leave.¹⁹⁹ Esmonde Little argued that even in its early days, predominately staffed by lay 'Cattle Inspectors', the Irish Veterinary Department carried out important examinations at Irish ports on all cattle being exported to Britain. This service was the forerunner of the later portal inspection service that required a large staff of veterinary surgeons. Following the recommendations of a Select Committee, the Department had a staff of twenty-five by 1878, six based at Dublin Castle, the others deployed at various ports around the country.²⁰⁰ The first identifiable list of veterinary surgeons employed by the Veterinary Department of the Irish Privy Council, published in the *RCVS Register* of 1884, suggested that few opportunities were given to Irish men. Twenty-four names were listed. An in-depth study of the backgrounds of those listed highlighted that the majority had recently arrived from Britain or the colonies to take up the posts. For example, Henry T. Ashbee (Edinburgh, 1873) had a previous address at Kamphiti, India.²⁰¹ Robert S. Blee (London, 1864), a native of Cornwall, had a long association with Ireland, establishing a practice in Waterford in 1867.²⁰² Only five of those listed were recorded as being from Ireland on graduation from College. James Taylor, Down, and John Jones, Mallow, were both graduates of Edinburgh Dick in 1864 and 1875, respectively, James Bole, Castlebar, and Hugh Bradshaw, Clonmel, both graduated from New Edinburgh in 1874, that year also saw William Gabbie graduate from Glasgow.²⁰³

The 1878 Contagious Diseases (Animals) Act afforded Irish born vets a better chance of regular state employment. The Act finally granted vets a legal monopoly, as

¹⁹⁹ Hugh Ferguson, 'Regulations for veterinary inspectors in Ireland' in *Veterinarian*, vol. 49, no. 4 (April, 1876), pp 292-3.

²⁰⁰ NLI Ms 15,505, pp 5-8

²⁰¹ Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, *The register (and directory) of veterinary surgeons, revised to January 1874* (London, 1874), p. 7.

²⁰² *Waterford Chronicle*, 12 March 1867.

²⁰³ *The Veterinarian* regularly published lists of those that had passed their first, second and final exams at the British veterinary colleges. The names of those that had passed the final exam were normally accompanied by the individual's home address.

it required all local authorities to appoint at least one qualified veterinary surgeon as inspector/valuer. The Act provided for the slaughter, with compensation, of any animal suspected of infection from pleuro-pneumonia, foot-and-mouth, or other contagious diseases. Where a slaughtered animal was subsequently found to be infected, compensation was set at half its estimated value prior to infection. Otherwise the owner received the full value of the animal prior to slaughter. Certain amendments were made for Ireland. Section 81 of the Act provided the Lord Lieutenant with certain powers that were deemed necessary to meet the ‘peculiar circumstances’ of Ireland, where the Boards of Guardians were tasked with executing the Act. The wording of Section 81 is complex, but, in short, Parliament deemed that, as the number of qualified vets was limited, it was impossible to insist on the appointment of a qualified veterinary inspector to every Union. Where a Union could not engage a qualified man, it should apply to Government for authority to select some other person. Provisions were also made that a number of local authorities could unite for the purpose of inspection.²⁰⁴ A circular was forwarded to all Unions by the Veterinary Department of the Privy Council affording instructions and information that might be required. Regarding payment, it suggested that, in any Union where disease did not exist, or had not recently existed, it was desirable to pay the Inspector per case. In the event of an outbreak of disease the scale of remuneration should be revised.²⁰⁵

In many cases the Poor Law Unions initially attempted to take advantage of the softening of the rules in Ireland regarding the appointment of qualified vets, knowing that a qualified man would cost more to employ. Several considered employing an unqualified individual but subsequently thought better of the idea. For example, the Bandon Union resolved to appoint a regularly qualified vet, fearful that any oversights by an unqualified individual might ultimately result in additional costs.²⁰⁶ In Scariff, Clare, a Mr. Purcell believed that ‘an ordinary intelligent man would suit them as well as a professional one, who would be very expensive, particularly owing to the distance he would have to come, there being none nearer than Ennis.’ However, the Chairman believed it was paramount to appoint a qualified man, capable of arresting any potential

²⁰⁴ Contagious Diseases (Animals) Act, 1878, 41 & 42 Vict., c.74; For details of the working of the Act in Ireland see P. H. Bagenal, *A digest of the Contagious Diseases (Animals) Act, 1878* (Dublin, 1879); Anon, ‘The Contagious Diseases (Animals) Act of 1878, in its application to Ireland’ in *Veterinarian*, vol. 51, no. 10 (October, 1878), pp 663-5.

²⁰⁵ The circular is reproduced in the *Leinster Express*, 5 October 1878.

²⁰⁶ *Cork Constitution*, 7 November 1878.

outbreak of disease.²⁰⁷ There were three applicants of the post but only Michael P. Greene, Ennis, was qualified and was duly appointed at one guinea per visit and a half guinea travelling expenses, regardless of distance.²⁰⁸ In 1879 the Lurgan Guardians considered removing the qualified incumbent, William Bray, as his fees for the previous year amounted to over £38. A Mr. Sinnamon argued that they required an Inspector and not a vet. The Guardians considered employing the argument that they did not have a resident vet, as Bray lived in Lurgan. However, they eventually decided to continue with the arrangement, fearing a backlash from the veterinary profession.²⁰⁹

The Listowel Union was amongst those that proceeded with appointing an unqualified individual despite the availability of a duly qualified vet. It advertised the post at 10s per visit and received three applications, the qualified John Brosnan, Mr. Mullally, a cow-doctor, and Mr. McElligott, a hotelier and auctioneer. The Guardians rejected the applications of both Brosnan and McElligott, having found an ‘informality’ in both. Brosnan had substituted the word ‘case’ for ‘visit.’ The Guardians’ understanding of a ‘visit’ involved dealing with any number of infected cattle in a herd. Brosnan obviously believed the inspector should be paid per animal. Mullally produced ‘excellent testimonials’, including one from a relative of the Chairman. After some division, Mullally was elected. The Chairman was questioned if there was any informality in the application and replied in the negative. Dublin Castle naturally refused to sanction the appointment as the Board ‘could have procured the services of veterinary surgeon on reasonable terms.’ At Listowel, Mr. Hewson questioned if the authorities were aware that Brosnan lived twenty miles away in Tralee. He proposed the Lord Lieutenant be informed that it was, therefore, impossible to get a duly qualified vet to fill the post. In the interim Brosnan wrote to Dublin Castle outlining the case. He concluded his letter with a ‘Delicate Compliment’, that his opponents for the post were ‘about as capable of diagnosing any of the diseases of the air passage as Bovine herself.’ Although the Listowel Guardians attempted to side-track the issue on further occasions they were eventually compelled to appoint Brosnan at 10s per visit and 8d per mile travelling expenses, not to include the return journey to Tralee.²¹⁰

²⁰⁷ *Clare Journal*, 28 October 1878.

²⁰⁸ *Clare Independent*, 16 November 1878.

²⁰⁹ *Portadown News*, 26 July, 6 September 1879.

²¹⁰ *Tralee Chronicle*, 19 November, 17, 31 December 1878, 10 January, 11, 21 February 1879.

Correspondence from veterinary surgeons suggested that the Privy Council Veterinary Department was not always as insistent on the employment of qualified men. On 14 June 1882 ‘MRCVS’ wrote in the *Freeman’s Journal* complaining about the number of unqualified persons and quacks that were appointed as Union Inspectors. He claimed that no board would appoint an amateur lawyer or doctor, yet, a ‘large number’ of veterinary inspectors were unqualified, even in districts where the services of a qualified man were available. He believed the framers of the Act did not contemplate the abuses that subsequently occurred, which he attributed to the fact that ‘Mr Quack is backed by political friends, as ignorant as himself.’ The following day ‘V S’ expressed similar sentiments. He knew of five Unions where veterinary surgeons were resident, and made applications for the inspectorship, but ‘Mr Quack was preferable on all these occasions.’²¹¹ In 1881 Robert Bouchier Prentice, Longford, claimed that several Unions, despite their legal obligation, humiliated young vets that had spent time and resources obtaining a diploma, by continuing to employ herds and labourers as veterinary inspectors. He suggested that many Irish-born veterinary surgeons, who were forced to find work abroad, could earn a living at home only if the government made it ‘absolutely’ compulsory for Unions to employ duly qualified men under the Act.²¹² Prentice had personal experience of humiliation at the hands of local Guardians. His father, Robert Snr. (Edinburgh,), established a practice in Longford in 1852 and was subsequently appointed Inspector under the 1878 Act. However, the position was re-advertised when the Guardians would not agree to an annual salary of £100, preferring to pay per case. Prentice re-applied, now seeking a salary of £80. Foley and McDermott, unqualified individuals, offered their services for £40 and £30, respectively. Although the Guardians assumed that the appointment might not be sanctioned they believed they had ‘sufficient cause’ to appoint Thomas McDermott and ultimately did, without sanction. Robert Snr. died, aged 50, on 2 March 1879.²¹³

Robert Bouchier Prentice, a recent graduate from Edinburgh, took over his father’s business. The following January Dublin Castle ordered the Longford Guardians to appoint the appropriately qualified Prentice Jnr. as Inspector, unless they showed ‘sufficient cause for not doing so.’ In reply, they wrote that they did not think it appropriate to saddle the ratepayers with the expense of a ‘professional man’, especially

²¹¹ *Freeman’s Journal*, 13, 14 June 1882.

²¹² *Freeman’s Journal*, 15 November 1881.

²¹³ *Longford Journal*, 11 September 1852, 5, 26 October, 23 November 1878, 8 March 1879.

as the district was disease free. Besides they had full confidence in the incumbent Inspector. However, the Guardians met again on 18 February, under orders to elect a duly qualified Inspector. A Mr. McCann argued that Prentice, only recently qualified, could not have much experience, particularly as to the valuation of cattle. If they appointed him as Inspector they would have to appoint a valuer at additional expense. McCann spoke of their satisfaction with McDermott and even suggested that Prentice was incompetent, alleging that the veterinary surgeon's diagnosis of a certain animal was wrong, and that of McDermott correct. He moved that the incident should be recorded in a letter addressed to the Lord Lieutenant, requesting the retention of McDermott as Inspector. The other Guardians disagreed and resolved that they should ask that McDermott be retained, not because of any incompetence on Prentice's part, but because of his inexperience. Despite criticism from local ratepayers McDermott retained the Inspectorship during the following years. In August 1880 eighteen individuals, predominately farmers, signed a letter to the Veterinary Department expressing their dissatisfaction that the Guardians had hitherto been permitted to set aside the most important provision of the 1878 Act, 'preferring a cow doctor to a duly qualified veterinary surgeon for the detection of a disease which there is none more difficult to distinguish.'²¹⁴ Prentice was appointed Inspector to the Granard Union.²¹⁵

An Inspectorship under the 1878 Contagious Diseases (Animals) Act offered nothing more than a supplemental income to the veterinary surgeon. Nevertheless, this extra income gave the veterinarian a better chance of maintaining a private practice in smaller country towns, which hitherto had proved difficult. Initially the positions were poorly contested as vets were still few on the ground and many chose to concentrate on horse related business in the cities and larger towns. Where a larger urban centre was found within a Poor Law Union the positions were comfortably filled with a duly qualified man. A different situation usually ensued in the more remote rural Unions, where vets were often unwilling to settle, knowing that a permanent practice was unsustainable. The plight of the veterinary surgeon seeking a veterinary inspectorship in rural areas is remarkably similar to that of the dispensary doctors, as highlighted in the work of Catherine Cox. For medical professionals, appointments as dispensary medical officers were keenly sought, providing a secure income. Nevertheless, difficult

²¹⁴ *Longford Journal*, 19 April 1879, 10 January, 21 February, 31 July, 7 August 1880, 1 December 1883.

²¹⁵ *Longford Journal*, 20 March 1880.

terrain, poor infrastructure and language difficulties meant that in some more remote areas these posts remained unfilled.²¹⁶

County Kerry, with six Poor Law Unions, Tralee, Killarney, Listowel, Dingle, Kenmare and Caherciveen, is a prime example of how some veterinary inspectorships were keenly sought, others ignored. All six Unions duly advertised for inspectors under the 1878 Act.²¹⁷ John Brosnan was subsequently employed in Tralee and Killarney, the newly qualified Patrick Keane (London, 1877), in Killarney.²¹⁸ These represented larger market towns, with a reasonable equine population and the potential for cattle practice in the predominately fertile hinterland. The task of filling the posts in the three remaining Unions, centred on remote rural towns, and a mountainous hinterland, proved more difficult. If there was any chance that the Guardians might fund the appointment of a qualified man it was only on the stipulation that he reside in the district. All three Unions remained without a duly qualified veterinary inspector until at least the 1890s. In December 1891, William Dagg (Edinburgh, 1888) was the only candidate for the post at Caherciveen. His interview with the Guardians highlighted how unattractive a remote rural town was to a vet. It also suggested that the majority of Guardians felt no necessity for a duly qualified man in the post, or for the services of a vet in the district. Dagg steadfastly refused to live in Caherciveen, offering to commute from Tralee for a fee of £1 10s, if he had business in the town, £3 otherwise. He claimed that if he were offered three times the salary of £60 he was still unwilling to live in the town. One board member remarked that when the district had no veterinary inspector it had ‘suffered nothing.’ Others made fun of a Mr. Butler, alluding to his money, when he said that he had a recent necessity to send for a veterinary surgeon to Tralee. The post was then re-advertised at a salary of £100, with a stipulation that the successful candidate should live in the town. Butler claimed they would only get a ‘tinker’ for such money. J. D. Bremner, a native of Valentia with experience as an inspector in Cork and Waterford, eventually secured the post, defeating Dagg in a vote.²¹⁹ In February 1893, Dagg was appointed as the first qualified veterinary inspector to the Dingle Union. He was the sole candidate for the position, carrying an annual salary of £80. His difficulties in sustaining a practice in the town, coupled with a desire to work in the

²¹⁶ Cox, ‘Access and engagement’, pp 57-78.

²¹⁷ See *Kerry Sentinel*, 22 October, 29 November, *Tralee Chronicle*, 15, 19 November 1878.

²¹⁸ *Kerry Sentinel*, 1 November, *Tralee Chronicle*, 29 November 1878, 21 February 1879.

²¹⁹ *Kerry Sentinel*, 16 December 1891, 9, 27 January 1892.

more prosperous towns of north Kerry, are discussed elsewhere in this study.²²⁰ Prior to Dagg's appointment the Dingle Inspectorship was held by John Neligan, described in the minutes of the Dingle Union as 'the Rate Collector of the Union and a practical farmer.' Despite concerns from Dublin Castle he had retained the position, as there was 'no professional veterinary surgeon resident within the union.'²²¹

The Kenmare Union was in a similar position and, despite queries from Dublin Castle, employed the unqualified Florence McCarthy as inspector.²²² However, a small minority, including William McCarthy and Sir John Colomb, was insistent that a duly qualified man should be appointed. They brought the matter before the Board on several occasions but found no support. McCarthy wanted to see a qualified vet reside in the district as 'animals died from want of proper treatment.' Sir John, to the annoyance of his fellow Guardians, declared that the Union had 90,000 head of cattle and those who voted against a veterinary surgeon voted for 'ignorance.'²²³ Florence McCarthy claimed that he had discharged his duty faithfully and branded any attempt to remove him as 'neither lawful nor constitutional.' He further believed that his namesake had 'some friend of his own for the appointment.' William McCarthy said he had nothing against him but his 'incompetence.'²²⁴ In early 1894 Patrick Keane was required to attend from Killarney to investigate the deaths of five cows from rabies, and an outbreak of glanders and farcy in horses. At this point William McCarthy and Colomb proposed that a duly qualified man be expeditiously appointed as Inspector. When the proposal was defeated on financial grounds McCarthy indicated that he intended to bring the matter before the Lord Lieutenant.²²⁵

Within a month an Inspector of the Veterinary Department of the Privy Council examined Florence McCarthy's abilities, under the Cattle Disease Act, and found him 'incompetent to discharge the duty.' He ordered that it was therefore necessary to appoint a qualified veterinary surgeon. The Guardians treated Dublin Castle's

²²⁰ *Kerry Weekly Reporter*, 11 February 1893.

²²¹ KCA/BG/DIN/MIN/22 (July, 1878-February, 1879). Dingle Union Board of Guardians Records, held at the Kerry County Archives, Kerry Library Headquarters, Moyderwell, Tralee. The Library holds a substantial, but incomplete set of Records from the Tralee, Killarney, Listowel, Caherciveen, Dingle and Kenmare Unions. Although useful the minutes are often to the point and concise. Unlike the newspaper reports they offer little coverage of the discourse between the Guardians.

²²² KCA/BG/KEN/MIN/59 (June-December 1878). Kenmare Union Board of Guardians Records.

²²³ *Kerry Weekly Reporter*, 5 August, 21 October, *Kerry Evening Post*, 1 November 1893.

²²⁴ *Kerry Sentinel*, 16 September 1893.

²²⁵ *Kerry Evening Post*, 31 January 1894.

subsequent inquiry into what steps they had taken to appoint a veterinary surgeon in a frivolous manner. The Chairman said they had taken no steps, as they did not ‘think it necessary.’ Another Guardian joked that ‘nothing kills cattle in this union but hunger and gout, and the vet won’t cure hunger.’ A letter from Patrick Keane, offering his services as Inspector for £80 a year, or £2 2s per visit, was ignored. Although there was some concern that non-compliance with the order might result in the Board’s dissolution, the Guardians resolved that the Lord Lieutenant was unlikely to force the issue ‘in face of a majority of this Board.’²²⁶ Despite further protestations from the Veterinary Department the Kenmare Guardians were firm with a resolution that there was ‘no necessity’ to appoint a veterinary surgeon as the Union had always been free from contagious animal disease, nor could it afford such an appointment. The majority were against the appointment and, therefore, ‘would fight it to the bitter end.’²²⁷ It appears Dublin Castle eventually conceded defeat. In 1900, twenty-two years after his appointment, Florence McCarthy retained the veterinary Inspectorship in Kenmare. At that time a meeting of Kerry County Council was informed that McCarthy was ‘not a regularly qualified man.’²²⁸

Despite continued resistance from a minority of Poor Law Unions the Contagious Diseases (Animals) Act, 1878 proved highly beneficial to the development of the veterinary profession in Ireland. The Act offered a supplemental income that enabled vets to establish private practices in towns hitherto without a resident veterinary surgeon. As a result, the number of qualified veterinary surgeons in private practice doubled in the decade after 1874. The RCVS Register of that year listed seventy-three members resident in Ireland. The 1884 Register listed 141 MRCVS in private practice, twenty-four with the Veterinary Department of the Privy Council, and twenty-eight ‘Existing Practitioners’, who could not use the title MRCVS but were free to call themselves veterinary surgeons.²²⁹ Inspectorships under the 1878 Act were particularly beneficial to new graduates, practitioners wishing to return to Ireland, or British practitioners seeking new opportunities. For example, the Inspectorship of the Mayo Unions of Ballina, Belmullet, Killala and Swinford, amalgamated under the provisions of the Act for the purpose of appointing a qualified man, was keenly contested. The

²²⁶ *Kerry Sentinel*, 14, 28 February 1894.

²²⁷ *Kerry Weekly Reporter*, 17 March, *Kerry Evening Post*, 21 April, *Kerry News*, April 27 1894.

²²⁸ *Kerry Evening Post*, 10 November 1900.

²²⁹ *Veterinary register to 1874*, p. 93; *Veterinary register of 1884*, pp 219-21, 226, 235-44.

post was advertised in both the provincial and national press and offered an attractive annual salary of £200, including travelling expenses. The successful candidate, in addition to the work required under the Act, was required to give veterinary advice, excluding opinions on the soundness of horses, to the ratepayers at a uniform rate, not to exceed five shillings.²³⁰

As the post carried an attractive salary there were six applicants, two of whom travelled from Britain to make personal representations to the Guardians. John Barry (Glasgow, 1879) was a recent graduate with some veterinary experience from his native Kilkenny. He was also a silver medallist of the Glasgow Medical Society and was previously honoured for his contributions towards the advancement of veterinary science. William Semple, Dumbarton, (Glasgow, 1875) was an assistant to Professor McCall, Principal of the Glasgow College. Charles Cartwright (London, 1856) spent fourteen years in private practice in Britain. In 1872 he acquired a Government Inspectorship with the Veterinary Department in Dublin and was subsequently transferred to England where he was the incumbent Government Inspector at Fleetwood, Lancashire. William Going (Edinburgh, 1870) was incumbent Inspector of the Edenderry and Cootehill districts and produced a testimonial from the Earl of Dartry. He had seen practice in Rathkeale, Limerick. Henry F. McGrath, an Ennis native, graduated from Edinburgh in 1870 but did not take the RCVS Diploma until 1883. His application for the post stated that he was based in Galway and had nine years' experience as a veterinary inspector. The 'local' candidate was Patrick Walsh, a native of Ballinrobe, recently appointed Inspector to that Union at £5 a month, including car hire. Barry, Semple, Cartwright and Walsh were present and each was called in turn before the Guardians, who were divided on who should be selected for the post. Barry and Semple were quickly dismissed as 'delicate looking men' that might not be able for the rigours of inspection over such a large district. Walsh and Cartwright were shortlisted for the post. When some Guardians commended Cartwright as being the best qualified and most experienced others questioned why he had not yet settled down permanently in any place. Although Walsh's experience was questioned he was well known in the county and came with excellent character references. Walsh won a subsequent vote by four votes to three and was duly elected. Cartwright, presumably realising that his journey was in vain, then attempted to lodge an objection claiming

²³⁰ *Irish Times*, 4 April, *Connaught Telegraph*, 29 March 1879.

that Walsh had no diploma from a veterinary college and was not therefore qualified. Walsh subsequently resigned his Ballinrobe post, informing the Guardians there that the new appointment was ‘a much more lucrative one.’²³¹ His resignation meant that another qualified man, Charles Concannon, Tuam, took the opportunity that came with that Inspectorship.²³² The Veterinary Inspectorship afforded Patrick Walsh the opportunity to return to his home county and sustain a practice there. He held the Inspectorship of the amalgamated Unions and maintained a ‘large private practice’ until his sudden death in July 1898.²³³ The Inspectorship also meant that the more prosperous horse owners and farmers of a rural district in Mayo could now access the services of a qualified veterinary surgeon.

During the following years, because of an increase in the number of veterinary surgeons, even the poorly paid veterinary inspectorships were much desired. As a result, intense rivalries often developed over the positions. On his death in 1894, John Carmody was inspector to six Poor Law Unions in county Clare. Six separate polls, which were needed to fill the positions, saw an intense rivalry develop between two local Clare candidates, Edward J. Carroll and Francis Kennedy. Carroll (Edinburgh, 1893) was a native of Milltown Malbay, with family connections in Ennis. At the time of the elections he was practicing in Tullamore, county Offaly. Kennedy (London, 1878) came from a well-established Ennis family and practiced in Listowel. The most significant inspectorship was that of the Ennis Union. Prior to that contest the local Guardians voted to cut the inspector’s salary from £35 to £20, in the belief that even the lower amount would see ‘too many looking for the position.’ Carroll and Kennedy were joined in the Ennis contest by E. C. Winter (Edinburgh, 1887), a native of Limerick, with an extensive practice in that city. Highly regarded, he achieved fellowship of the RCVS in January 1883.²³⁴ However, Winter withdrew before the contest, likely in the realisation that his involvement was unwelcome. The *Kilrush Herald* predicted a close contest between Carroll and Kennedy. Of Winter it claimed that ‘the Unionist ex-officios will all support their brother ‘ditch-liner.’²³⁵

²³¹ *Connaught Telegraph*, 19 April 1879, *Ballinrobe Chronicle*, 5 October 1878, 1 Feb, 19 April 1879.

²³² *Ballinrobe Chronicle*, 3 May 1879.

²³³ *Weekly Freeman’s Journal, Sligo Champion*, 23 July 1898.

²³⁴ *Clare Journal*, 22 February 1894.

²³⁵ *Kilrush Herald*, 3 March 1894.

An intense rivalry was evident between the supporters of the Clare men and the build-up to the Ennis contest rivalled that of a parliamentary election. Kennedy was late into the race but subsequently conducted a vigorous canvas. The *Clare Journal* reported that the contest generated interest of an ‘unusual degree...in Ennis feeling was high over the struggle...on every wall and at every corner one was confronted with colourful posters, calling on the guardians to ‘Vote for Kennedy, the local candidate.’ Twenty-seven individuals were entitled to vote. Election day attracted a large crowd not hitherto seen at an Ennis Poor Law Board meeting. The excitement generated by a Kennedy victory, by a majority of five, almost resulted in a mass brawl between the rival supporters.²³⁶ Kennedy also defeated Carroll in a more benign contest for the Ballyvaughan Inspectorship, and was elected unopposed at Tulla, which paid £1 20s per visit.²³⁷ Carroll defeated Kennedy at Corrofin by one vote.²³⁸ The former was elected unopposed at Ennistymon, where E. C. Winter was initially also a candidate. Apparently, both were promised influential support after an active canvass. In spite of this Winter withdrew, claiming that his friends had requested that he would not change his place of practice. The *Clare Journal* reported that it was obvious that the appointment of a Clare gentleman would have been popular and if the contest had come to an issue ‘feelings would have run high.’²³⁹ The final contest was for the Kildysart Inspectorship, again with a £20 salary. Carroll, Kennedy and John J. Kelly (Edinburgh, 1888) were candidates. Kelly was a native of Cashel, Tipperary, and was the temporary Inspector to the Union, as he practiced in Kilrush only seventeen miles away. Nevertheless, on the advice of friends, he withdrew his name stating he would leave the contest to the other candidates. Although Carroll was not present he won by eleven votes to seven. Kennedy thanked his supporters and hoped that, as both he and Carroll had secured three inspectorships each, they might now ‘pull together.’²⁴⁰ Following Carmody’s death his wife was approached with extensive offers for the goodwill of his extensive practice at Church Place, Ennis. P. J. Howard, a new graduate of Edinburgh, eventually acquired the practice in November 1895.²⁴¹ There were now four qualified veterinary surgeons resident in county Clare. However, they were based in the two

²³⁶ *Clare Journal*, 3 March 1894.

²³⁷ *Clare Journal*, 15 March 1894.

²³⁸ *Cork Constitution*, 9 March 1894.

²³⁹ *Clare Journal*, 12 March 1894.

²⁴⁰ *Clare Journal*, 22 March 1894.

²⁴¹ *Clare Journal*, 22 February 1894, 21 November 1895.

largest towns, Ennis and Kilrush, travelling into the country for both private practice and Government work. Another half century passed before opportunities again emerged to sustain a practice in smaller rural towns.

The Veterinary Surgeons Act of 1881

In the early 1870s legislative backing continued to elude the RCVS and its 1844 Charter. It hoped that another Veterinary Medical Bill would finally provide the recognition it so desired. As a start the RCVS achieved a Supplemental Charter in 1876. This allowed it certain powers including the creation of Fellows and the right to remove members from its register, which it was now compelled to keep. The Charter allowed the RCVS to initially elect 'Primary Fellows' without examination. Those with at least fifteen years practice, of which there were 1,016, who had aided the profession or shown 'Distinction in Original Research', were deemed suitable candidates. Thereafter, those over twenty-six years, with five years' experience, could claim Fellowship by examination. At any time only 'five *per centum*' of RCVS members could hold a Fellowship.²⁴² A Committee was established to oversee the process. Professor Hugh Ferguson, the Queen's Veterinary Surgeon in Ireland and a member of the Veterinary Department of the Privy Council, Thomas D. Lambert, Veterinary Surgeon to the Royal Agricultural Society of Ireland, David Paley, Dublin, and John Malcolm, Wexford, were chosen to represent Ireland.²⁴³ The RCVS Council considered those proposed for Primary Fellowship at a special meeting convened on 20 February 1877. Eight Irish men were elected Fellows. Their British contemporaries immediately elected Hugh Ferguson and Thomas D. Lambert. David Paley, Matthew Murphy, both Dublin, Thomas Simcocks, Drogheda, James King, Belfast, James Preston, Mallow, and John Bell, Clonmel were also elected on the recommendation of the 'Irish section' of the Committee, based on their 'Original Research.'²⁴⁴ The same Committee had considered John Jenks, Dublin, Charles Joseph, Dublin, and Thomas Richardson, Clonmel, during an earlier meeting, at which it was recorded that Ferguson had written to the RCVS

²⁴² Anon, 'The election of Fellows under the Supplemental Charter of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons' in *Veterinarian*, vol. 49, no. 12 (December, 1876), pp 885-6.

²⁴³ Anon, 'Quarterly meeting of Council, held 4th October, 1876' in *Veterinarian*, vol. 49, no. 11 (November, 1876), pp 801-2.

²⁴⁴ Anon, 'Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons: Special meeting of Council held on February 20th, 1877' in *Veterinary Journal*, vol. 4, no. 4 (April, 1877), pp 273-5.

Council recommending certain gentlemen as Irish Fellows.²⁴⁵ When the Primary Fellowship list was published by the RCVS on 13 March 1877 it emerged that seventy-seven individuals, including the eight Irishmen, had accepted the title. Sixteen others had declined.²⁴⁶ No Irish practitioner was included in the official list of those who declined. However, an unofficial list, published in the *Veterinarian*, noted that Jenks and Joseph had declined the title.²⁴⁷ Committee member John Malcolm, Enniscorthy, was ineligible, as he did not meet the criterion of being in practice for fifteen years.

Two Irish correspondents to the *Veterinarian* questioned the credentials and character of the new Irish Fellows during the following months. ‘Observer’ was amused at how things were done in Ireland. He called the selection of the Irish Fellows as a ‘farcical humbug.’ Having examined twenty-five years of the *Veterinarian* he claimed, ‘without fear of contradiction’, that none of the ‘seven’ members named had been known to write a page that had benefited the profession. One assumes the writer excluded Hugh Ferguson, as previously noted a distinguished author on the cattle plague. He further concluded that none of the persons selected from Ireland possessed any other qualification other than ‘the lining of one’s pocket’ as successful practitioners. The following month Observer continued his criticism. Having examined the Register for 1875 he believed the number of Irish Fellows was completely disproportionate. There were only seventeen Irish practitioners that fitted the criterion of more than fifteen years practice, yet eight of those were honoured. According to his calculation, and understanding of the term ‘five *per centum*’, Ireland should have received two Fellowships.²⁴⁸ Another correspondent, ‘Reflection’, was highly critical of the character and methods of Irish veterinarians. He wrote that it was ‘rather singular’ that the majority of the Irish Fellows were men he regularly observed at fairs and repositories. On those occasions, they became ‘itinerant’ practitioners who announced their presence by posting placards in the vicinity. He compared them to ‘tinkers’ that stationed themselves at markets to fix broken wares. He believed this to be undignified and no help to advancing the profession, calling it a ‘money-making business.’

²⁴⁵ Anon, ‘Special meeting of Council, held February 6th, 1877’ in *Veterinary Journal*, vol. 4, no. 3 (March, 1877), p. 198.

²⁴⁶ Anon, ‘The Fellowship of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons’ in *Veterinarian*, vol. 50, no. 4 (April, 1877), pp 288-9.

²⁴⁷ Anon, ‘The Fellowship of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons’ in *Veterinarian*, vol. 50, no. 3 (March, 1877), pp 229-31.

²⁴⁸ ‘Observer’, ‘Election of first Fellows’ in *Veterinarian*, vol. 50, no. 4 (April, 1877), pp 290-1. See also *Veterinarian*, vol. 50, no. 5 (May, 1877), pp 379-80.

Furthermore, when examining horses, Irish veterinarians were known to accept a *douceur* from the seller. They also acted as jockeys or grooms by riding the horse during examination, claiming this gave a better opportunity to detect faults and to hear abnormal sounds. The writer claimed this to be ‘as objectionable as anything can be’ in the profession, making all the teaching at college ‘false.’ If the veterinary surgeon was incapacitated and unable to ride how then could he examine a horse? The writer facetiously questioned if this *modus operandi* might equate to their ‘distinction in original research.’ Both writers felt the RCVS had, in some instances, made poor selections and congratulated the gentlemen who declined the Fellowship because of this.²⁴⁹

The criticism of the selection of the Irish Fellows was arguably justified. ‘Observer’ was correct in his claims that the Irish Fellows, excluding Ferguson, had contributed practically nothing to veterinary literature or discussion.²⁵⁰ Thomas Simcocks made some effort to redeem himself. Previously he had written to the *Veterinarian* regarding the title veterinary surgeon, hardly original research.²⁵¹ The criticism appeared to inspire him. For example, in the aftermath of his Fellowship his scientific essay on the toxic effects of carbolic acid, published in the *Veterinary Journal*, was well received.²⁵² Richard Dyer, a prolific contributor to the veterinary press, was a notable absentee from the list. His thirty-years of practice, prolificacy with the pen, and commitment to veterinary reform meant that, apart from Ferguson, he was more deserving of the honour than anyone in practice in Ireland. Although Dyer was in his second period of practice in the country the Irish selection committee may have viewed him as an outsider. It is more likely that he was seen as having been too outspoken about fellow veterinarians in general. It was only a year since he had questioned the qualifications of his fellow veterinarians in Limerick. His earlier insinuations that certain veterinarians were too grand to dirty their boots at cattle practice would also have irked the city practitioners on the selection committee. Peter Murray was another with three decades of experience, who was overlooked. The

²⁴⁹ ‘Reflection’, ‘A dignified position assumed by some Primary Fellows’ in *Veterinarian*, vol. 50, no. 6 (June, 1877), pp 455-6.

²⁵⁰ For a review of Ferguson’s literary output see Smith, *Veterinary literature*, iv, pp 78-9.

²⁵¹ T. H. Simcocks, ‘The title of veterinary surgeon’ in *Veterinarian*, vol. 49, no. 3 (March, 1876), pp 153-4.

²⁵² Thomas S. H. Simcocks, ‘On the toxic effects of carbolic acid’ in *Veterinary Journal*, vol. 3, no. 10 (October, 1876), pp 250-3.

majority of the elected fellows practiced either in Dublin or along the east coast, and had the opportunity to be known in veterinary circles. In truth, those furthest from Dublin, such as Murray in Tralee, were largely unaware of the activities of the RCVS, concentrating on their own practices. They went largely unknown to the wider profession, and certainly to those involved in RCVS politics.²⁵³

The selection of Irish Fellows by a small group of Irish colleagues was also questionable. The RCVS, based in London, knew little about the Irish practitioners and, therefore, relied on the Irish Committee to select the most eligible candidates. On the other hand, rivalries, jealousies and competition between practitioners surely led to several deserving candidates being overlooked. Such rivalries did exist, as highlighted by Thomas Greaves, Lancashire Veterinary Association, and guest speaker at the preliminary meeting of the Irish Central Veterinary Medical Association in April 1869. His address to the gathering suggested that relationships between Irish veterinarians were far from cordial. For the betterment of the profession Graves hoped those present might discard 'whatever petty jealousies, enmities, antipathies, revilings and rancours may exist amongst you, and substitute in their stead the observance of an affable, kind, gentlemanly, honourable, and generous conduct.'²⁵⁴ One of those who attended this meeting was James J. Farrall, a long-time rival of Professor Hugh Ferguson. Farrall died within months of this meeting so his selection as a fellow was never an issue for Ferguson.²⁵⁵ However, their relationship highlighted that jealousies and rivalries between Irish veterinary surgeons were often intense, especially where practitioners were competing for work in an urban setting.

Ferguson's animosity towards Farrall began when, as previously noted, Farrall was preferred as veterinary surgeon to the RAISI annual show of 1856. Two years later the rivalry intensified when Farrall rejected a horse at the October Ballinasloe Fair as a

²⁵³ Woods and Matthews, 'Little if at all', p. 35, argued that many qualified vets in Britain did not value their association with the RCVS, either socially or economically, believing it took their subscription and offered little in turn. The majority of provincial vets did not have the time or money to travel to London to partake in or vote for the RCVS council. Therefore, London practitioners, RVC Professors and Government or Army vets dominated the body. These men had little understanding of provincial practice. The same could be said of practitioners in Ireland. It was predominately those in Dublin that were interested in veterinary politics, men who knew little of the struggles of the provincial practitioner.

²⁵⁴ Anon, 'Irish Central Veterinary Medical Association' in *Veterinarian*, vol. 42, no. 5 (May, 1869), pp 376-7.

²⁵⁵ *Dublin Evening Mail*, 3 September 1869. Farrall died suddenly at a comparatively young age. His death notice described him as 'Frank, generous and unselfish. He won the good opinion of all with whom he came in contact, and maintained a high and unblemished character.'

‘roarer and whistler.’ The owner then asked the opinions of three other veterinary surgeons, ‘residents of Dublin’, who were present at the fair. All three concluded that the horse was ‘sound.’ Farrall subsequently posted a notice in the Dublin press that he was unhappy, not with their judgement, but with the manner in which these gentlemen circulated the difference of opinions that existed with ‘industry and colouring.’ To prove he was right he bought the horse himself and subsequently went to the ‘trouble and expense’ of sending the animal to both London and Edinburgh to be examined by the most prominent veterinarians of the day, including Professors Dick and Spooner, heads of the Edinburgh and London Colleges, respectively. Twelve British practitioners subsequently examined the horse and all, with the exception of Spooner, agreed with Farrall’s opinion on the animal. Copies of certificates from these gentlemen accompanied the notice.²⁵⁶

Hugh Ferguson wrote a letter to the all Dublin practitioners asking if Farrall’s public notice had a ‘tendency to depreciate the integrity, as well as the professional judgement’ of the city’s vets. William Dycer (Edinburgh, 1841), Joseph Doyle (London, 1833) and Bernard Reynolds (Edinburgh, 1851) subsequently stated that they were the gentlemen that had deemed the horse sound. Professor Spooner, on receiving a copy of Farrall’s circular, confirmed that he had also determined the horse as sound. He also claimed that Farrall had turned down £400 for the horse from a prominent horse buyer whilst in London. When Farrall refused Ferguson’s request to examine the horse, the latter posted a substantial newspaper notice in which he claimed that no Dublin practitioner, even those who had not attended the fair, had ‘escaped the stigma.’²⁵⁷ Farrall then claimed that the only reason Ferguson had intruded into his affairs was for the purposes of damaging him professionally. He further questioned Spooner’s account of the alleged offer of £400 for the horse, claiming that he had merely said that he was not interested in selling the animal, even at double its value, estimated at £200.²⁵⁸ The final notice came from Ferguson, which he admitted would be the last because of the expense. He argued his actions were not a personal attack on Farrall but a professional effort in ‘censuring his attempt to distinguish himself at the expense of his professional

²⁵⁶ *Freemans Journal*, 2 November, *Saunders’s News-Letter*, 3 November, *Farmer’s Gazette*, 6 November 1858.

²⁵⁷ *Saunders’s News-Letter*, 13 November, *Freeman’s Journal*, 16 November 1858.

²⁵⁸ *Farmer’s Gazette*, 4 December 1858.

brethren in Dublin.²⁵⁹ The episode, also reported in the British sporting press, portrayed the most prominent Irish veterinarians in a bad light, bickering between themselves and then implicating the RVC President in their squabble.²⁶⁰

Veterinary reformers had long sought legislation to formally recognise the profession. This ambition was eventually achieved in 1881. The first step was the healing of the rift between the RCVS and the Edinburgh College, confirmed by a Supplemental Charter, dated 5 August 1879.²⁶¹ The agreement allowed HASC holders admission to the RCVS ‘without examination and upon such terms as to payment of fees and otherwise as the Council shall think proper.’ In turn, the Highland Society would cease to grant any further veterinary certificates. From December 1879 to May 1880 the *Veterinarian* published the names and graduation dates from the Edinburgh College of 123 holders of the HASC who had been approved by the RCVS and had therefore obtained the diploma of that body. There were eleven Irish based practitioners on the list ranging from David Fulton, Mullingar, who graduated in 1859, to Thomas A. Frost, Clare, and Robert B. Prentice, Longford, who both graduated in 1879.²⁶² With the veterinary profession now united the path was clear for legislation that would protect the title ‘veterinary surgeon’ and enable the public to distinguish between qualified and unqualified practitioners.

Those who proceeded to draft a ‘Veterinary Surgeons Bill’, such as George Fleming, who became President of the RCVS during 1880, and Thomas Walley, Principal of the Edinburgh School, envisaged that only RCVS members could now use the title veterinary surgeon. However, legal advisors to the crown advised that a retrospective Bill would be rejected by Parliament and highlighted that the RCVS had made no attempt to protect the title since the 1844 Charter. The RCVS was directed that they could now deprive unqualified people, who used the title, of what had been a legitimate livelihood. A compromise was eventually reached where such individuals, who had been in *bona fide* veterinary practice for at least five years, were entitled, on

²⁵⁹ *Freeman's Journal*, 6 December, *Farmer's Gazette*, 18 December 1858.

²⁶⁰ *Field*, 6 November, *Bell's Life in London and Sporting Chronicle*, 14, 21 November 1858.

²⁶¹ Iain Pattison, ‘The Veterinary Surgeons Act, 1881’ in *Vet. Rec.*, vol. 108, no. 8 (21 February 1981), pp 158-9.

²⁶² See Anon, ‘Highland and Agricultural Society's Certificates’ in *Veterinarian*, vol. 52, no. 12 (December, 1879), p. 910-1; Anon, ‘Members of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons: Specially admitted’ in *Veterinarian*, vol. 53, no. 2 (February, 1880), pp 145-6; Anon, ‘Members of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons’ in *Veterinarian*, vol. 53, no. 5 (May, 1880), p. 360.

the payment of three guineas, to be placed on a separate register under the heading 'Existing Practitioners.' On 27 August 1881 the Veterinary Surgeons Act, 1881 received Royal Assent and became law.²⁶³ Registration requirements and other measures meant that the RCVS now had considerable regulatory control over the profession.²⁶⁴ The framers of the Veterinary Surgeons Act of 1881 drew from the experiences of the Medical Act (1858) and the Dentists Act (1878), drafting a penal clause that was more explicit and better drawn than those on which it was based.²⁶⁵

The statutory powers of the 1881 Act strengthened the RCVS. Section 17 (1) made it a criminal act to receive payment for veterinary practice by falsely claiming to be a veterinary surgeon. Those who did so were liable to a fine, not exceeding twenty pounds. After 31 December 1883 only RCVS members, HASC holders, and those listed as Existing Practitioners could use the title of veterinary surgeon. A special Committee, made up of the RCVS President and eight council members, was formed to consider applications from unqualified individuals hoping to be recognised as Existing Practitioners. It drew up a form of affidavit to be filled up by the applicants, and a form of certificate of moral character. The Annual Report of the RCVS for 1882-83 noted that both forms were drafted in 'strict and precise terms.' More than two thousand individuals applied for forms, but less than half that number returned them duly filled out. On assessment 863 were deemed eligible. Unsuccessful applicants could appeal to the Privy Council.²⁶⁶ A list of the successful candidates was eventually published in the *Register of Veterinary Surgeons, 1884*. There were twenty-eight Irish based practitioners on the list.²⁶⁷ The majority of the original applications have survived and are held at the RCVS Library, Horseferry Road, London.²⁶⁸ The library holds surviving

²⁶³ Pattison, 'Veterinary Surgeons Act', pp 158-60.

²⁶⁴ John McEldowney, Wyn Grant and Graham Medley, *The regulation of animal health and welfare: Science, law and policy* (Abington, 2013), pp 22-3.

²⁶⁵ Anon, 'The penal clauses in the Medical Acts' in the *British Medical Journal*, vol. 1, no. 1732 (10 March 1894), pp 534-5. See also A. M. Wilshere, *The principles of the law of contracts and torts* (London, 1922), pp 149-51; Michael J. D. Roberts, 'The politics of professionalization: MPs, medical men and the 1858 Medical Act' in *Medical History*, vol. 53, no. 1 (January, 2009), pp 37-56. The Medical Act, 1858 noted that 'it is expedient that Persons requiring Medical Aid should be enabled to distinguish qualified from unqualified Practitioners.' Furthermore, it stated that, under the Poor Law System, Boards of Guardians could only employ those qualified in medicine as Poor Law doctors. The Dentists Act limited the titles 'dentist' and 'dental surgeon' to registered practitioners. Only qualified practitioners or those who could show they had practiced for five years, prior to 1878, could register.

²⁶⁶ Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, *Annual report for the year 1882-83* (London, 1883), pp 5-6.

²⁶⁷ *Register, revised to January 1884*, pp 235-44.

²⁶⁸ During 2014 RCVS Knowledge staff examined bundles of applications, submitted to the RCVS during 1882, for entry to the list of 'Existing Practitioners.' They found 859 applications.

documents from twenty-eight Irish based applicants.²⁶⁹ This list of Irish based names differs slightly from that published in the 1884 register.²⁷⁰ Applicants usually supplied the Committee with three documents. The first was a simple accompanying letter, which stated that the candidate wished to be considered as an existing practitioner, and detailed how the appropriate fees were to be paid, usually by cheque or postal order. The applicant also forwarded a ‘Certificate of Character’, a statutory declaration, usually witnessed by a magistrate, Justice of the Peace or, occasionally, a registered veterinary surgeon, in which the applicant declared how long he had been in continuous practice. The average length of practice claimed by the applicants was thirteen years. Richard Bollard, Athlone, Isaac Mason, Dublin, and William McVey, Derry, all claimed to be in practice for twenty-five years. William Saunders, Cork, claimed the least time in practice, five years.²⁷¹ Edward Allcock, Dublin, declared that he was in practice for fifteen years. However, he also furnished a copy of his indenture of apprenticeship, dated August 1835, forty-seven years earlier, to Joseph Bretherton, MRCVS, Liverpool.²⁷² Local pillars of the community, who used the veterinary services of the applicants, supplied testimonials as to their moral character. For example, several medical men, the local priest, rector, the Bishop of Kilmore, and the Earl of Dartrey, endorsed William H. Going, Cootehill, Cavan.²⁷³ Poor Law Guardians endorsed a number of individuals. For example, George Johnston, Chairman of the Larne Union, vouched for its inspector, Hugh Drummond. Johnston praised ‘the very efficient manner in which he (Drummond) had discharged his duties as Cattle Inspector,

²⁶⁹ When this author examined the applications on 11 September 2019 they were filed in a rudimentary fashion. A number of boxes each held up to twelve files. These files, in turn, contained the application forms and accompanying material of up to ten applicants, arranged alphabetically. The files were marked ‘Existing Practitioners’ accompanied by the box number/file number. For the purpose of this study the citation RCVS EP 1/1 will, for example, refer to Existing Practitioners, Box 1/File 1.

²⁷⁰ The application documents of Charles Bradley, Banbridge, Down, have not survived. However, there are documents pertaining to the application of William Daws Bray, Lurgan, Armagh. When the final list was published in 1884 Bray was residing at 34 Commercial Road, Liverpool. There is also some confusion regarding the applications of the Scannell Brothers of Cork. The RCVS have filed applications from James D. Scannell, Joseph J. Scannell and John Joseph Scannell. However, evidence suggests that Joseph J. and John Joseph are the same person, as the fragmented applications from both files make one application. Even though the name Joseph J. subsequently appeared on the published list, this author suggests that John Joseph is the correct name as this is the signature on applications and the name on testimonials. The name John Joseph also appeared in the Cork newspapers on several occasions. It appears the name Joseph J. was incorrectly used by a number of registered veterinary surgeons that objected to the application, and was subsequently incorrectly used in the RCVS registers.

²⁷¹ RCVS EP 1/12, 6/6, 6/7.

²⁷² RCVS EP 1/1.

²⁷³ RCVS EP 4/4.

and also to the kind and considered attention shown by him to everyone requiring his services.’²⁷⁴

As previously noted, prominent members of the RCVS occasionally signed the statutory declaration of the candidates. For example, John Boyd Dunlop, veterinary surgeon and inventor of the pneumatic tyre, witnessed that of John Hunter, Ballyclare.²⁷⁵ Thomas D. Lambert, FRCVS, endorsed his former assistant, Edward Gavacan, as did John Sperring, Inspector to the Veterinary Department of the Privy Council.²⁷⁶ John Gloag, FRCVS, testified that James Crozier, Dublin, was ‘in every respect a contentious, good, moral man, also very intelligent and industrious.’ However, Richard Ebbitt, Dundalk, believed that Crozier should not be registered, as he was not a veterinary surgeon but a ‘retired police constable.’²⁷⁷ Known as ‘Protests’ these signed affidavits from RCVS members far outnumbered their testimonials, highlighting the strained relationships that often existed between the qualified and unqualified. Although James Doris, Cookstown, received letters of recommendation from four members of the Leather family, all RCVS members from Liverpool, his application was initially rejected following ‘strong protests’ from veterinary surgeons in his own neighbourhood. George A Browne, Coleraine, John Teggart, Dungannon, and William Sandford, Moneymore, protested that Doris, the brother of an RCVS member, was only a blacksmith who had not practiced for the requisite five years. Teggart wrote that James Doris managed a forge and was known to administer medicines to horses in his brother’s absence, a task that ‘any ordinary man could do.’ The decision to reject Doris was subsequently overturned when Joseph Leather, head of the Liverpool family, again wrote to the RCVS arguing that he could see no reason for Doris’s rejection but ‘some petty jealousy on the part of his neighbours.’²⁷⁸ Browne and Teggart also unsuccessfully objected to the application of William John McVey, county Derry, whom Browne described as a ‘a weaver and a small farmer... besides administering doses to neighbours’ cattle in the usual way he has never practiced at all as a veterinary

²⁷⁴ RCVS EP 3/5.

²⁷⁵ RCVS EP 5/3; For an account of Dunlop’s career see John A. Evans ‘The original biotechnologist: John Boyd Dunlop’ in *Ir. Veterinary Jn.*, vol. 43, no. 5 (September/October, 1990), pp 131-3.

²⁷⁶ RCVS EP 4/2.

²⁷⁷ RCVS EP 2/11.

²⁷⁸ RCVS EP 3/4.

surgeon or made his living by such practices.’ McVey’s character witnesses were a local rector and a Justice of the Peace.²⁷⁹

Although some protests from MRCVS members were driven by jealousy and a fear of competition, others were most likely genuine. A correspondent to the *Freeman’s Journal* claimed that ‘Any would-be quack, who has ever given a dose of medicine to or performed some minor operation on an animal’ had promptly applied for registration. Although he claimed that admitting such individuals to the register was ‘unpleasant’ to the qualified man, who would have to ‘swallow the pill’, he placed his faith in the Committee that considered the applications.²⁸⁰ The RCVS Committee subsequently reported that in order to provide justice to the claimants, the profession and the public, it ‘carefully considered and analysed’ the claims of each applicant, as well as the objections to his registration. This task proved to be ‘extremely onerous and full of anxiety.’²⁸¹ It most likely proved even more difficult to verify claims and objections from Ireland, distant from London. Even though an applicant was considered to be of good moral character by a local clergyman or magistrate, this did not mean he was competent as a veterinarian. However, no objection by an Irish MRCVS was upheld. The RCVS rejected the sworn word of its own members over the testimonials of prominent members of society. David Fulton, Mullingar, and Thomas H. Prior, Parsonstown, both objected to the application of Richard Bollard, Athlone, claiming he was ‘an unfit person for registration in as much as he was a gentleman’s servant.’ Nevertheless, the RCVS accepted the application on the strength of a Certificate of Character signed by Lord Castlemaine and a testimonial from the Captain of the 5th Dragoon Guards, who claimed he had employed Bollard to attend the troop horses in the absence of the Regiment’s regular veterinary surgeons.²⁸²

Although the veterinary credentials of men like Crozier, McVeigh and Bollard were questionable, others whose applications were opposed by qualified vets at least had experience in forges or veterinary establishments. Nevertheless, some of these cases highlighted what a difficult task the RCVS Committee had in coming to a decision. In 1882 Cork MRCVS members John Sinclair, John Jenks, William Evans, John Peard, and John Bell, Clonmel, all protested, by affidavit, at the application of

²⁷⁹ RCVS EP 6/7

²⁸⁰ *Freeman’s Journal*, 15 June 1882.

²⁸¹ *RCVS report for the year 1882-83*, p. 5.

²⁸² RCVS EP 1/12.

William Saunders, Crane St, Cork. They claimed Saunders was previously a clerk or bookkeeper to Robert and George Olden, RCVS members, who on George Oldens's death in 1879 opened his own 'shoeing forge, describing it as a veterinary establishment.' Therefore, he had not practiced for the requisite five years. However, Saunders produced a printed testimonial from twenty-six individuals, physicians, surgeons, Queen's College Professors and prominent merchants who all praised his veterinary skills. Despite this the testimonials gave conflicting accounts of how many years Saunders had been in practice. For example, Captain R. T. Gray stated that Saunders had looked after his horses, cattle and hounds for ten years. T. C. Shinkwin, Senior Surgeon at the North Infirmary and ex-lecturer on surgery at Queen's College, wrote that Saunders had practiced on his own since the death of Robert Olden in 1876. James Murphy, J. P., gave the same account as the protestors that Saunders was only in practice since the death of George Olden.²⁸³

Sinclair, Jenks, Evans, Peard and Bell also objected to the applications of the Scannell brothers, James D. and J. J., Warren's Place, Cork, whom they described as 'working smiths.' The brothers again produced printed testimonials, similar to that of Saunders. Amongst those who vouched for James D. was William Chambers, MRCVS, Government Veterinary Inspector, Belfast, who praised Scannell's ability to treat equine disease and lameness. The brothers were blacksmiths or farriers before successfully applying for registration. In 1881, James Scannell represented Cork farriers at a meeting of the United Trades Association and Irish Industrial League.²⁸⁴ On receiving news that his application was successful, he placed a notice in the *Cork Examiner* to announce that he had 'obtained the announcement of his qualification to practice the art and science of veterinary surgery and medicine on the horse, cattle, and the other domesticated animals in the United Kingdom.'²⁸⁵ John J. carried on the business on James's death in 1896.²⁸⁶ It must have vexed the RCVS members when the names of Saunders and Scannell subsequently appeared alongside theirs in newspaper

²⁸³ The file containing the applications of William Saunders, James D. Scannell, J. J. Scannell, all Cork, and William Teeling, Dublin, does not carry a box or file number. Newspaper reports and advertisements confirmed that Saunders was employed by the Oldens as a practice manager, even after Robert's death in February 1876, and that George Olden died in 1879. See *Cork Constitution*, 28 May 1870, 1 March, 29 April 1876; *Irish Times*, 14 May 1879.

²⁸⁴ *Cork Examiner*, 28 July 1881.

²⁸⁵ *Cork Examiner*, 2 May 1883.

²⁸⁶ *Cork Examiner*, 2 April 1896.

reports as attending ‘professionally’ at the big fairs, such as Cahirmee.²⁸⁷ The subsequent veterinary careers of the existing practitioners differed little from those of the qualified men. The majority continued in private practice, mostly treating horses. Some availed of the new opportunities offered to the profession as veterinary inspectors. William Tedlie Moore, Medical Hall, Letterkenny, became inspector to the Letterkenny Union.²⁸⁸ He subsequently claimed many professions, the 1911 census listed him as a veterinary surgeon, dental surgeon, pharmacist, chemist and druggist.²⁸⁹ As a chemist he was best known for inventing a popular medicine for the cure and prevention of fowl disease.²⁹⁰ Although James Crozier had received criticism from the qualified men he appeared to do well from his veterinary endeavours in Dublin. On his death in 1915, he reportedly left £28,806 in his will for charitable purposes.²⁹¹

The first prosecution in Ireland under the Veterinary Surgeons’ Act came in June 1891. Patrick Duffy came before a Longford court charged with using the title of veterinary surgeon without proper qualification. Duffy was prosecuted by the RCVS and the main witness was Richard Prentice, a qualified practitioner, who deposed that he was present when Duffy had represented himself as a veterinary surgeon at an earlier court case in Longford. The sitting magistrate rebuked Duffy’s statement that his final exam was in two halves and he had passed one of them, stressing that Duffy had not passed the required exam.²⁹² A report in the *Westmeath Examiner* never mentioned the Veterinary Act but reported that Prentice did not apparently like any opposition and ‘quickly hauled up the would-be Vet.’ Even though Duffy was liable to a £20 fine, he received a caution on the payment of £5.²⁹³ Prosecutions went beyond the use of the title veterinary surgeon. In February 1892, John Robinson, a farrier at Kensington, London, was prosecuted before the Metropolitan Police Magistrates for an infringement of the seventeenth Section of the Act by placing a sign that read ‘Veterinary Forge’ over his premises. The case was dismissed by this court, but on appeal by the RCVS was heard at the High Court of Justice. This court decreed that the Act had been

²⁸⁷ See *Cork Constitution*, 13 July 1888.

²⁸⁸ *Derry Journal*, 22 January 1894.

²⁸⁹ <http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/reels/nai002102901/>; See also *Londonderry Sentinel*, 24 November 1914.

²⁹⁰ *Weekly Freeman’s Journal*, 28 May 1898; *Derry Journal*, 15 April 1901.

²⁹¹ *Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer*, 9 June 1915.

²⁹² Anon, ‘First prosecution in Ireland under the Veterinary Surgeon’s Act’ in *Veterinarian*, vol. 64, no. 7 (July, 1891), p. 501.

²⁹³ *Westmeath Examiner*, 12 June 1891.

infringed but decided that it was not a case for punishment, as it was ‘only desired that the law should be known.’²⁹⁴ This landmark case was referred to later that year when James Coleman, Camden Place, Dublin, was prosecuted before the Dublin Police Court for having a sign that read ‘Royal Veterinary Forge’ over his premises. Even though Coleman’s defence argued that no offence against the act had been committed, he was prosecuted and fined 2s, with £2 costs. The magistrates concluded that they did not inflict a heavy fine as the Robinson case had only been reported in Ireland the previous month.²⁹⁵ In a similar 1898 case, the fines were increased but never came near the proposed £20. James Whelan, trading as Whelan Brothers, 25 Merrion Row, was fined 5s with £5 costs for posting the description ‘Veterinary Farriers’ over his business. Although Whelan claimed that the late Professor Hugh Ferguson had acknowledged his competency as a farrier, the magistrate stated that this was not the matter at hand and handed down the prosecution as he had ‘got a formal notice some months ago to discontinue this thing.’²⁹⁶

Summary

Veterinary reformers spent much of the nineteenth-century attempting to enhance the status and competency of the profession and to eliminate the unqualified opposition. The early decades saw pressure applied on Edward Coleman by existing practitioners, to reform his London school, especially as there was a complete absence of vets on the examining committee and no instruction on the diseases of non-equines. The establishment of William Dick’s Edinburgh school provided an alternative for prospective students and newly published veterinary periodicals a medium of criticism of Coleman. The Charter of 1844 gave the profession formal recognition, with the foundation of the RCVS. However, it did not make it unlawful for unqualified individuals to practice the veterinary art. Its formulation also caused a spat with the Edinburgh College, whose graduates were not bound to take the RCVS examination, resulting in what many perceived as a two-tier profession. In fact, practicing the veterinary art was viewed more as a trade than a profession, the inadequacies of the London College had produced many poorly educated individuals of low social standing. It was this low status, especially compared to the sister profession, medicine, which

²⁹⁴ *Morning Post*, 16 February 1892.

²⁹⁵ Anon, ‘Prosecutions by the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons’ in *Veterinarian*, vol. 65, no. 11 (November, 1892), pp 784-5.

²⁹⁶ *Weekly Irish Times*, 6 August 1898.

drove veterinary reform during the second half of the century. The social status of Irish based vets was generally higher than their British counterparts. Only monied families could send their sons to London to train as vets and, in turn, only those who could afford to do so left Britain to establish a practice in Ireland.

With the failure in 1866 of a Veterinary Medical Bill proposing to limit the title of veterinary surgeon to RCVS members, it became apparent that low entry levels, an undemanding curriculum, and low requirements for graduation, were unsustainable at the veterinary colleges. The following decades saw the introduction of uniform preliminary examinations, for which prospective Irish students studied before leaving home, and final examinations that contained written, practical and oral elements. A longer course also meant that those of restricted means could not afford the college fees, meaning that the social status of the vet slowly began to rise. This period also saw new opportunities for Irish veterinary surgeons in state employment. A Veterinary Department was established, which occasionally employed extra vets on major outbreaks of disease. More importantly, the 1878 Contagious Diseases (Animals) Act required all local authorities to appoint a qualified vet as a disease inspector. However, several local councils attempted to employ unqualified individuals, as it was a cheaper option. The following year saw the spat between the RCVS and the Edinburgh college resolved. With a united profession, the Veterinary Surgeons Act, 1881, finally afforded the profession legal recognition and allowed those in *bona fide* veterinary practice for at least five years to use the veterinary surgeon title. The second half of the nineteenth-century saw the organisation of Irish veterinary societies, usually short lived, with meetings poorly attended. Evidence suggests that the relationships between members were not always congenial, and that vets were generally slow to support measures that helped fellow members of the profession who were in need.

Chapter 4: Nineteenth-century Veterinary Education in Ireland

The previous chapter has discussed the various actions taken by veterinary reformers during the nineteenth-century to improve the competency and status of the veterinary surgeon. Perhaps the most important component of this professionalisation was an improvement in educational standards at the British veterinary colleges. While educational reform was taking place in Britain there was a continuous desire to introduce formal veterinary education to Ireland. Chapter four will examine the various attempts to do so and review the reasons why they repeatedly failed until a college was eventually established in the 1890s. It will also discuss the scope of veterinary instruction delivered to the public, either through public lectures or as part of the curriculum at various institutions that offered courses in general agriculture.

The era of Thomas Peall

Although the Dublin Society is universally credited with the first attempt to introduce veterinary instruction to Ireland in 1800, as discussed below, evidence suggests that this accolade should go to John Feron, a French Royalist refugee who assisted at the LVC from 1789 to 1793. Feron left London and travelled, via Dublin, to Edinburgh, where he established a forge and delivered two short farriery courses. During 1797, he published a comprehensive prospectus of a proposed institution, where he intended to deliver veterinary education in courses ranging in duration from one month to three years.¹ Although no account of Feron's Dublin visit exists, he later wrote that he made the journey to Ireland and Scotland to observe the state of their rural economies and 'whatever has any relation to the principle objects of my favourite profession.' This suggests that his subsequent endeavours in Edinburgh may have been initially planned for Dublin, a city whose economy grew rapidly during the eighteenth-century. The 'Second City of the Empire', with a large equine population, was surely an attractive location to promote the veterinary art.² In any case, Feron appeared to receive little

¹ See John Feron, *Veterinary institution* (Edinburgh, 1797). The text of *Veterinary institution* is reproduced in *Vet. Hist.*, new ser., vol. 16, no. 1 (August, 2011), pp 32-5.

² For an account of the eighteenth-century economic growth of Dublin see Christine Casey, *Dublin* (London, 2005), p. 44.

support in Scotland, returning to London, where he took the LVC diploma, before enlisting as an Army vet.³

In the late eighteenth-century the Dublin Society was a prime example of ‘Enlightenment’ thinking amongst the Anglo-Irish Establishment.⁴ It certainly took an enlightened attitude to its plans to introduce veterinary education to Ireland, influenced not by the English model but by the French schools where ‘the most able physicians, anatomists, and philosophers have been commanded and amply pensioned by government, to make themselves masters of the art, and whose labours and observations are printed.’⁵ However, it’s veterinary professors, Thomas Peall and George Watts were not alumni of the French schools but of Edward Coleman’s troubled London institution. Nevertheless, in the early part of the nineteenth-century, Thomas Peall became Ireland’s foremost veterinary educator. For more than a quarter of a century he was associated with a variety of public lecturing initiatives that never coalesced into a formal school, his greatest aspiration. The story of the Dublin Society’s failed attempt to introduce formal veterinary education to Ireland has been comprehensively recorded elsewhere and does not need to be repeated in detail. In short, its plan to educate young men as veterinary surgeons was halted, with the withdrawal of a pivotal Parliamentary grant. Nevertheless, the Society retained Peall, on a part time basis, to deliver an annual course of public veterinary lectures. Peall subsequently joined the army in 1806 but regularly returned to Dublin to deliver his lectures, predominantly on the diseases and care of horses. In the years before his death a small number of lectures were also delivered on sheep ailments.⁶ Peall took his own life in 1825, following months of mental struggles, probably exacerbated by an impending court case taken against him by one of the porters of the RDS for an alleged assault.⁷

Thomas Peall’s years with the Dublin Society were a source of great personal disappointment, especially as he never got the chance to deliver veterinary education

³ Alastair A. MacDonald, Colin M. Warwick and W. T. Johnston, ‘John Feron and his ‘Address’ on a veterinary institution in Edinburgh’ in *Vet. Hist.*, new ser., vol. 16, no. 1 (August, 2011), pp 43-52.

⁴ Kevin Bright, *The Royal Dublin Society, 1815-45* (Dublin, 2004), p. 4

⁵ *Proc. Dublin Soc.*, xxxvi, 30 January 1800.

⁶ Hartigan and Evans, ‘Veterinary Institute’, pp 9-17; Bright, *The Royal Dublin Society*, p. 47; Henry F. Berry, *A history of the Royal Dublin Society* (London, 1915), pp 338-40; P. A. McGeady, ‘The Irish Veterinary College’ in James Meenan and Desmond Clarke (eds), *The Royal Dublin Society: 1731-1981* (Dublin, 1981), pp 132-5.

⁷ *Dublin Morning Register*, 20 May, *Dublin Evening Post*, 21 May, *Dublin Mercantile Advertiser*, 23 May 1825.

to young men who wished to become veterinary surgeons. There is no doubt he would have excelled at the task. On his death, his public physiology lectures were described as ‘not inferior in matter...superior in diction and arrangement’ to those of any of Dublin’s medical professors.⁸ Furthermore, his obligations to the Society hindered both his private and military careers. Peall claimed that he lost several hundred pounds when relinquishing his Bristol establishment in order to forward the Society’s views, which were never achieved. Besides, the Professorship hindered his military ambitions, being unable to partake in active service in the Peninsular War or at Waterloo. It appears Peall eventually wanted to break his association with the Society, the latter determined to retain his services, but only on a part-time basis. In 1815, he failed to secure a Government appointment, even though the Lord Lieutenant was also the Society’s President. It had taken several requests to secure a Society recommendation.⁹ In 1817, when placed on half-pay from the army, Peall requested to be paid in line with the £300 salaries of the other professors.¹⁰ In lieu of his abilities and long service the Society agreed to raise his salary from £160 to £200 per annum, but on the condition that he would now deliver lectures biannually.¹¹

Peall’s contribution to veterinary education was not confined to his efforts with the Dublin Society. During his lifetime substantial courses of instruction were also delivered to the public in both Belfast and Cork. However, his first lectures outside of Dublin were delivered in 1801 to the Farming Society of Ireland (FSI) at the Ballinasloe Fair, one on the anatomy of the horse’s foot and shoeing, the other concerning general stable management.¹² The FSI was established in 1800, under the patronage of the Dublin Society, when the latter turned its attention to the foundation of schools of science, including the veterinary school.¹³ Its initial objective was the improvement of livestock, primarily through the presentation of prizes at the October fair at Ballinasloe. Thereafter, it hoped to extend its plans to ‘other interesting Objects of Agriculture.’¹⁴ Although Walter Wade, the botanist and honorary member of the FSI, argued that every

⁸ *Dublin Evening Post*, 21 May 1825.

⁹ *Proc. Dublin Soc.*, li, 9 March, 8 June 1815.

¹⁰ Great Britain War Office, *List of officers of the Army and Royal Marines on full and half pay* (London, 1821), p. 328; Dublin Society, *The Dublin Society’s accounts with the public* (Dublin, 1818), p. 7.

¹¹ *Proc. Dublin Soc.*, liv, 11 June 1818, lv, 12 November 1818.

¹² *Dublin Journal*, 26, 29 September, 17 October 1801.

¹³ Simon Curran, ‘The Society’s role in agriculture since 1800’ in James Meenan and Desmond Clarke (eds), *The Royal Dublin Society: 1731-1981* (Dublin, 1981), pp 88-9.

¹⁴ *Dublin Journal*, 25 March 1800.

person intending to raise healthy animals should be acquainted with the veterinary art, the FSI thereafter paid little attention to promoting scientific veterinary treatments.¹⁵ The Society was dissolved in 1828, its activities re-absorbed by the RDS. A contemporary account suggested that the Society made some efforts to encourage practical husbandry, but none to promote abstract scientific knowledge.¹⁶

Whilst the majority of Peall's public veterinary lectures were organised under the auspices of a learned or agricultural society, in 1808 he privately organised a course of lectures at the Exchange-Rooms, Belfast. He promised to deliver the course, costing a guinea, in a popular, and plain manner, comprehensible to a general audience. The *Belfast Commercial Chronicle* urged all horse-owners, who continuously complained about their dependence on ignorant grooms, to embrace the opportunity of acquiring information on such a 'desirable' subject.¹⁷ The primitive state of the veterinary art in Ireland was highlighted when a correspondent to the *Belfast News-Letter* suggested that the readership might be unfamiliar with the term 'veterinary lectures.' He explained that it meant nothing more than lectures on the structure and disease of the horse by a farrier or one skilled in the diseases of that animal.¹⁸ On 20 May, a further course of evening lectures commenced at the request of several gentlemen whom the earlier time did not suit.¹⁹ Peall's sojourn in Belfast conflicted with his commitments to the Dublin Society, which complained that he had as yet set no date for his Dublin lectures. Hitherto, Peall alone had decided on the dates. The Society immediately resolved that its Committee of Agriculture would now assume that responsibility.²⁰

Outside of the Dublin Peall's most comprehensive delivery of veterinary instruction came at the Royal Cork Institution. The RCI had evolved from a series of scientific lectures delivered by Rev. Thomas Dix Hincks, who regarded the Dublin Society and London's Royal Institution as 'models.'²¹ Incorporated by Royal Charter in 1807, it merged with the Cork Farming Society in 1810, thereby broadening its social

¹⁵ Walter Wade, *Sketch of lectures on artificial or sown grasses* (Dublin, 1808), p. vii.

¹⁶ M. D., 'Notes on Irish farming societies' in *The Gardeners' Chronicle and Agricultural Gazette* (10 January, 1863), p. 36.

¹⁷ *Belfast Commercial Chronicle*, 25 April 1808.

¹⁸ *Belfast News-Letter*, 29 April 1808.

¹⁹ *Belfast News-Letter*, 20 May 1808.

²⁰ *Proc. Dublin Soc.*, xlv, 2, 16 June 1808.

²¹ Thomas D. Hincks, 'A letter on the Cork Institution' in *Transactions of the Dublin Society*, vol. 5 (1806), p. 443.

base.²² The primary objective of the RCI was the general improvements of the arts, manufacturing and agriculture.²³ Government grants allowed for the appointment of four professors, including John Milner Barry, a medical doctor, as Professor of Agriculture.²⁴ Despite adequate publicity, his agricultural lectures were poorly attended.²⁵ In 1826, William Clear, a founding member, maintained that RCI lectures were generally attended by city dwellers that had little interest in agriculture. Furthermore, local practical agriculturists tended to place little faith in ‘theoretical systems.’²⁶ The RCI discontinued its promotion of agriculture in 1828.²⁷ With such poor interest in scientific agricultural principles, it is unlikely that the RCI ever intended to promote veterinary science. However, that opportunity arose when Thomas Peall was quartered at Ballincollig barracks. He delivered his first lecture to the Institution during 1810. The RCI’s report for that year recorded that the Professor had lectured, with satisfaction ‘to many respectable and scientific gentlemen, as well as Farriers and Grooms.’²⁸ The scope and content of this lecture or series of lectures is unclear. However, Peall returned in 1812 to deliver a course of twelve lectures. A published syllabus highlighted the prominence that veterinary science afforded to the horse. The outline of the first lecture suggested that Peall endeavoured to wean his audience off traditional practices and a dependency on time-honoured literature by outlining the improvements that had taken place since the establishment of the LVC.²⁹ Lectures were

²² See David Dickson, *Old world colony: Cork and south Munster, 1630-1830* (Cork, 2005), pp 289-90. Dickson states that the Cork Farming Society began as the Society for the Encouragement of Agriculture, Planting, Manufactures and Useful Arts and cites *Resolution of the Society for the Encouragement of Agriculture, Planting, Manufactures and Useful Arts, 10 September 1789* (Cork, 1789). See also Horatio Townsend, *Statistical survey of the county of Cork* (Dublin, 1810), pp 16, 730; Anon, *Report of the Farming Society of the County of Cork* (Cork, 1809), p. 6.

²³ Cork Institution, *The charter and bye-laws of the Cork Institution* (Cork, 1808), p. 2.

²⁴ Margaret MacSweeney and Joseph Reilly, ‘The Royal Cork Institution, Part I: 1803-1826’ in *Cork Hist. Soc. Jn.*, ser. 2, vol. 62, no. 195 (1957), pp 25-7; Anon, ‘Account of the Cork Institution’ in *The Athenaeum*, vol. 1, no. 5 (1 May, 1807), pp 465-6; S. F. Pettit, ‘The Royal Cork Institution: A reflection of the cultural life of a city’ in *Cork Hist. Soc. Jn.*, ser. 2, 81 (1976), p. 80.

²⁵ See John Milner Barry, *Syllabus or abstract of lectures and rural affairs: delivered in the Cork Institution, in the spring of 1809* (Cork, 1809); *Cork Mercantile Chronicle*, 22 October 1810.

²⁶ *Appendix to the Seventh Report of the Commissioners of Irish Education Inquiry 1827 (Royal Cork Institution)*, pp 18-9, H.C. 1827 (443) xxiii, 501. Clear described Bedford as ‘particularly attached to agriculture.’

²⁷ Margaret MacSweeney and Joseph Reilly, ‘The Royal Cork Institution. Part II: 1826-1849’ in *Cork Hist. Soc. Jn.*, vol. 62, no. 196 (1957), pp 79-80.

²⁸ Kieran McCarthy, *Royal Cork Institution: Pioneer of education* (Cork, 2010), p. 43; Pettit, op cit.

²⁹ Thomas Peall, *Cork Institution: Syllabus of a course of veterinary lectures* (Cork, 1812).

held on Mondays at one o'clock.³⁰ George Tisdall, Barry's successor as Professor of Agriculture, subsequently noted that 'a good many attended them.'³¹

As part of the scheme to encourage scientific agriculture the RCI published twenty-five issues of the *Munster Farmer's Magazine*, irregularly, between April 1811 and April 1820.³² After initial success the journal was eventually discontinued because of poor sales and the 'want of a sufficient supply of new material.'³³ The first issue announced that 'the improvement of agriculture... as of every other art must depend on the diffusion and application of science.'³⁴ Consistent with contemporary publications, veterinary science content was sourced from British journals, veterinary treatises and original correspondence. The latter dominated by discussion on murrain and cattle 'Blown with Clover.'³⁵ Although there is no direct evidence that the RCI was involved, Peall's most acclaimed publication, *Observations*, was published in Cork in 1814.³⁶ The Dublin Society, as his employer, was best placed to collaborate on any publication of their Professor. However, it appears a certain tension existed between the parties at that time. In January 1809, Peall informed the Society of his intention to publish a book on common equine diseases, intended for those who could not attend his lectures. His communication also highlighted his frustration that the Society had not advanced the plans for a veterinary institution. On receiving a copy of the book's prospectus, the Society initially appears to have been disinterested, referring to the Library Committee to consider whether or not it should subscribe to six copies.³⁷ Eventually, twenty-five guineas were subscribed for a copy, in the confidence that it would lead to the wider

³⁰ *Cork Mercantile Chronicle*, 28 August 1812.

³¹ *Seventh report of the commissioners of Irish Education Inquiry 1827*, p. 29, H.C. 1827 (443) xxiii, 501.

³² An incomplete and sometimes improperly bound set survives at Special Collections, UCC.

³³ Anon, 'Address to the public' in *Munster Farmer's Magazine*, vol. 2, no. 7 (October, 1812), p. 274; *Southern Reporter and Cork Commercial Courier*, 13 September 1825.

³⁴ Anon, 'Introduction' in *Munster Farmer's Magazine*, vol. 1, no. 1 (April, 1811), pp i-v.

³⁵ For example, see William Allen, 'On the best mode of relieving cattle blown with clover' in *Munster Farmer's Magazine*, vol. 3, no. 9 (June, 1813), pp 46-8. Allen of Greenfield, Kanturk, described experiments he performed on a dead cow to prove that, in relieving bloating, stabbing the animal's side might be more humane than introducing a stomach tube through its mouth. He used a slender osier (willow shoot) to trace the tube's path to the cow's stomach.

³⁶ Thomas Peall, *Observations, chiefly practical, on some of the more common diseases of the horse* (Cork, 1814). The title page merely listed the author as an 'Honorary Member of the Cork Institution.'

³⁷ *Proc. Dublin Soc.*, xlix, 8 April 1813.

diffusion of the contents of the lectures and ‘to confirm the well merited reputation of their professor.’³⁸ The book was for general sale at one guinea.³⁹

The review of *Observations* in the *Munster Farmer’s Magazine* described it as ‘sufficiently popular, and at the same time deserving the notice of the Medical and Philosophical world.’⁴⁰ Despite Peall’s association with the RCI it appears the Institution’s library did not hold a copy, as it is not listed in a contemporary library catalogue.⁴¹ A copy of the work was held, however, at the Cork Subscription Library in 1820.⁴² *Observations* highlighted Peall’s disapproval of barbaric practices.⁴³ According to Pat Hartigan his mission was to ‘wean the well-to-do horse-owners away from the preposterous methods of treatment applied by the farriers.’⁴⁴ The *Philosophical Magazine* gave the work a positive review, stating that it ‘cannot fail to prove acceptable, not only to professional people but to every gentleman who would rescue his cattle from the destructive empiricism of grooms and common farriers.’⁴⁵ Smithcors argued that Peall and his publications were little known because of Ireland’s remoteness from Britain ‘both physically and philosophically.’⁴⁶ Evidence suggests otherwise. Peall’s work was well received by contemporary veterinary writers in Britain. Delabere Blaine described *Observations* as ‘a monument to his (Peall’s) industry, zeal and ability...at once, intelligible to the meanest capacity and yet worthy the full attention of the most philosophic.’⁴⁷ William Percival believed *Observations* was ‘unrivalled by any book of the kind’ and Peall had ‘no competitor as a veterinary

³⁸ *Proc. Dublin Soc.*, xlix, 17 June 1813.

³⁹ *Freeman’s Journal*, 27 June 1814.

⁴⁰ Anon, ‘Disease and treatment of horses’ in *Munster Farmer’s Magazine*, vol. 3, no. 12 (March, 1814), pp 306-11.

⁴¹ Royal Cork Institution, *Catalogue of books in the library, 1823* (Cork, 1824).

⁴² James Coleman, ‘The Cork library in 1801 and 1820’, in *Cork Hist. Soc. Jn.*, ser. 2, vol. 11, no. 66 (1905), p. 87.

⁴³ For example, as a result of roweling, which is inserting a piece of leather or other material under a horse’s skin to promote drainage of an infection, Peall (p. 83) saw ‘most dreadful mischief arise, and in two cases, mortification and death were the consequence’; See also J. O. Broberg, ‘Rowels and setons, ancient therapies: Illogical and logical logic!’ in *Vet. Hist.*, new ser., vol. 13, no. 3 (2006), pp 199-207.

⁴⁴ P. J. Hartigan, ‘Purgation and propaganda: Thomas Peall on the common diseases of the horse’ in W. E. Vaughan (ed.), *The Old Library, Trinity College Dublin, 1712-2012* (Dublin, 2012), p. 185.

⁴⁵ Anon, ‘Notices respecting new books’ in *Philosophical Magazine*, ser. 1, vol. 45 (Jan-June, 1815), pp 366-7.

⁴⁶ Smithcors, *Evolution*, p. 356.

⁴⁷ Delabere Blaine, *Outlines of the veterinary art* (5th ed., London, 1841), p. 14.

pathologist.⁴⁸ The book also received recognition on the continent where in 1820 Johann L. Wallis, a German doctor, translated the work into German.⁴⁹

Other options were available for veterinary education, through public lectures, during Peall's time. Around the time of Peall's death, Matthew Small (London, 1829) delivered veterinary instruction in Belfast to a predominantly horse owning audience. Small initially worked in Scotland, where he received recognition for performing a successful tracheotomy on a horse at Perth. The newspapers reported that he 'cut the creature's throat.'⁵⁰ On his arrival in Belfast, as veterinary surgeon to Dowdall's Horse Bazaar, the city's *News-Letter* described the vet as of 'distinguished eminence.'⁵¹ In December of that year Small announced a course of popular lectures on the diseases of horses, cattle and dogs that would be 'particularly interesting to Sportsmen and Amateur Students.' He determined to convey to up to thirty lectures at the Bazaar between January and April, with content extending from determining the age of a horse to the manner of performing veterinary operations.⁵² The *Belfast Commercial Chronicle* highlighted the importance of the subject and expected a large audience as Small's abilities were 'so generally known and appreciated, as to render unnecessary all eulogy.'⁵³ The *Northern Whig* offered similar sentiments and suggested that medical men should attend, as veterinary knowledge would be of great benefit to those who intended practicing in the country. The writer hoped that Small might receive enough support as would persuade him to continue the lectures annually.⁵⁴

According to newspaper reports Small delivered his first lecture in a distinct and able manner. Despite severe weather the attendance was 'most respectable' with some gentleman travelling from a considerable distance into the country. Like that of Peall, Small's mission was to discourage horse-owners from using common farriers and horse-doctors to provide veterinary care to their animals. It is evident from the content of his introductory lecture that the course was aimed at a horse owning fraternity as he

⁴⁸ William Percivall, *A series of elementary lectures on the veterinary art* (London, 1823), pp xxi, 203.

⁴⁹ Thomas von Pael, *Praktische beobachtungen über einige der gewöhnlicheren pferdekrankheiten, übers J. L. von Wallis* (Hannover, 1820).

⁵⁰ See *Caledonian Mercury*, 27 July, *Belfast News-Letter* 31 July, *Bell's Life in London and Sporting Chronicle* 2 August 1829.

⁵¹ *Belfast News-Letter*, 6 April, 1832, 7, 10 April, 8 May 1835.

⁵² *Northern Whig*, 7, 31 December, *Belfast News-Letter* 11 December, *Belfast Commercial Chronicle*, 16 December 1835.

⁵³ *Belfast Commercial Chronicle*, 13 January 1836.

⁵⁴ *Northern Whig*, 7 December 1835.

highlighted the importance of racehorses and hunters to the country and the ignorance that existed in treating equine diseases. He argued that the involvement of ‘men of education’ in establishing veterinary schools in both England and Scotland had seen great advances in the veterinary art, an art which had hitherto never been taught in Ireland. To highlight the ignorance of cattle doctors and farriers he read extracts from previous authors on farriery and insisted that modern works on veterinary medicine now contained ‘accurate and scientific’ prescriptions. He promised his audience that his lectures would help them become more acquainted with horse diseases and guard them against the impositions of ignorance and quackery.⁵⁵ Despite being well-regarded Small appears to have met with little personal success in the aftermath of the Belfast lectures. It was not Small, but William M’Kenna (London, 1835), that acquired the Horse Bazaar when Dowdall announced he was moving to London.⁵⁶ Less than a year after the lectures Small had removed from Belfast to Newry, where he intended to remain if he met with encouragement.⁵⁷

Plans for the delivery of veterinary education were also intimated by two unqualified individuals. However, there is no evidence to suggest that those plans were acted upon. In 1817, when J Wilkinson established a practice at Liffey Street, Dublin, he proposed to deliver lectures on the ‘Structure and Economy’ of the horse.⁵⁸ As there is no evidence to suggest that such lectures were subsequently delivered, perhaps Wilkinson was attempting to gain the attention of the horse-owning fraternity. He subsequently practiced at Kildare Street ‘opposite the club house’ in 1820.⁵⁹ The club in question was the Kildare-Street Club, a gentleman’s club described as ‘a favourite resort of the Irish aristocracy.’⁶⁰ Kildare Street was also home of the RDS, so Wilkinson was in a prime position to exploit the veterinary needs of wealthy horse-owning gentlemen. He advertised a substantial list of ‘approved medicines’, prepared for gentlemen returning to the country, and announced the imminent publication of *Addition of Stable Guide*. Wilkinson placed no further newspaper notices from December 1822 on announcing that he was to open a larger establishment comprising

⁵⁵ *Northern Whig*, 14, 18 January, *Belfast Commercial Chronicle*, 20 January 1836.

⁵⁶ *Northern Whig*, 18 July, 12 September 1837.

⁵⁷ *Newry Examiner and Louth Advertiser*, 16 December 1837.

⁵⁸ *Freeman’s Journal*, 8 September 1817.

⁵⁹ *Saunders’s News-Letter*, 31 July 1818, 22 September, 29 December 1819.

⁶⁰ William Curry, *The new picture of Dublin* (Dublin, 1835), p. 319

a forge.⁶¹ In 1824 John Irwin, following James Riley's protests against unqualified practice, took the title 'Professor on Veterinary Art' and renamed his Belfast premises the 'Veterinary School.' Maybe Irwin was again attempting to impress potential clients, or perhaps he vainly saw himself as a teacher or advisor. He regularly reproduced a testimonial signed by Major Kean, of the 7th Hussars, stating that he had prevented glanders from spreading through that regiment's troop horses some years earlier in Dundalk.⁶² Again there are no conspicuous accounts that Irwin delivered veterinary instruction. Nevertheless, one cannot discount that either Wilkinson or Irwin instructed local horse-owners, grooms, farriers or blacksmiths on the care and diseases of horses.

During the seven decades following Peall's death, in 1825, several unsuccessful attempts were made to introduce formal veterinary education to Ireland, sometimes with and sometimes without the RDS. Within days of Peall's death, both Richard Johnston and William Stockley (London, 1794), attracted by the prospect of receiving a salary to deliver public lectures on a part-time basis, placed newspaper notices offering their services to the Society as his replacement. Johnston, Veterinary Surgeon to the Lord Lieutenant, maintained that his extensive Dublin practice and public approval made him the ideal candidate.⁶³ Stockley, formerly Assistant Professor at the LVC, offered his services on the strength of almost twenty-five years in the Royal Artillery.⁶⁴ There is no evidence that the RDS acknowledged the approaches. On 2 June 1825, it commissioned a report into what steps might be taken in consequence of Peall's death.⁶⁵ The subsequent report proposed to place the financial burden of the veterinary department solely with a veterinary Professor, who would be paid an annual salary of £100 to deliver lectures on the horse, and also on cattle and sheep if so desired by the Society. Although the Society proposed to regulate the department, the Professor would be entitled to all earnings, including those from the forge and the instruction of pupils and farriers. The necessary infrastructure would be provided but thereafter be maintained at the Professor's expense.⁶⁶

⁶¹ *Saunders's News-Letter*, 20 December 1820, 2 March 1821, 10 December 1822.

⁶² *Belfast News-Letter* 10 November 1826.

⁶³ *Dublin Morning Register*, 24 May 1825; *Freeman's Journal*, 23 May 1805.

⁶⁴ *Freeman's Journal*, 23 May 1825, *Dublin Evening Mail*, 15 April 1831.

⁶⁵ *Proceedings of the Royal Dublin Society* (Hereafter cited as *Proc. Roy. Dublin Soc.*), lxi, 2 June 1825.

⁶⁶ *Proc. Roy. Dublin Soc.*, lxi, 23 June 1825.

These proposals were consistent with advice from Edward Coleman that any future plans for a veterinary establishment should be carefully examined, as his London school could not meet its expenses through the members' annual subscription. Therefore, it would be requisite of a Professor to be engaged in private practice and be allowed to charge for professional treatment.⁶⁷ A year later the Society reluctantly agreed to a recommendation of the veterinary committee that the Professorship be kept vacant for a further two years. The savings realised would then be used to complete the establishment. Nevertheless, during the following weeks the Committee of Economy was asked to report whether Society funds would allow for an annual expenditure of £260 to provide a hospital for diseased cattle. Furthermore, the resolution on postponing plans for a professorship and veterinary institution was rescinded. Immediate consideration was given to filling the Professorship but five years lapsed before the issue was re-visited.⁶⁸ Those promoting the veterinary profession were critical that the RDS had hitherto failed to establish a veterinary school. In 1830, at the second annual meeting of veterinary practitioners, the Chairman, William Percival, remarked that whilst Scotland afforded great encouragement to the veterinary art, Ireland had actually 'abolished' its veterinary school. He found this 'curious and inexplicable' as Ireland had a far greater number of hunting and racing horses of a more valuable description than their Scottish counterparts. He believed the RDS received an annual grant of £300 for the upkeep of a veterinary Professorship yet 'annihilated' that appointment, spending the money elsewhere. He suggested that the circumstances should be investigated.⁶⁹

In December 1830, the Agricultural Committee of the RDS proposed to hold an exhibition of livestock and horses during the spring of the following year.⁷⁰ The show was held at the Society's premises in Kildare Street from 26 to 28 April and was deemed a success, especially as a social event. Although the number of cattle exhibited was small their quality was considered excellent.⁷¹ The euphoria surrounding the gathering rekindled the Society's desire for a veterinary school. The Committees of Agriculture proposed that the recommendations of the 1825 report be adapted, with two significant

⁶⁷ *Proc. Roy. Dublin Soc.*, lxi, 3, 14 July 1825.

⁶⁸ *Proc. Roy. Dublin Soc.*, lxii, 11 May, 8, 15, 22 June 1826.

⁶⁹ Anon, 'Second annual meeting of veterinary practitioners' in *Veterinarian*, vol. 3, no. 5 (May, 1830), p. 279.

⁷⁰ *Proc. Roy. Dublin Soc.*, lxvii, 2 December 1830.

⁷¹ *Dublin Morning Register*, 27 April, *Dublin Evening Packet*, 28 April 1831.

amendments. The professorship would now carry an annual salary of £200 on the condition that the professor maintained, at his own risk and for his own profit, a hospital for invalid horses and other livestock. However, no portion of the Society's premises, except the lecture theatre, should be used for a veterinary institution. Although the Society agreed to the revival of the professorship in connection with a veterinary school, no further action was taken.⁷² The latest proposals, offering an annual salary to deliver part-time lectures along with the opportunity of private practice with an enhanced reputation, again aroused the interest of a number of veterinary surgeons. George Watts Jnr., based in Brighton with the 2nd Dragoons, indicated that he would resign his army commission and devote himself to private practice and the interests of the Society if requested. He based his suitability on experience gained in the army and at his father's extensive practice.⁷³ William Stockley repeated the interest he had shown in 1825.⁷⁴ A third army veterinarian, John Wilkinson, also expressed an interest.⁷⁵ However, plans for a veterinary school were now shelved for almost two decades. In 1833 the RDS even considered exchanging the anatomical preparations of the veterinary museum for items, perceived as more valuable, in the Royal College of Surgeons. The museum was ultimately left intact.⁷⁶ In 1850 prominent Dublin veterinarians, George Watts Jnr. and Edward Dycer, became members of the Society, though there is no evidence to suggest that either was there for any other reason than its social attractions.⁷⁷ On 3 November 1853, another motion for the establishment of a veterinary Professorship was postponed and later deferred.⁷⁸ Five years later, savings of £120, made since the death of Professor Davy, late Professor of Agricultural Chemistry, were again proposed towards establishing a veterinary professorship. This idea was ultimately rejected and the money allocated to renovating the Agricultural Museum.⁷⁹

⁷² *Proc. Roy. Dublin Soc.*, lxvii, 17, 24 February, 24 March, 28 April 1831.

⁷³ *Dublin Evening Packet*, 7 April 1831.

⁷⁴ *Dublin Evening Mail*, 15 April 1831.

⁷⁵ *Freeman's Journal*, 3 May 1831; *Dublin Evening Mail*, 4 May 1821.

⁷⁶ *Proc. Roy. Dublin Soc.*, lxix, 4 April, 16 May 1833.

⁷⁷ *Proc. Roy. Dublin Soc.*, lxxxvi, 25 April, lxxxvii, 14 November 1850.

⁷⁸ *Proc. Roy. Dublin Soc.*, xc, 3 November 1853.

⁷⁹ *Proc. Roy. Dublin Soc.*, xcv, 5 July, 4 November 1858.

Hugh Ferguson: An independent call for formal veterinary education

For the first four decades of the nineteenth-century any plans to introduce formal training for veterinary surgeons to Ireland had remained the preserve of the RDS. The idea was now being mooted by outsiders, the first of whom was Hugh Ferguson, a Dublin born vet, who graduated from London in 1836. Three years later he established his 'Veterinary Institution' at 26 Denzille Street. Ferguson claimed to be a former student of the Alfort Veterinary School, Paris, and to have spent time in London with William Youatt. As a result, he proposed to prescribe for all domestic animals at his Dublin practice. Furthermore, he claimed honorary membership of the Royal Veterinary Schools of Lyons and Toulouse, and membership of the Veterinary Medical Societies of London and Paris.⁸⁰ His credentials did not rest with training in animal medicine. He subsequently announced he had received a thorough medical education at Middlesex Hospital in London, at the *Hôtel-Dieu de Paris* and finally at the Royal College of Surgeons in Dublin.⁸¹ In November 1839, Ferguson requested permission of the RDS to deliver a course of five lectures on the horse and on the veterinary art. The Society consented and obliged with the use of its premises and the contents of the veterinary museum. The lectures, delivered in 'a clear but learned style', were attended by a cross section of the population, including several medical men. For their duration, the theatre was apparently crowded to excess, and five more lectures were therefore subsequently added.⁸²

Association with the RDS offered Ferguson professional advantage, so on 14 May he presented the Society with a memorial praying that he be appointed Honorary Professor of the Veterinary Art to the Society.⁸³ The matter was deferred and there is no evidence in the Society's *Proceedings* that it was subsequently re-visited. In September 1840, Ferguson attended professionally at the Ballinasloe Fair to examine horses for soundness, his conclusions guided by the principles outlined in his lectures at the RDS.⁸⁴ During the late 1830s, a cattle plague, namely Foot and Mouth Disease, spread throughout Europe, arriving in Ireland in 1840. Cattle, sheep and swine were

⁸⁰ *Saunders's News-Letter*, 28 May, *Dublin Evening Packet*, 24 August 1839.

⁸¹ *Dublin Evening Mail*, 11 July 1841; *Freeman's Journal*, 3 July 1850.

⁸² *Proc. Roy. Dublin Soc.*, lxxvi, Council, 14 November, 19 December 1839, 19 March 1840; *Dublin Evening Mail*, 22 January 1840; *Dublin Evening Packet*, 6 February 1840.

⁸³ *Proc. Roy. Dublin Soc.*, lxxvi, Council, 14 May 1840.

⁸⁴ *Dublin Evening Mail*, 28 September 1840.

affected.⁸⁵ Ferguson delivered a lecture on this epizootic during the Society's cattle show on 21 April 1841. He described encountering the disease first-hand in 1836 while 'attached to one of the continental veterinary schools', presumably Alfort. He claimed a number of successful experiments on inoculating healthy stock by taking the discharge from a sore of an infected animal with a sponge and applying it to the abraded skin of the animal he wished to inoculate. Ferguson's primary reason for delivering the lecture was to 'excite the attention' of those interested in the welfare of farm stock and wean that herd-owners from the 'the empirical mismanagement of the ignorant cow-leech.' He concluded that such possibilities could only emanate from some society having the agricultural interests of the country as its primary object.⁸⁶

By 1842 Ferguson's Dublin establishment was expanding, with particular emphasis on equine lameness. He promised to treat his patients 'as scientifically' as at any human hospital, again highlighting his medical training.⁸⁷ During that year he delivered a lecture on another, more severe, cattle epizootic that had arrived in Ireland, resulting in mortality throughout the country. It appears the lecture was delivered, not to the RDS, but to the Royal Agricultural Society of Ireland.⁸⁸ When the lecture's substance was published in pamphlet form Ferguson dedicated the work to the members of that society. In doing so he was petitioning 'men of rank and of influence' to exert pressure on the government to establish by Royal Charter a veterinary institution or profession of which membership 'would be deemed rather an honour than a disgrace to the man of enlightened education.' This was not only an attack on his alma mater, the LVC, where he maintained 'any ignorant clodhopper, having a spare few guineas' could successfully train as a veterinary surgeon, but a call for formal veterinary education in Ireland.⁸⁹ The work was well received with the reviews in the provincial press calling for land proprietors and societies to distribute copies to tenant farmers, whose class

⁸⁵ Finlay Dun, 'On murrain, or the vesicular epizootic' in *Veterinarian*, vol. 23, no. 12 (December, 1850), pp 685-6; Anon, 'Eczema epizootic- Foot and mouth disease' in *Veterinarian*, vol. 42, no. 11 (November, 1869), p. 852.

⁸⁶ *Dublin Evening Packet and Correspondent*, 22 April 1841.

⁸⁷ *Dublin Evening Mail* 11 July 1842.

⁸⁸ Hugh Ferguson, 'A popular lecture on the prevailing epizootics among cattle in Ireland in 1842' in *Veterinarian*, vol. 15, no. 10 (October, 1842), pp 575-89. The report merely notes that the lecture was 'Delivered in Dublin.'

⁸⁹ Hugh Ferguson, *The present distemper among cattle with full directions for its treatment, also a means of rendering permanent the secretion of milk from the cow* (Dublin, 1842), pp iii-v.

suffered most from the ravages of the disease. The publishers offered a considerable reduction on the purchase of fifty copies and upwards.⁹⁰

In 1843, despite his criticism of the LVC, its Veterinary Medical Association awarded Ferguson the 'First Prize Medal' for his essay on bloodletting. The printed form was dedicated to his former teacher Charles Spooner, notwithstanding their differences 'on all subjects relating to the profession.'⁹¹ Ferguson's association with the RDS appeared to come to an end at this juncture. In March 1843 Ferguson's offer to deliver lectures on both the distemper among cattle and diseases of the horse during the Society's April cattle show was accepted, but only on the condition that he returned a horse skeleton, lent to him for anatomical demonstrations. Ferguson withdrew his offer.⁹² The following year the RDS overlooked Ferguson when it considered that it would be of 'great advantage' if lectures on the diseases of cattle were delivered 'by a person of distinguished eminence' during the spring show. To that end they contacted Professor Dick of Edinburgh who agreed to their request.⁹³ However, there is no evidence that Dick subsequently delivered the lectures.⁹⁴ In 1845, Austin Cooper Shaw (London, 1843), a Dublin born army veterinarian, received permission to deliver a course of lectures on horse shoeing, his speciality, and on the anatomy, physiology and pathology of the horse, sheep and dog.⁹⁵

Ferguson then turned his attention to the Agricultural Improvement Society, established in 1841 and modelled on the Highland Society and the Royal Agricultural Society of England. Within months, with Queen Victoria as Patroness, it adopted the title Royal Agricultural Improvement Society of Ireland. On receiving a Royal Charter in 1860 it was incorporated as the Royal Agricultural Society of Ireland. The Society had close links with the RDS and was eventually absorbed by that body in 1888 because of a desire for 'one leading Agricultural Society in Ireland.'⁹⁶ Amongst the primary

⁹⁰ *Waterford Mail*, 19 October, *Enniskillen Chronicle and Erne Packet*, 3 November 1842; *Northern Whig*, 24 January 1843.

⁹¹ Ferguson, *Bloodletting as a remedy*, preface. Spooner was at that time Professor of Anatomy and Physiology at the LVC and President of the Veterinary Medical Association.

⁹² *Proc. Roy. Dublin Soc.*, lxxix, Council, 23 March, 8 April 1843.

⁹³ *Proc. Roy. Dublin Soc.*, lxxx, 7 March 1844.

⁹⁴ The newspapers subsequently reported that Professor Kane, the Society's Professor of Natural Philosophy, delivered a series of lectures on the application of science to agriculture. See *Dublin Evening Packet*, 18 April 1844.

⁹⁵ *Waterford Chronicle*, 1 February 1845. See also Austin Cooper Shaw, *Observations on the Expansion of the Foot of the Horse* (Dublin, 1848).

⁹⁶ See Thomas Carroll, 'The Royal Agricultural Society of Ireland' in William P. Coyne (ed.), *Ireland industrial and agricultural* (Dublin, 1902), pp 181-96; Anne Lane, A. E. J. Went and D. Bateson 'The

objectives of the RAISI were the establishment of an annual meeting incorporating cattle and agricultural shows, the promotion of local societies, circulation of useful and practical knowledge and the establishment of an agricultural college.⁹⁷ The RAISI recognised the efforts of Scotland's Highland Society in promoting the veterinary art and its support for Dick's College. If successful in forming an agricultural school the RAISI proposed to instruct its pupils in veterinary science, though only 'in their leisure hours.'⁹⁸ In February 1845, Hugh Ferguson informed the RAISI that he intended, if patronised by the Society, to establish an institution in Dublin, similar to Dick's Edinburgh College. He proposed to deliver lectures on the diseases and treatment of all animals that required veterinary care. The Society reserved the proposal for future consideration.⁹⁹ The following month Ferguson again forwarded proposals of 'considerable length', outlining that his institution would confer degrees similar to London and Edinburgh. He further proposed to deliver free lectures at Society meetings.¹⁰⁰ On 18 April, at a half yearly meeting of the Society, a sub-committee, formed to consider the matter, recommended that the Society should support the veterinary college and further suggested that Ferguson's application to be gratuitously appointed veterinary surgeon and lecturer to the Society be supported. After much discussion, the motion to patronise the veterinary school was carried on the understanding that the Society was not responsible for its funding or management. However, the recommendation that Ferguson would have a formal connection with the Society was rejected on the grounds of a general opposition to 'all monopolies.'¹⁰¹

Despite this setback Ferguson delivered a lecture on animal organisation and the cattle epidemic at the Society's annual show held in Ballinasloe. The talk was given in the local courthouse before a 'crowded audience.'¹⁰² During 1846 Ferguson was appointed Veterinary Surgeon in Ordinary to the Queen in Ireland and to the Lord

medals of the Royal Agricultural Improvement and the Royal Agricultural Societies of Ireland (1843-1885)' in *Occasional Papers of Numismatic Society of Ireland*, no. 19 (1978), p. 1.

⁹⁷ Edward Bullen, *Royal Agricultural Improvement Society of Ireland: Rules and regulations and primary objectives of the Society* (Dublin, 1841). The annual cattle and agricultural show proved to be a notable success. According to the *Cork Examiner*, 22 July 1842, the show held in that city was 'thronged with crowds of the curious of all classes.' Deputations also travelled from the Highland Society and the Royal Agricultural Association of England.

⁹⁸ Anon, *First report of the Royal Agricultural Improvement Society of Ireland* (Dublin, 1841), pp 8, 12.

⁹⁹ *Dublin Monitor*, 19 February 1845

¹⁰⁰ *Dublin Evening Mail*, 31 March 1845.

¹⁰¹ *Freemans Journal*, 19 April, *Belfast Commercial Chronicle*, 23 April 1845.

¹⁰² *Statesman and Dublin Christian Record*, 3 October 1845.

Lieutenant. The Denzille Street establishment was restyled the 'Royal Veterinary Institution', claiming 'the auspices and especial patronage' of the RAISI. The business subsequently re-located to Harry Street, off Grafton Street.¹⁰³ Although Ferguson continued to support the idea of an Irish veterinary college, where Irishmen could be educated for the profession without travelling to Britain, the workload of his government appointment and his private practice put paid to any designs of fronting such a project. Ferguson spent much of the 1860s curtailing the spread of cattle plague in Ireland, when he often dissented from official guidelines.¹⁰⁴ When he died in 1890, the *Irish Times* wrote that he was 'mainly instrumental in checking the spread of foot-and-mouth disease on its first appearance in Ireland.'¹⁰⁵

The incident with the RDS regarding the borrowed horse skeleton suggested that Ferguson was an impulsive, headstrong individual that had a fractious relationship with those organisations or societies with which he claimed association. In January 1853, in consequence of an undisclosed 'contemplated change of vocation' he wrote to the Council of the RCVS in London requesting that his name might be removed from its list of members.¹⁰⁶ Nevertheless, he continued to promote his Veterinary Institution, now styling himself 'Ex-Fellow' of the veterinary colleges and 'Formerly Lecturer' to the RDS and RAISI. However, within months he was again calling attention to his association with all these institutions, excepting the RDS.¹⁰⁷ Although Ferguson regularly stated that he was 'Professor of Veterinary Surgery' to the RAISI this relationship was not as formal as he claimed.¹⁰⁸ In 1856 he complained to the Society when it appointed James J. Farrall, Veterinary Surgeon to the Constabulary Force of Ireland, as veterinary surgeon to its annual cattle show. In reply, the Society's Council made it quite clear that although Ferguson held a letter from the Society that it patronised his establishment he was 'not in any way officially identified with the Society.'¹⁰⁹

¹⁰³ *Freeman's Journal*, 7 December 1850.

¹⁰⁴ See Clive A. Spinae, *Cattle plague: A history* (London, 2003), pp 191-3, 279-80.

¹⁰⁵ *Irish Times*, 8 March 1890.

¹⁰⁶ Anon, 'Proceedings of the Council of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons' in *Veterinarian*, vol. 26, no. 2 (February, 1853), p. 119.

¹⁰⁷ *Freeman's Journal*, 11 February, 12 April 1853.

¹⁰⁸ For example, see *Dublin Evening Mail*, 4 January 1856

¹⁰⁹ The incident is reported in the *Farmer's Gazette*, 6 September 1856 but is not recorded in the minutes of the RAISI's Council Meeting of 4 Sept 1856. See Royal Agricultural Society of Ireland Council minute book, for the years 30th April, 1846- 4th March 1848. The minute books of the Society survive at the RDS Library and Archives, Ballsbridge, Dublin.

It was unfortunate that Ferguson did not enter into some formal arrangement with either the RAISI or the RDS that might have fostered veterinary instruction in Ireland. Both societies appeared to have some desire to do so, though not at a level proposed by Ferguson. Ferguson, for his part, was dissatisfied with the poor training hitherto offered to those wishing to become veterinary surgeons and appeared to have a genuine desire to establish a veterinary college to rival those in London and Edinburgh. He had all the credentials to be a great veterinary teacher, having both a medical background and a continental veterinary training which afforded him knowledge of the diseases of all animals. After an early lecture to the RDS the *Dublin Evening Packet* noted his medical and veterinary abilities were evident from ‘the tone of his education, the extent of his opportunities and his peculiarly varied talents.’¹¹⁰ Ferguson’s fellow veterinarians were equally impressed by his abilities. J. F. Bickford, a Devon vet, argued that exposure to qualified veterinarians such as Ferguson could wean the farmer from using the services of the uneducated and ignorant farrier or cow-leech. Bickford was a member of a farmer’s club where the *Veterinarian* had recently been circulated, enabling his fellow members to read the transcripts of Ferguson’s lecture on cattle plague. Bickford concluded by asking ‘would not the thorough acquaintance displayed by Mr. Ferguson on the prevailing disease tend to exalt him in the estimation of owners of cattle?’¹¹¹

Veterinary College of Ireland

On 2 October 1860, a group proposing to establish an Irish veterinary school convened at the Dublin office of the *Agricultural Review* newspaper. Dr Charles A. Cameron, the ‘projector’ of the proposed institution, was appointed secretary.¹¹² Cameron was a renowned physician, chemist and authority on medical hygiene. At that time, he was editor and part proprietor of the *Agricultural Review*.¹¹³ In an editorial he stressed the need for a ‘pre-eminent’ Irish veterinary school, deeply interested in the sanitary condition of the country’s livestock, on which so much of its material prosperity was immediately dependent.¹¹⁴ Cameron’s main interest lay in public health. For many

¹¹⁰ *Dublin Evening Packet and Correspondent*, 2 November 1841.

¹¹¹ J. F. Bickford, ‘On cattle practice’ in *Veterinarian*, vol. 16, no. 1 (January, 1843), pp 13-4.

¹¹² *Evening Freeman*, 3 October 1860.

¹¹³ See Charles Alexander Cameron, *Reminiscences of Sir Charles A. Cameron, C.B* (Dublin, 1913); Lydia Carroll, *In the fever king’s preserves: Sir Charles Cameron and the Dublin slums* (Dublin, 2011).

¹¹⁴ *Weekly Agricultural Review*, 12 October 1860.

years he explored the ideas about germs and disease transmission and campaigned that the meat of diseases animals, particularly those with pleuropneumonia, should be excluded from the food chain.¹¹⁵ The college promoters highlighted that the country had nine million livestock, valued at thirty-four million pounds. The instance of disease was increasing yet there were less than thirty qualified practitioners in the country, 'leaving the most precarious of property almost entirely in unskilled hands.' The prospectus of the proposed college was the most comprehensive hitherto drawn up in the country. The college would train young men for the veterinary profession, instruct herds in the management of the more commonly occurring, but simple, diseases of stock, investigate the causes of epidemic diseases and focus on the treatment of diseases of domestic animals. The necessary infrastructure for both classroom and practical instruction would be provided and 'properly qualified' professors would administer the course. Establishing the institution would cost an estimated £5000, which might be raised from the donations of gentlemen who 'as owners of farm animals, and hunting and racing horses, are known to be deeply interested in the founding of this institution.'¹¹⁶ The *Irish Farmer's Gazette*, whilst supporting the overall concept, argued that the proposed sum would be wholly inadequate, merely purchasing a site. It cited the previous difficulties of the RDS in raising funds for such a project and argued that the RDS should be involved, possessing the 'nucleus' for such an establishment, namely buildings and a chemistry professor.¹¹⁷

John Gamgee, Principal of the Edinburgh New Veterinary College, expressed similar sentiments on funding the proposed school. Gamgee was previously an assistant to William Dick at the Edinburgh College but, frustrated with Dick's stubbornness, established his own college in the city. He was only twenty-six years old, with no funds, but his desire to promote modern, scientific veterinary training won him the support and funds of influential individuals. In 1859, two years after its establishment, Gamgee's school was recognised by the RCVS, allowing for graduates to be conferred with the diploma of that body. In 1865 the school was transferred to London, as the Royal Albert Veterinary College. Gamgee was a dedicated veterinary reformer and had a passionate interest in public health matters. As a result, he neglected his school and it

¹¹⁵ See Juliana Adelman, 'Contagious Bovine Pleuropneumonia, germs and public health in Dublin, 1862-1882' in *Social History of Medicine*, vol. 30 (2017), pp 71-91.

¹¹⁶ *Weekly Agricultural Review*, 12 October 1860.

¹¹⁷ *Irish Farmer's Gazette*, 20 October 1860.

ultimately failed in 1868.¹¹⁸ Peter Taylor, President of the Lancashire Veterinary Medical Association, believed that Gamgee should have initially established his school in Ireland. He wrote ‘I wish he had planted his vineyard in our sister isle (Ireland) in place of Edinburgh...and advanced the interest of our science, and conferred greater benefit on mankind at large.’¹¹⁹

Cameron visited the Edinburgh veterinary colleges to consider their objectives and organisation. He believed that Gamgee had ‘highly approved’ of the Irish plans.’¹²⁰ In letters to the Irish agricultural press Gamgee suggested that the establishment of an Irish School would prove far more difficult than its promoters might imagine. Although his fledgling institution drew a small number of Irish students he made it clear he supported the establishment of an Irish school. On his own admission, he had indirectly been consulted, on several occasions, on the prospect of establishing a veterinary school in Dublin. However, he remained in Edinburgh because of the city’s educational resources and to continue with his attempts at veterinary reform there. His school was established with the ‘powerful support of many influential persons’ and he felt the proposed £5000 was quite insufficient to keep a new institution alive during its formative years. Furthermore, he believed an Irish college would almost certainly be reliant on home grown pupils. He also questioned the competency of those that might ‘aspire to positions as veterinary professors.’ His school was largely dependent on English students. An Irish college would require ‘an excellence in its organisation...and staff’ to draw students from Britain. Gamgee advised that the £5,000 be used to prepare the way for an institution that would become a worthy rival to any other veterinary college. With the encouragement of the agricultural societies in Ireland the interest of the money should be used to send a number of select young men abroad on an extended course of veterinary education with a certain prize in prospect, a teaching position at the proposed institution.¹²¹ Gamgee’s proposed model had similarities with one that existed in New Zealand until the middle of the twentieth-century. Following a failed attempt to establish a school in 1904, it was decided to give bursaries to New Zealand

¹¹⁸ S. A. Hall, ‘John Gamgee and the Edinburgh New Veterinary College’ in *Vet. Rec.*, vol. 77, no. 42 (October, 1965), pp 1237-41.

¹¹⁹ Peter Taylor, ‘The inaugural address read before the Lancashire Veterinary Medical Association, on election as President’ in *The Veterinary Review and Stockowners’ Journal*, new ser., vol. 1, no. 2 (February, 1865), p. 89.

¹²⁰ *Dublin Evening Packet and Correspondent*, 6 November 1860.

¹²¹ *Irish Farmer’s Gazette*, 20 October, *Weekly Agricultural Review*, 2 November 1860.

students to attend Australian veterinary colleges at Sydney and Brisbane. In turn, these schools received financial aid from New Zealand. On returning home, graduates had the opportunity to work for Government or for ‘farmer veterinary clubs’, which offered farmers veterinary services at a discounted rate. A New Zealand school was only established in 1963 when Australia demanded larger grants to compensate for increased pressure on its teaching and building resources.¹²²

At a meeting on 3 November 1860 it was agreed that the capital needed should now be £10,000, raised in shares of £5, under the operation of the Limited Liabilities Act. Dr Cameron informed the meeting that several gentlemen had intimated becoming students of the school as soon as it opened. The committee also expressed its regret at the proposition of the RDS to form a veterinary school, which they felt was calculated to counteract their movement.¹²³ There is no doubt that the prospect of an independent veterinary school in Dublin roused the RDS into action. In November 1860, the Society ordered an inquiry and report ‘relative to the expediency of re-establishing the school of Veterinary Surgery.’ The inquiry examined the principles upon which it operated and the reason for its discontinuance.¹²⁴ Lord Dunlo, the inquiry Chairman, subsequently presented a comprehensive history of the Society’s Veterinary Institution from 1800 to 1826. His committee believed the veterinary establishment had been discontinued because of a deficiency of funds caused by the diminished grants. It suggested that, due to the increase in livestock numbers and value, partly attributed to the Society, such an establishment was more expedient now than it had been in 1826.¹²⁵ The following February the committee recommended that a veterinary school would require the usual built infrastructure and ancillaries as well as two lecturers and an anatomical demonstrator. As previously noted the RDS had the nucleus of an establishment in lecture rooms, a laboratory and a chemical Professor. A site adjoining Clare Lane, with efficient sewage and water supply, was identified for an anatomy house, forge and infirmary. However, Dunlo pointed out the Society could not afford

¹²² Edgar Burns, ‘Urged for more than fifty years: Veterinary education in New Zealand, c1900-1964’ in *History of Education Review*, vol. 38, no. 1 (2009), pp 63-77; Institute of Veterinary, Animal and Biomedical Sciences, *Massey University 50 years of veterinary education: A history, 1963-2013* (Palmerston North, 2013), pp 3-4.

¹²³ *Dublin Evening Mail, Weekly Agricultural Review*, 9 November 1860.

¹²⁴ *Proc. Roy. Dublin Soc.*, xcvi, 15 November 1860

¹²⁵ *Proc. Roy. Dublin Soc.*, xcvi, 29 November 1860.

the estimated £5,200 needed to provide extra infrastructure and a Veterinary Professor. His committee strongly recommended a general subscription to further the project.¹²⁶

The country's two agricultural papers differed greatly on how the RDS should be involved in the establishment of an Irish veterinary school. The *Irish Farmer's Gazette* regularly repeated its view that the RDS held the 'nucleus' of an establishment. Furthermore, it believed that the Society had a duty to deliver a veterinary school as it 'has had parliamentary sanction for its establishment.'¹²⁷ The *Agricultural Review*, on the other hand, felt the RDS was in no way pledged to found a veterinary college. The RDS was previously bound only to establish and support a 'veterinary institution' and to pay the salary of one veterinary professor. This did not constitute a veterinary college, the founding of which should be left to those who 'have not to contend against the evil current of a previous failure.' The Society could still play an active part in disseminating information on veterinary subjects to the public, with the possibility of inducing competent young men to enter the veterinary profession.¹²⁸ Edward Carroll, Cranmore House, Waterford, remarking on the recent developments, felt that the RDS should be dealt with as it was in 1861 and to leave its 'acts' in 1801 to history. He also suggested that the contents of Gamgee's letters would have been received by the public as an implied censure on the qualifications of the many eminent veterinary surgeons practicing in the country.¹²⁹

Another report from Duplo's committee, read at the monthly meeting of the RDS in April 1861, acknowledged for the first time the independent efforts to establish a veterinary college. The report was very complimentary towards those involved in the proposed college, acknowledging that 'the respectability of the noblemen and gentlemen... afford a guarantee that the undertaking has not been lightly entered into or without a reasonable prospect of success.' The Society resolved that, instead of attempting to rival the independent company, it would rather give encouragement to an enterprise of such national importance. It would defer its own plans until the next session, giving ample time for the independent company to develop its plans and efforts, which the Society would then 'view with interest.'¹³⁰ In truth, the RDS, without

¹²⁶ *Proc. Roy. Dublin Soc.*, xcvi, 28 February 1861.

¹²⁷ *Farmer's Gazette*, 10 November 1860.

¹²⁸ *Weekly Agricultural Review*, 9, 16, 30 November 1860.

¹²⁹ *Waterford Mail*, 24 October 1860.

¹³⁰ *Proc. Roy. Dublin Soc.*, xcvi, 4 April 1861.

funds to further any plans of its own, had little choice but to support the independent effort. Furthermore, it counted many of the ‘noblemen and gentlemen’ involved amongst its own membership. The path was now clear for the independent company to pursue its objectives. The *Agricultural Review* welcomed the RDS’s decision to step aside and attributed a lack of progress by the company to a suspension of efforts out of respect for the RDS.¹³¹ The promoters of the veterinary college were now incorporated under a Joint Stock Company’s Act and were registered under the title of the ‘Veterinary College of Ireland.’ The *Dublin Medical Press* published a list of its council and management committee as well as its prospectus. Shares were advertised at £5 each, a deposit of 10s per share required.¹³² This suggested that Cameron was soliciting the money and influential support of his medical colleagues. A newspaper notice, advertising a meeting for 17 October 1861, requested the attendance ‘of all those who feel interested in the establishment of a National Veterinary Institution.’¹³³

This meeting, presided by the Lord Mayor, convened at the Mansion House. Cameron outlined the progress made during the previous year and noted that this was the first public meeting to further the project. He argued that as Edinburgh had two veterinary colleges, Dublin could surely support one. The estimated cost of the project was £6,090 and promises of ‘large assistance’ were already made. Lord Talbot de Malahide proposed a resolution that a veterinary college should be established and dismissed concerns forwarded to him by a member of the veterinary profession who expressed concern for the success of the movement because of a difficulty in raising the necessary funds. Talbot claimed that ‘it would be a hard case’ if the £6,000 needed could not be raised considering the wealth and population of Dublin. Dr William Wilde seconded the proposal, arguing the necessity of qualified veterinary surgeons by recalling his experiences of cow doctors and fairy darts from the west of Ireland. Amidst much cheering and applause there was one dissenting voice. Matthew Small was very much opposed to an Irish college. He informed the meeting that it had required the work of three counties, Down, Armagh and Louth to support his practice. He had practiced in county Down for twelve years, not making £100 a year. He added that there were at that time 150 members of the profession seeking employment. He described the £6,000 as a ‘mere paltry sum’ to set up a veterinary school and advised that it would be

¹³¹ *Weekly Agricultural Review*, 26 April, *Dublin Builder*, 1 May 1861.

¹³² *Dublin Medical Press*, 13 March 1861.

¹³³ *Freeman’s Journal*, 16 October 1861.

better spent in assisting members of the profession throughout the provinces. The veterinary education that was required was available in London and Scotland. The meeting felt that although it was indebted to him for the information he had furnished, it was not bound to accept his opinion. Hugh Ferguson expressed some concern at the availability of funds but was in favour of an Irish school where Irishmen, without travelling to Britain, could be educated for the civil and military branches of the profession.¹³⁴ Richard Dyer wrote to the *Veterinarian* expressing similar sentiments as Small. Citing the small number of practitioners that managed to make a living in Ireland, he questioned the need for a veterinary school in the country, whether under the patronage of the RDS or any other body. He believed that there was a sufficient number of practitioners available to meet the current requirements. Eight-eight new members of the veterinary profession now sought the support of the public having graduated from the three existing colleges that summer. He recommended that a body such as the RDS should invite the general public to hear lectures on the management and diseases of cattle, educating them in the benefits of veterinary science, which might eventually lead to popularising the profession. He urged potential veterinary students to think carefully before embarking on such a career and if they did to ‘make themselves certain of having funds to enable them to wait whilst they are opening the eyes of the farmers.’¹³⁵

The enthusiasm shown for a veterinary school at the meeting of October 1861 quickly evaporated. It was almost three years before another meeting was advertised. The *Farmer's Gazette* claimed that the promoters had ‘made some way’ and were hoping that this meeting would bring their undertaking to a successful conclusion.¹³⁶ The *Agricultural Review* reported that the LVC was receiving state endowment of £400 per annum and called on the ‘Imperial well-wishers’ of Ireland to subsidise a similar college in Ireland.¹³⁷ On 14 July 1864, Cameron reported that a gentleman had offered to take £1,000 worth of shares, eight others had subscribed to £50 worth. He hoped this would be a powerful stimulus to others. He now considered a smaller college, partly funded by government grants or subsidies, estimated to cost £3,000. Meanwhile, a House of Commons Inquiry into Dublin's Scientific had agreed that the establishment

¹³⁴ *Freeman's Journal, Dublin Evening Mail*, 18 October, *Farmer's Gazette*, 19 October 1861.

¹³⁵ Dyer, ‘Veterinary profession’ pp 385-7.

¹³⁶ *Farmer's Gazette*, 2 July 1864.

¹³⁷ *Weekly Agricultural Review*, 1 July 1864.

of an Irish veterinary school 'would legitimately fall within the province of the Royal Dublin Society.'¹³⁸ Therefore, the meeting proposed that the RDS be approached relative to their co-operation in establishing a Veterinary College, particularly regarding government grants. Cameron wrote to the RDS, which subsequently resolved that it could not entertain the subject as it was presently under the consideration of Parliament.¹³⁹ Meanwhile, the RDS continued with its own agenda. On 13 December 1862, John Gamgee delivered a lecture to the Society on the mortality of cattle in Ireland. The lecture was generally well received but thought defective in not providing any remedy for the prevailing diseases.¹⁴⁰ Gamgee subsequently offered to deliver a course of three lectures, costing a guinea, on 'The Prevention of Cattle Disease in Ireland.' The RDS declined on the grounds that this was contrary to their policy of not charging for lectures delivered at their premises.¹⁴¹ It appears the RDS bowed to outside pressure. The *Farmer's Gazette* was critical of the information and statistics given by Gamgee in December. It questioned why the RDS could not invite Hugh Ferguson, 'one well informed, practical and competent', to lecture on a subject in which he had 'such lengthened experience.'¹⁴²

The plans for an Irish veterinary college again went into hibernation for a number of years. In June 1866 the *Farmer's Gazette* noted that Ireland was still, 'as far from the attainment of that object as ever' and suggested that a first-class veterinary college be established as one of the public institutions of the country.¹⁴³ The 'Veterinary College of Ireland' project appeared to run its course during 1867. On 13 August a meeting involving members of both the RDS and the private company convened at the offices of the *Farmer's Gazette*. In the chair was George Handcock, Vice President of the RDS, who stated that he was not there representing the Society but had seen an advertisement and thought it right to attend. Cameron now argued that an unused sum of £15,000, raised to carry out inspections for an expected attack of cattle plague, might be used to establish an institution, which could also have some connection with cattle inspection. Alternatively, the interest from this money coupled with that already

¹³⁸ *Report from the Select Committee on Scientific Institutions (Dublin) together with the proceedings of the committee, minutes of evidence, appendix and index. Ordered by the House of Commons to be printed, 15 July 1864.* H.C. (455) 1860 xii.1

¹³⁹ *Proc. Roy. Dublin Soc.*, ci, 31 July 1864.

¹⁴⁰ *Dublin Evening Mail*, 15 December 1862.

¹⁴¹ *Proc. Roy. Dublin Soc.*, xcix, 26 March 1863.

¹⁴² *Farmer's Gazette*, 4 April 1863.

¹⁴³ *Farmer's Gazette*, 30 June 1866.

promised to the private company, now estimated at between £600 and £700, might suffice to found a veterinary college. He believed co-operation between the existing committee and the RDS would likely lead to a successful outcome. However, Handcock reported that the RDS, in consequence of the House of Commons report, had already appointed a committee to consider and report on the feasibility of founding a veterinary school in connection with the Society.¹⁴⁴ Having quashed the idea of pursuing the £15,000, which all agreed would not be forthcoming, the meeting agreed to send a four-man deputation to meet with the veterinary committee of the RDS.¹⁴⁵ This meeting, held on 22 August at the RDS House, Kildare Street, was closed to the press.¹⁴⁶ There is no evidence, either in the press or the *Proceedings* of the RDS, to suggest that any agreement was reached. The meeting was the last stand of men like Dr Cameron who had laboured in vain for almost a decade to establish a veterinary school.

A week later the report of the RDS ‘Veterinary School’ committee was brought before the Society. It suggested infrastructure similar to that proposed in February 1861, with estimated annual expenditure of £600. The meeting considered whether the RDS should seek for powers to examine and qualify candidates as veterinary surgeons, or simply establish a school for their education. It was unanimously decided to go initially with the latter option. Once educated, the students would then present themselves for examination at the RCVS. It was not specified if RCVS examiners would travel to Dublin or if the students were to attend examinations in London or Scotland. The latter would surely be contrary to what had been sought for many years, Irish veterinary surgeons that could obtain their diploma without leaving the country. In effect, the RDS was proposing to introduce more unqualified practitioners into the Irish veterinary marketplace. The House of Commons report had advised that a portion of the private contributions of the Society should be used to subsidise any future veterinary department. However, the committee recommended that the Society apply for a parliamentary grant through its President, the Lord Lieutenant.¹⁴⁷ In January 1868 the veterinary committee presented an undisclosed estimate that would be forwarded to government.¹⁴⁸ In order to bring the subject of ‘extended veterinary education’ to public

¹⁴⁴ *Proc. Roy. Dublin Soc.*, Council, ciii, 22 August 1866.

¹⁴⁵ *Dublin Evening Mail, Farmer’s Gazette*, 13 August 1867.

¹⁴⁶ *Freeman’s Journal*, 23 August 1867.

¹⁴⁷ *Proc. Roy. Dublin Soc.*, Council, civ, 29 August 1867.

¹⁴⁸ *Proc. Roy. Dublin Soc.*, Council, civ, 9 January 1868.

notice the Society organised George Armatage, Glasgow Veterinary College, to deliver a short course of three lectures on the diseases of cattle at its premises in Kildare Street. The lectures were poorly attended but the *Farmer's Gazette* encouraged the RDS to continue with its efforts as 'in Dublin it is always difficult to get an audience to listen to any subject relating to agriculture.'¹⁴⁹

On 23 July 1868, a draft of a public memorial to the Lords of the Treasury in favour of the establishment of a veterinary school was put before the Society. This memorial was adopted and it was decided that it should lie for signature at the forthcoming horse show as well as being generally circulated for the same purpose.¹⁵⁰ Later that year, when it was rumoured that the Government was willing to found a school, under the directorship of an existing educational institution such as Trinity College or the College of Surgeons, the *Farmer's Gazette* reported that it was 'quite evident' that the general public were unwilling to contribute financially to a veterinary institution, expecting the same to be financed from the national exchequer.¹⁵¹ Evidence suggests that contemporary veterinary colleges established elsewhere without government funding continued to be the least successful. The first Canadian college was the Ontario Veterinary College, founded in 1864. Granted a private charter, it received practically no financial assistance from the provincial government of Upper Canada. Consequently, a reliance on tuition fees led to low entrance requirements and a 'repetition of the situation which arose in England.'¹⁵² In the United States, the Veterinary College of Philadelphia was established with the patronage of the local Agricultural Society of Philadelphia, in 1852. It ceased to exist in 1859. This was the fate of forty-one US veterinary schools, up to 1947, the vast majority privately established.¹⁵³ The first US state sponsored veterinary school, and the oldest extant school, was the Iowa State College of Veterinary Medicine, established in 1879.¹⁵⁴

¹⁴⁹ *Farmer's Gazette*, 25 January, 1, 8, 15 February, 7, 28 March, 4, 11 April 1868.

¹⁵⁰ *Proc. Roy. Dublin Soc.*, Council, cv, 23 July 1868.

¹⁵¹ *Farmer's Gazette*, 14 November 1868.

¹⁵² Charles A. Mitchell, 'A note on the early history of veterinary science in Canada' in *Canadian Journal of Comparative Medicine*, vol. 2, no. 4 (April, 1938), pp 91-5.

¹⁵³ C. Trenton Boyd, 'The lost history of American veterinary medicine: The need for preservation' in *Journal of the Medical Library Association*, vol. 99, no. 1 (January, 2011), pp 8-14. A full list of the defunct schools is found in a supplement to a particular online version of the article at <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3016659/?report=classic>. Retrieved, 23 September 20.

¹⁵⁴ Charles H. Stange, *History of veterinary medicine at Iowa State College* (Ames, 1929).

During 1869 the debate over an Irish school continued but nothing was achieved. At the first official meeting of the Irish Central Veterinary Medical Association on 9 August 1869, William Pallin, MRCVS, Kilkenny, welcomed plans for an Irish College and questioned why the country should be obliged to send potential veterinarians overseas to be trained. He felt that a college would stimulate more employment, attract high quality candidates to the profession and give encouragement to existing members. He encouraged the RDS to continue with its efforts.¹⁵⁵ In September 1869 the *Farmer's Gazette* reported that it had heard nothing of the veterinary committee of the RDS for almost two years and, therefore, presumed that the Society had abandoned its plans. The newspaper also noted rumours that Cameron's group was 'not dead, but sleeping.'¹⁵⁶ Cameron subsequently blamed the RDS for the failure of his proposed independent college, at a personal loss of £100. He claimed that the RDS had always resolved that it was its particular function to establish an Irish veterinary school, yet, eventually did 'nothing whatever.' It had urged his group to take no action as it itself was prepared to do the work. He further believed that his more influential supporters were therefore coerced into abstaining from supporting him.¹⁵⁷ An unnamed member of the Council of the Royal Agricultural Society suggested that the RDS tended to hijack projects that were nearing success. He believed that because of the RDS, others 'always fear the moment that success dawns upon their undertakings, all is snatched from their grasp.'¹⁵⁸

Proposals for an Irish veterinary college unaffiliated to the RCVS

During 1880 another independent attempt was initiated at establishing a veterinary college in Dublin, at an estimated £10,000. The promoters, including medical men and 'some country gentlemen', prepared a memorial for presentation to the Lord Lieutenant. They lamented the fact that ten counties were without a qualified veterinary surgeon and that Irish students found it necessary to travel abroad to pursue the veterinary diploma. They proposed that the college would not be affiliated with the RCVS as an independent college might 'raise a scientific rivalry' that would be of benefit to the further development of the veterinary art. It was hoped that a Royal

¹⁵⁵ Anon, 'Irish Central Veterinary Medical Association' in *Veterinarian*, vol. 42, no. 9 (September, 1869), pp 684-5.

¹⁵⁶ *Farmer's Gazette*, 14 November 1868.

¹⁵⁷ *Irish Times*, 15 December 1880.

¹⁵⁸ *Irish Times*, 30 November 1867.

Charter would be issued enabling the proposed institution to appoint professors and examiners to set a curriculum and grant diplomas. Amongst the influential supporters of the project were the Duke of Leinster, the Marquis of Drogheda and Viscount Powerscourt.¹⁵⁹ The chief spokesman for the group was Dr Robert Lyons, a medical doctor and MP for the City of Dublin from April 1880.¹⁶⁰

There were mixed opinions on the feasibility of the project. Hugh Bradley, a county Down student at the Glasgow Veterinary College, welcomed the proposals and highlighted the difficulties involved in travelling to Britain to obtain the diploma. He hoped for the day that Irish veterinary students could study at home and claimed that he could quote many instances of his fellow Irish students becoming ‘complete failures in the veterinary pursuit’ on arrival in Britain. Separated from friends and family they unable to cope with their new surroundings and lodgings. Many arrived with more money than was necessary, having received same from relatives at home, and in order to overcome loneliness turned to ‘alcohol...the treats of the world, the flesh and the devil.’ He hoped that a satisfactory outcome to the land question in Ireland would place Irish tenant farmers in an economic position to employ a veterinarian, helping to establish the profession.¹⁶¹ Robert Prentice, MRCVS, Longford, saw no need for another veterinary school. He believed private practice in Ireland was becoming ‘quickly overcrowded’, with practitioners leaving for Britain to work as assistants.¹⁶² Prominent British veterinarians, such as the RCVS President, George Fleming, and William Fearnley, former Principal of the Edinburgh College, agreed, arguing that if Ireland offered only a ‘very moderate prospect’ to British practitioners they would move there. Furthermore, they were irate that the college promoters were considering instituting a separate licencing body. Fleming insisted that any attempt to do so would be strenuously resisted by the ‘entire profession.’¹⁶³ Although Dr Charles Cameron believed in affiliation to the RCVS, he was more optimistic as to the prospects of future Irish veterinary graduates, identifying three potential sources of employment, the army,

¹⁵⁹ *Freeman's Journal*, 11, 13 November 1880.

¹⁶⁰ See George C. Boase, ‘Robert Spencer Dyer Lyons’ in Sidney Lee (ed.) *Dictionary of national biography, volume XXXIV* (London, 1893), pp 359-60.

¹⁶¹ *Freeman's Journal*, 4 December 1880.

¹⁶² *Freeman's Journal*, 3 September, 15 November 1881.

¹⁶³ *Freeman's Journal*, 15 December, *Irish Times*, 23 December 1880.

inspectors under the Contagious Diseases (Animals) Act, and practice at home, in Britain and in the colonies.¹⁶⁴

On 11 December 1880 the memorial was presented to the Lord Lieutenant, Earl Cowper, who could ‘hardly believe’ that no such institution existed in Ireland. Cowper was generally supportive of the project but questioned the proposal that an Irish college might not be affiliated to the RCVS. He offered to assist in whatever way he could but insisted that he was currently dealing with ‘subjects of greater importance to the interests of Ireland.’¹⁶⁵ During the following years government ignored the question of an Irish college. Nevertheless, others did their utmost to keep the matter alive. ‘One of the Interested’, a prospective veterinary student, informed the *Irish Times* that he had hoped to be in a position to commence his studies in Dublin that year but believed the project was now falling out of the public mind.¹⁶⁶ The year 1883 saw widespread outbreaks of foot-and-mouth and pleuro-pneumonia affecting cattle, as well as swine-fever in pigs in Ireland.¹⁶⁷ In March, Lyons argued that such a crisis made ‘an abundant supply of men well skilled in veterinary science’ an immediate priority. He informed the *Freeman’s Journal* that despite relentless communications with the latest Lord Lieutenant, Lord Spencer, and successive Chief Secretaries, William Foster and George Trevelyan, he had been unsuccessful in securing ‘the favour of the Treasury’ to fund a veterinary college.¹⁶⁸ Setting the Irish land question aside, throughout the British Empire losses suffered to ‘public’ cattle rankled and motivated Government to a much lesser extent than losses to cavalry. Therefore, both veterinary research and education were, in this sense, more closely aligned with military interests. For example, in India, despite calls from the country’s Cattle Plague Commission to provide veterinary surgeons to tackle outbreaks of livestock disease, the first civil veterinary college, established at Lahore in 1882, was as a response to great losses suffered by the cavalry during the Second Afghan War. An Army veterinary school had already been

¹⁶⁴ *Irish Times*, 15 December 1880.

¹⁶⁵ *Farmer’s Gazette*, 18 December 1880.

¹⁶⁶ *Irish Times*, 2 October 1883.

¹⁶⁷ See John Farquhar and James M’Call, ‘Prevalence of contagious diseases amongst animals in Ireland’ in *Veterinarian*, vol. 56, no. 9 (September, 1883), pp 607-11.

¹⁶⁸ *Freeman’s Journal*, 8 March 1883.

established at Pune in 1862, with the objective of training Indians as assistants at remount depots and military farms.¹⁶⁹

In a letter to Spencer, Lyons claimed that he could now establish a veterinary school without any demand on government ‘except for a charter.’ He proposed that the large number of prospective veterinary students could receive a general medical training in Dublin’s medical schools and hospitals. Specialist knowledge on the diseases of horses and cattle could subsequently be taught in ‘the clinics of the eminent veterinary surgeons of this city.’¹⁷⁰ Lyons was promised immediate support and resources from his medical colleagues in both the School of Medicine at the Catholic University of Ireland and the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland.¹⁷¹ However his assumption that specialist knowledge might be given by eminent Dublin veterinarians seems to have been unfounded. Three years earlier, George Fleming questioned why Irish practitioners were not consulted on the matter and claimed that as far as he could ascertain the project had not the ‘support or countenance’ of any veterinary surgeons.¹⁷² There was little change in the intervening period with several RCVS members again highlighting the poor prospects for new graduates. T. G. Tuite, Kells and Richard Ebbitt, Dundalk, highlighted the fact that Lyons had intensified his efforts because of ‘unexampled health’ in Irish herds, yet many local authorities unlawfully continued to employ ‘quacks’ as veterinary inspectors, despite the availability of qualified practitioners.¹⁷³ Lyons did however have the support of F. F. Collins, late Principal Veterinary Surgeon in India, now based in Dublin. Collins had furnished the Indian government with a scheme for a veterinary college and was now willing to assist Lyons in formulating a ‘practical scheme’ for an Irish Institution.¹⁷⁴

At the General Meeting of the RDS on 8 November a resolution was moved that a committee, from Society members or ‘others as it may see fit’, be appointed to report as to the most effectual means of establishing an Irish veterinary college, with

¹⁶⁹ Saurabh Mishra, ‘Beasts, murrains, and the British Raj: Reassessing colonial medicine in India from a veterinary perspective, 1860-1900’ in *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, vol. 85, no. 4 (2011), pp 609-16; N. Rana and Ashok Kumar, ‘Veterinary education in India: Shaping the future agenda with focus on veterinary public health education’ in *Indian Journal of Animal Sciences*, vol. 87, no. 9 (September, 2017), p. 1053; S. Abdul Rahman, ‘The history of veterinary education in India’ in *Journal of Veterinary Medical Education*, vol. 31, no. 1 (Spring, 2004), p. 55.

¹⁷⁰ *Freeman’s Journal*, 8 March 1883.

¹⁷¹ *Freeman’s Journal*, 10 March, 7 April 1883.

¹⁷² *Irish Times*, 23 December 1880.

¹⁷³ *Freeman’s Journal*, 16 March, 3 April 1883.

¹⁷⁴ *Irish Times*, 13 March 1883.

independent powers of examining and conferring diplomas. This proposal had all the hallmarks of Lyons's proposed college. The resulting committee included Lyons, as well as Cameron, the Marquis of Drogheda and some of the country's most prestigious medics and academics, but no veterinarians.¹⁷⁵ It is unclear if the Society hijacked Lyons's project or whether he sought their help. As with Cameron in 1867, Lyons probably felt that his best, or possibly last, chance of establishing a college was in conjunction with the Society. The *Freeman's Journal* reported that this latest attempt was 'likely' to lead to a successful conclusion.¹⁷⁶ The committee's report, read and adopted on 28 February 1884, was more concise and candid than those of previous RDS 'veterinary committees.' A sub-committee presented the meeting with a comprehensive curriculum for a three-year veterinary course.

The report suggested that the college should not have independent diploma-conferring powers, but be affiliated to the RCVS. It emphasized that there would be little difficulty in arranging with that body for examinations to be held in Dublin. Above all it concluded that the Society was not in a financial position to undertake such a project. If the college were to compete successfully with its British counterparts a sum of £5,000 would be required for the appropriate infrastructure. An estimated fifty students would generate annual income of £500 with expenditure on wages for six professors, support staff and incidentals at £1,300, leaving an immediate shortfall of £800. The committee assumed that no income would be derived from the school's infirmary or veterinary establishment, as making this a commercial venture involved entering into direct competition with the city's veterinary practitioners, 'a course that would not be consistent with the character and position of the Royal Dublin Society.'¹⁷⁷ Experience elsewhere showed that a commercial element was essential if a privately established veterinary school were to be a success. In 1888, William T. Kendall, a graduate of the LVC, introduced formal veterinary education to Australia, with the establishment of the Melbourne Veterinary College. It offered a comprehensive education, as the 1887 Veterinary Surgeons Act of Victoria stipulated the course had to be given over four years, the same length as in a Dental Act, passed that same year. With no state funding, the enterprise was largely funded by an animal hospital, predominantly treating horses and dogs. Kendall experienced an initial difficulty in

¹⁷⁵ *Proc. Roy. Dublin Soc.*, cxx, 8 November 1883.

¹⁷⁶ *Freeman's Journal*, 9 November 1883.

¹⁷⁷ *Proc. Roy. Dublin Soc.*, cxx, 28 February 1884.

obtaining sufficient patients and frequently purchased sick or injured animals. On recovery, he then sold them at a profit, often to their original owners, who soon learned that it was profitable to have their sick animals professionally treated. Within six months the hospital had a steady influx of patients. Ironically, the college only came under financial pressure when its graduates commenced private practice. Kendall eventually had its responsibilities transferred to the University of Melbourne, with Government support.¹⁷⁸

The 1884 RDS report concluded that it might best aid an Irish college in the same way that its British counterparts supported their colleges by offering grants in aid and prizes to be competed for by students.¹⁷⁹ Apparently the report did not receive the unanimous approval of the committee. The newspaper reports of the meeting noted that J. H. Ferguson argued that the report was not in accordance with the evidence brought before the committee. He claimed that the statement that the Society was not in a financial position to fund the project was untrue as a grant of £15,000 was ‘unoccupied.’ He concluded that the matter would not end there as there was an ‘outer public who would consider the question.’¹⁸⁰ Ferguson’s protestations were not recorded in the Society’s *Proceedings*. Lyons was similarly disappointed, especially with the lack of support for a college that would grant an independent Irish diploma. Some months later he claimed a ‘radical difference of opinion’ had arisen on that point between those he described as ‘really active’ promoters of the college and the Irish Executive, which desired to ‘subordinate’ an Irish college to the English one. Lyons concluded that with so many objections he was willing to wait another twenty-five years for an independent Irish college and was confident that ‘another’ government would eventually grant one.¹⁸¹ In June 1888 it was again proposed that the RDS should establish a veterinary school. However, the meeting quickly resolved that the subject had been fully dealt with in the 1884 report.¹⁸² Earlier that year, Alfred Harris, an alderman of Dublin, noted

¹⁷⁸ K. L. Hughes and I. Milne, ‘Early history of veterinary education in Victoria’ in *Australian Veterinary Journal*, vol. 69, no. 12 (December, 1992), pp 325-7; I. W. Caple, ‘A short history of veterinary education in Australia: The 120-year transmission from education for a trade to education for a profession’ in *Australian Veterinary Journal*, vol. 89, no. 8 (August, 2011), pp 282-8.

¹⁷⁹ *Proc. Roy. Dublin Soc.*, cxx, 28 February 1884; *Irish Times*, 29 February 1884.

¹⁸⁰ *Freeman’s Journal, Dublin Daily Express, Irish Times*, 29 February 1884.

¹⁸¹ *Irish Times*, 29 August 1884.

¹⁸² *Proc. Roy. Dublin Soc.*, cxxiv, 7 June 1888; *Dublin Daily Express*, 8 June 1888.

that the plan for an Irish veterinary school had now ‘ceased to be considered and has passed from the memory of the public.’¹⁸³

Veterinary instruction at educational institutions

Whilst efforts to establish a formal veterinary college had continued throughout the nineteenth-century, other venues, especially those offering agricultural courses, occasionally offered veterinary content as part of the curriculum. A decade after the death of Thomas Peall, the Commissioners of National Education established their system of agricultural instruction, initially with the foundation of the Glasnevin Institute, in 1838. It was established to train young teachers to teach agriculture in National Schools, and also accepted general farming students. During the following decades, about twenty agricultural schools were established in various parts of the country.¹⁸⁴ Some offered veterinary instruction to their pupils. For example, the school at Newtown-Barn offered lectures on the symptoms and treatment of the diseases of horses, horned cattle and other domestic animals as early as 1841.¹⁸⁵ In 1853, Glasnevin, now renamed the Albert Institution, invited Professor Hodges, Queen’s College Belfast, to deliver two courses relating to the treatment of farm animals in health and disease, which pupils apparently attended with ‘zeal.’ The object of the exercise was not to make veterinary surgeons of the pupils but to teach them that they should embrace scientific principles in all aspects of their profession.¹⁸⁶ In-house veterinary instruction was introduced at Glasnevin in 1870, delivered by Charles Steele (London, 1851), veterinary surgeon to the 12th Lancers. Another Army vet, William A. Russell (London, 1862), replaced Steele for a period. It is hardly surprising that veterinary instruction was introduced at that time, as the incumbent Superintendent of the school, Thomas Baldwin, was well informed on animal disease.¹⁸⁷ Furthermore, as part of the Government Cattle Committee, established to consider how best to prevent

¹⁸³ *Dublin Daily Express*, 6 January 1888.

¹⁸⁴ Anon, ‘Outlines of the history of agricultural education in Ireland up to 1900’ in *Department of Agriculture Journal*, vol. 49 (1952-53), pp 3-28; J. R. Campbell, ‘The educational work of the Irish Department of Agriculture’ in *The Irish Naturalist*, vol. 17, no. 11 (November, 1908), pp 241-2; Anon, ‘Albert Agricultural College’ in *University Review*, vol. 1, no. 1 (Summer, 1954), pp 69-71.

¹⁸⁵ Newtown-Barn Agricultural School, near Moate, *Prospectus* (1841), p. 2. A copy of the prospectus is found at James Joyce, Special Collections, UCD. Shelfmark 44.X.9/1. The school was actually in county Offaly. See also Henry John Porter, ‘On the increasing operation of loan funds in Ireland’ in *Journal of the Statistical Society of London*, vol. 5, no. 3 (October, 1842), p. 288.

¹⁸⁶ *Twenty-First Report of the Commissioners of National Education in Ireland 1854*, pp 165-7, H.C. xxiii pt.i.1, (143) xxiii, pt. ii. 1. Dr Kirkpatrick, Albert Institution and Inspector of National Agricultural Schools reproduced a copy of a Hodge lecture.

¹⁸⁷ Albert Agricultural College, *Centenary souvenir, 1838-1938* (Dublin, 1938), pp 20-1, 35.

cattle plague entering Ireland, Baldwin was well acquainted with several prominent veterinary surgeons, in both Ireland and Britain. This period is discussed in a paper Baldwin read before the Statistical and Social Society of Ireland on the monetary loss to the country from cattle disease. He also suggested means for preventing such loss.¹⁸⁸

In March 1865, Baldwin informed the Commissioners of National Education of the necessity of affording the Glasnevin pupils veterinary knowledge. He highlighted that in remote districts the farmer and land-steward were continually called on to treat animals because of the absence of veterinary surgeons. He knew of a west of Ireland nobleman who was compelled to send to Dublin for a practitioner, when required. He believed the appointment of a veterinary Professor at Glasnevin would not only supply a 'manifest want' to the school, but also a great public want.¹⁸⁹ On the commencement of the 1870 session, Baldwin re-iterated his views. He believed that Steele had already imparted a large amount of information to the pupils that would provide them with a 'clear conception' of the nature of common diseases that would enable them to prevent loss on returning to the country as farmers or stewards. He also suggested that veterinary surgeons had a poor concept of cattle disease, especially for uncommon conditions. He wrote that during a recent serious outbreak of lung disease on the Glasnevin farm the professional advice of the 'most eminent' practitioner in the city was of no practical service.¹⁹⁰ Extern pupils were also permitted to attend that first course of lectures and partake in the general business of the farm for £3 a quarter.¹⁹¹ Steele was a capable individual who had recently revised and updated *Blaine's Veterinary Art*.¹⁹² The *Farmer's Gazette* subsequently reported that the lectures were delivered 'with great acceptability.'¹⁹³ A further course of public lectures, costing 10s, was organised during July. The *Gazette* praised the initiative and hoped that it might be

¹⁸⁸ Thomas Baldwin, 'On the diminution of the national wealth from cattle diseases' in *Journal of the Statistical and Social Society of Ireland*, vol. 5, no. 39 (August, 1870), pp 183-95.

¹⁸⁹ *Thirty-First Report of the Commissioners of National Education in Ireland (For The Year 1864), with Appendices Vol. 1.*, pp 137-8, H.C. 1864, (373) xix. 1.

¹⁹⁰ *Thirty-Sixth Report of the Commissioners of National Education in Ireland (For The Year 1869), with Appendices*, pp 373-8, H.C. 1869, xxiii, 9, 57.

¹⁹¹ *Freeman's Journal*, 14 January, *Cork Constitution, Londonderry Standard*, 15 January, *Waterford Mail*, 17 January 1870.

¹⁹² Delabere Blaine, *Outlines of the veterinary art: Revised and enlarged by Charles Steele* (London, 1865). The book was reviewed in *Bell's Life in London*, 18 November 1865.

¹⁹³ *Farmer's Gazette*, 30 April 1870.

a prelude to an Irish veterinary college, established by the Commissioners, with Glasnevin as its headquarters.¹⁹⁴

The public lectures were delivered irregularly over the following decades. In June 1886 the Commissioners sanctioned the attendance of ‘a limited number’ of gentlemen at a course of fifty lectures, costing five guineas.¹⁹⁵ A surviving College Journal, for the years 1870-73, reveals that Steele delivered two courses of regular lectures annually in January and October. Each course consisted of six hours of instruction and an examination each week over a five-week period. Practical instruction was also given. An entry for 13 February 1870 recorded a ‘lecture and post-mortem on a cow which died on a small farm.’¹⁹⁶ In 1883, a course in dairy management was offered to young women, extended to male students in 1886. At this juncture, Steele volunteered to instruct the dairy students on the common diseases of cattle and the nursing and care of sick farm animals. The *Dublin Daily Express* subsequently reported that the initiative gave ‘considerable assistance’ to the dairy pupils.¹⁹⁷ Similar veterinary classes were given at other agricultural colleges. In 1880, Mungret College, Limerick, announced that lectures on veterinary medicine and surgery would be delivered by a veterinary surgeon.¹⁹⁸

Veterinary science was also briefly taught at university level, as part of an Agricultural Diploma introduced at the Queen’s Colleges in Cork, Galway and Belfast, in 1850. Edmund Murphy, former editor of the *Irish Farmers’ and Gardeners’ Magazine*, John Frederick Hodges and Thomas Skilling were appointed Chairs of Agriculture at Cork, Belfast and Galway, respectively.¹⁹⁹ Students took a module on the ‘history and diseases of farm animals’ during the second year of a two-year course.²⁰⁰ At Galway and Belfast the respective agricultural Professors delivered the veterinary content. However, the President of the Cork College announced that arrangements were being made for a full course of lectures on veterinary medicine delivered by an ‘eminent’

¹⁹⁴ *Farmer’s Gazette*, 23, 30 July 1870.

¹⁹⁵ *Freeman’s Journal*, 5 June 1886.

¹⁹⁶ UCD Archives, ACCI/1, Records of the Albert Agricultural College, College Journal, 23 October 1870-7 June 1873.

¹⁹⁷ *Dublin Daily Express*, 22 December 1885, 22 December 1887.

¹⁹⁸ *Freeman’s Journal*, 4 August 1880.

¹⁹⁹ For an overview of the agricultural diploma see Juliana Adelman, ‘The Agricultural Diploma in Queen’s College, Belfast, 1849-63, and science education in nineteenth century Ireland’ in *Irish Economic and Social History* (2008), pp 51-67.

²⁰⁰ *Report of the condition and progress of the Queen’s University in Ireland; from June 19, 1852 to September 1, 1853*, pp 51-8, H. C. 1854 [1707], xx, 83.

veterinary surgeon.²⁰¹ Robert Olden was subsequently listed as veterinary Professor.²⁰² The College report for 1851-52 showed that of the eight agricultural students only three attended the 'Veterinary Medicine' lectures, of which fifty four were delivered, three per week.²⁰³ In 1858, a Commission, established to investigate the progress of the colleges, deemed the Agricultural Diploma a failure. In total, 105 matriculated students started the course at the three colleges between 1850 and 1858. Forty-eight attended the second year and only ten eventually graduated. Sixty individuals, including some non-matriculいたes, attended the veterinary lectures during that period. The Commission recommended that the Schools of Agriculture be discontinued at the Colleges. It believed that the Colleges had failed to deliver the 'all important' practical information needed. Nor were the farmers of Ireland willing to defray the cost of maintaining their sons at colleges merely to receive a theoretical education in Agriculture. It further recommended the encouragement of agricultural schools and farms under the Board of National Education²⁰⁴

In Cork, an institution, variously known as the Model Farm School, Munster Agricultural School or Munster Institute, was established in 1853, with the financial support of Commissioners of National Education, mainly to facilitate the teaching of the Agricultural Diploma. On the cessation of the Diploma it made some attempt to continue veterinary instruction in the city by announcing that it intended to deliver a course on veterinary science 'probably' by a Professor of the Queen's College, during 1859. However, there is no evidence to suggest this subsequently happened.²⁰⁵ Its successor, the Munster Dairy School and Agricultural Institute, established in 1880, was more successful. In 1881, it published proposals to deliver lectures 'in the structure and diseases of farm animals', by a veterinary surgeon. On 8 July 1882, the committee moved to offer John Sinclair (Glasgow, 1875), Veterinary Inspector of the Privy Council in Cork, £52 10s to deliver fifty veterinary lectures, over two sessions. Sinclair

²⁰¹ *Freeman's Journal*, 19 Sept 1850.

²⁰² C. H. B. (ed.), *The Royal Kalendar and court and city register, for the year 1853* (London, 1853), p. 455.

²⁰³ *The Report of the President of Queen's College, Cork for the Academic Year of 1851-52*, p. 5.

²⁰⁴ *Report of Her Majesty's Commissioners appointed to inquire into the progress and condition of the Queen's Colleges at Belfast, Cork and Galway*, pp 22-3, 372-5, H.C. 1857-1858, 2413, xxi, Vol. 21, 53.

²⁰⁵ *Weekly Agricultural Review*, 29 July 1859. For a brief history of the Model Farm see D. J. Coakley (ed.), *Cork: Its trade and commerce* (Cork, 1919), pp 128-31; William P. Coyne (ed.), *Ireland: Industrial and agricultural* (Dublin, 1902), pp 142-3. See also document U619/8, Cork City and Country Archives. This short six-page typescript gives a short history of the County Cork Agricultural Society, which was involved in the initiative.

agreed and requested that the committee purchase a set of surgical instruments, coloured diagrams and a 'dead subject.'²⁰⁶ Sinclair continued to deliver the annual course of lectures, with success, for almost two decades. He reported to the committee at the distribution of prizes to the pupils on the completion of each course. For example, in 1893, Sinclair claimed that the fourteen pupils had made good use of their time and that the knowledge they had acquired would be of advantage to them in their future management of farm stock.²⁰⁷ At the prize giving ceremony in 1885, a proposal was made that the Cork Farming Society, patrons of the establishment, might direct their efforts towards the establishment of a veterinary school in connection with it.²⁰⁸ A sub-committee subsequently reported that, in order to make full use of the resources of the dairy school, a 'trifling grant' from the State could establish such a veterinary school in Cork, as the existing establishment already employed a chemist, zoologist and veterinary surgeon. It again questioned the ability of the cow-doctors, on whom the health of Irish livestock was dependent, because of the scarcity of properly qualified vets.²⁰⁹ Such a school did not materialise. The Dairy School report of 1890 noted that plans to revolutionise Irish agriculture through education had largely failed, and 'it all arises from lack of funds.' It argued that if funds were available each province could have its own separate model farm, schools of agriculture, dairy science, gardening and forestry, and veterinary science. The veterinary establishments could be situated on the outskirts of Dublin, Cork, Galway and Belfast.²¹⁰

As previously noted, the Royal Agricultural Improvement Society of Ireland had given consideration to establishing an agricultural college in the 1840s, with veterinary instruction to be given outside of school hours. However, it showed no interest in establishing a veterinary school, when approached by Hugh Ferguson. In April 1885, now known as the Royal Agricultural Society of Ireland (RASI) it proposed an initiative new to Ireland, to examine pupils for a non-taught 'Diploma in the Science and Practice of Agriculture.' An entry fee of one pound would be returned to unsuccessful candidates. Special certificates and silver medals would be awarded to those found to

²⁰⁶ Cork City and County Archives, Reference U619/1: Minute book of the Munster Dairy and Agricultural School Committee, dated 8 April 1882-25 June 1892. Accessed 27/03/2019. The printed four-page prospectus is attached, Munster Agricultural and Dairy National School, *Prospectus* (Dublin, 1881).

²⁰⁷ *Cork Constitution*, 24 January 1893.

²⁰⁸ *Cork Constitution*, 4 March 1885.

²⁰⁹ *Dublin Daily Express*, *Cork Constitution*, 6 June 1887

²¹⁰ *Weekly Freeman's Journal*, 10 January 1891.

merit them.²¹¹ The initiative was undoubtedly based on one by Scotland's Highland and Agricultural Society, where candidates were not tied down to any particular college but should produce certificates of attendance from an institution where the relevant courses were taught.²¹² The examination papers and examiners' reports for the RASI Diploma of 1885 were reproduced in the Society's *Transactions*. Veterinary science was an important component of the examination, where candidates were also examined in agriculture and accounts, chemistry and geology, land valuation and botany. The veterinary paper, set by Thomas D. Lambert, a well-known Dublin practitioner, was interesting in that all five questions related to species other than the horse. Lambert concluded that the students did not have the required 'practical acquaintance' of cattle and sheep disease or of the commonly employed treatments and medicines. He believed the agriculturalist should only act on common and simple cases; the advice of the experienced veterinary surgeon should never be superseded. Professor Thomas Carroll, another examiner, remarked that the award did not necessarily mark the holder a skilled agriculturalist but showed the individual held a 'fair amount' of scientific knowledge.²¹³ During its three years of existence the examination drew candidates from both Ireland and Britain. The *Cork Constitution* announced that G. Seaton, Grange, Youghal, was amongst the successful candidates of 1885.²¹⁴ Students or graduates from the Royal Agricultural College, Cirencester, were particularly successful.²¹⁵ In 1885, Mr. Perkins, one of four Cirencester alumni examined, took first place. The following year, Mr. Banerjea, a Cirencester student from India, did likewise.²¹⁶

The Veterinary College of Ireland

In the winter of 1893, the final, and at last successful, attempt to establish an Irish veterinary college began to materialise. Although not previously recorded, it appears the process was initiated by William J. Walsh, Archbishop of Dublin, who wrote to Sir Christopher Nixon, Professor at the Catholic University School of Medicine, enquiring, in the interest of Irish students, if a veterinary college could be organised in connection

²¹¹ *Irish Times*, 30 January, *Dublin Daily Express*, 23 April 1885.

²¹² Alexander Ramsay, *History of the Highland and Agricultural Society of Scotland: With notices of anterior societies for the promotion of agriculture in Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1879).

²¹³ Anon, 'Agricultural education' in *Half-yearly reports and transactions of the Royal Agricultural Society of Ireland, January, 1884, to May, 1886* (Dublin, 1886), pp 50-7.

²¹⁴ *Cork Constitution*, 27 November 1885.

²¹⁵ *Wilts and Gloucestershire Standard*, 26 December 1885.

²¹⁶ *Globe*, 14 February, *Illustrated London News*, 19 February 1887.

with the university. Walsh was a keen supporter of home rule and agrarian reform and exerted great political influence on agrarian issues. As a scholar and teacher his greatest passion was education, holding several positions at St Patrick's College, Maynooth, before being appointed Chancellor of the newly established National University of Ireland in 1908.²¹⁷ On 31 October 1893, in his inaugural address to the winter session of the School of Medicine, Nixon acknowledged the Archbishop's letter but conceded that the University could not undertake such a project because its resources were already limited.²¹⁸ However, he took considerable personal interest in furthering the project. On receiving the Archbishop's letter, he visited the veterinary colleges in Brussels and London where he found their schools, hospitals, and the various facilities that were afforded to veterinary students 'perfectly organised.'²¹⁹

A number of comprehensive accounts of the evolution of the college, from 1894 to its opening in 1900, and beyond, have detailed how a group of promoters, led by Nixon, approached John Morley, the Chief Secretary of Ireland, regarding its financing. By mid-February 1894, Morley surprisingly announced the allocation of a grant of £15,000 towards the cost of acquiring suitable buildings and fittings, not staff. A guarantee fund of over £2000, £1000 from the RDS, the remainder from private contributions, was quickly established to meet any losses that might be incurred in the early years of the proposed college. The process of reaching the ultimate result was not an easy one, and the project looked like it might fail, like its predecessors, on several occasions. According to Pat Hartigan, Nixon was required to use his 'considerable skill, patience and perspicacity' to manage the attitudes and sensitivities of existing vets, the educational sector in Ireland, and the British veterinary schools. Furthermore, the Liberal Government, which promised the grant, resigned in June 1895, replaced by Salisbury's Conservative-led coalition. The promoters of the college were perhaps fortunate with the timing of their efforts. This incoming Government were known for their policy of 'Constructive Unionism', where, in an effort to maintain the Union, it introduced to Ireland an extension to state-aided land purchase, a re-organisation of local government, technical education and agricultural development. As the

²¹⁷ See Redmond Peter Jennings, *Archbishop William J. Walsh's influence upon the political, social and higher education question, 1885 -1921* (Cork, 1990); Myles V. Ronan, *The Most Rev. W. J. Walsh, D. D., Archbishop of Dublin* (Bray 1927), pp 7-9.

²¹⁸ *United Ireland*, 4 November 1893.

²¹⁹ *Veterinary Record*, 18 November 1893.

establishment of a veterinary college fitted this model, the new Government agreed to honour the grant-in-aid. However, it resolved that funds would be provided through a Board of Agriculture and Technical Development, which it planned to establish. As a result, the school was delayed for a number of years. Nevertheless, a Charter of Incorporation was granted in 1896, under which a Governing Body was appointed to administer the college, consisting of individuals nominated by the Crown, the RDS, the Commissioners of National Education and private subscribers. A site was eventually acquired at Ballsbridge and Albert Mettam, Professor of Anatomy at the Royal Dick, was appointed Principal. The reception of the first students at the Royal Veterinary College of Ireland, in October 1900, meant that after a century of effort Ireland could finally offer formal veterinary training to prospective students.²²⁰

Summary

The Dublin Society's early nineteenth-century plan to introduce formal veterinary education to Ireland foundered on the withdrawal of a promised parliamentary grant. As a result, for the next quarter century, its Veterinary Professor, Thomas Peall, became engaged, not in the education of prospective veterinary surgeons, but in the delivery of veterinary instruction to the general public, in Dublin, Cork and Belfast. This introduction to the merits of scientific veterinary practices was continued by others such as Matthew Small and Hugh Ferguson, whose subsequent plans to develop an Irish institution to formally teach veterinary medicine received little support from either the RDS or the RAISI. Throughout the century, an undercurrent prevailed that the RDS, because of its previous parliamentary sanction, was pledged to establish an Irish veterinary school. It appeared to interfere with the plans of others to provide formal veterinary teaching, such as Dr Cameron's proposed 'Veterinary College of Ireland.' Such plans normally re-awakened this sense of right by the RDS to found a school.

²²⁰ For a detailed account of the founding of the Royal Veterinary College of Ireland see P. J. Hartigan, 'The Royal Veterinary College of Ireland: A veterinary school to flourish' in W. J. C. Donnelly and M. L. Monaghan (eds), *A veterinary school to flourish: Veterinary College of Ireland 1900-2000* (Dublin, 2001), pp 18-50. See also W. Kearney, 'Veterinary education in Ireland' in *Ir. Veterinary Jn.*, new ser., vol. 5, no. 6 (June, 1954), pp 113-5; Pat Hartigan and Michael Monaghan, 'Veterinary education in Ireland-the past, the present and the future' in *Ir. Veterinary Jn.*, vol. 53, no. 12 (December, 2000), pp 629-30. These accounts are predominantly derived from the Records of the Royal Veterinary College of Ireland, held at the UCD Archives, especially the Minute book of the Board of Governors, 6 March 1894-5 November 1914. (Reference RCVI/1). For an overview of the Conservative Party's policy of 'Constructive Unionism' see, for example, Joseph Lee, *The modernisation of Irish society, 1848-1918* (Dublin, 1979), pp 122-9; Alan Gailey, *Ireland and the death of kindness: The experience of constructive unionism, 1890-1905* (Cork, 1987); L. P. Curtis, *Coercion and conciliation in Ireland 1880-1914. A study in Constructive Unionism* (Princeton, 1963).

However, despite proposals and reports, the Society failed to deliver. In truth, it never had the finances to deliver a veterinary school, eventually acknowledged in an 1884 report. Nor was it prepared to interfere with the livelihoods of the existing Dublin practitioners, many of whom were members and supporters.

The veterinary surgeons were generally opposed to an Irish college. The Dublin vets feared competition from new graduates, the country vets were adamant that as they could barely survive, there was no necessity for more graduates. Farmers generally had no faith in the vet's abilities to cure cattle, and the local authorities, despite continued outbreaks of cattle epidemics, continued to appoint unqualified cattle inspectors. In 1867, the RDS proposed that if it were successful in providing a school, the pupils would attend at RCVS examinations. A subsequent independent attempt at establishing a school, spearheaded by Dr Robert Lyons, proposed a licencing veterinary college for Ireland, with no connection to the RCVS. The RCVS and the British colleges were vehemently opposed to a separate licencing body, stressing that those trained in such a system would be at a disadvantage in procuring employment outside of Ireland, a necessity for many as the country already had too many veterinarians. In any event, the college failed to materialise, again hampered by lack of funds and the support of existing vets. Even though the ongoing land agitation had a hampering effect on any government support for veterinary education in Ireland, the extension of state intervention towards the end of the nineteenth-century was key to the establishment of a school. While the quest for the introduction of a formal veterinary education continued some veterinary instruction was delivered to agricultural students, and the general public, principally by the Commissioners of National Education and the Queen's Colleges. The aim was to teach those involved in agriculture that they should embrace scientific principles in all aspects of their profession. An Irish veterinary school was eventually realised in 1900, with the support of the Crown, the RDS, the Commissioners of National Education and private subscribers.

Chapter 5: The Irish Veterinary Profession in the Twentieth-century

Thus far, this study has examined the development of Irish veterinary practice from the arrival of prominent farriers into the country during the early part of the eighteenth-century until the establishment of formal veterinary education, with the opening of the Veterinary College of Ireland in 1900. This final part of the thesis concentrates on the first half of the twentieth-century, where the gradual development of formal veterinary practice was intrinsically linked with surviving traditional practices. While the research in the earlier chapters is predominantly based on newspapers and other documentary sources, the remainder of the study is enriched with a very different range of sources, including oral history and folklore. Whilst both must be used with a certain amount of caution, they give a certain insight not available from other sources. Material from the National Folklore Collection was predominately used in chapter 6, which examines traditional practices, to enhance documentary material and oral history. This chapter introduces the personal reminiscences of those involved in the care of animals in the middle decades of the twentieth-century, vets, farmers and cow-doctors, interviewees chosen because of age profile and geographical distribution. Initially, the interviews were open ended but the author, calling on both his knowledge of the subject and farming background, occasionally directed the interviewee to topics of importance to the study. Chapter five takes a thematic approach to veterinary developments during the first half of the twentieth-century. The main themes are the continued difficulties experienced in general veterinary practice, the attempts of Government to introduce stock-owners to scientific veterinary principles, the introduction of women to the profession, the influence of the World Wars on veterinary practice, legislation and State initiatives to eliminate TB, and the development of infrastructure, communications and medicines. Even though each theme is approached chronologically internally, the main thrust of the research is to look at gradual change, over time.

The drudgery of early twentieth-century practice

My dear fellow, from your last letter I can imagine you the vet of a small Irish town, with its rainy market days and small winding streets, gradually deteriorating, with the village practitioner living a hand to mouth existence and deteriorating, deteriorating, deteriorating.

These lines come from an extant correspondence in the mid-1890s between two former students of Williams's New Edinburgh Veterinary School.¹ They highlight the plight of the veterinary surgeon in a small Irish town at the turn of the twentieth-century. The recipient was James J. Mulqueen, a Limerick vet, best known as a member of the Limerick team that won the inaugural All-Ireland Senior Football Championship of 1887.² He graduated in May 1895, a year after his friend Harold Elliot, a native of Manchester. Elliot emigrated to Hawaii and established a practice at Hilo, mainly treating the mules and horses on the sugar plantations.³ He subsequently enjoyed a long, successful career as a businessman and deputy Territorial Veterinarian.⁴ On the other hand, Mulqueen returned to Ireland and established a practice at Barrack Street, Nenagh.⁵ He was subsequently involved in the local horse fairs and races, suggesting that his practice was predominately equine based.⁶ This letter from Elliot, dated 24 September 1896, painted a gloomy picture of Mulqueen's existence. Although Elliot endured volcanic eruptions, tidal waves and earthquakes, he earned fifty pounds per month and strongly urged Mulqueen to forfeit the 'small country town racket' for a 'gorgeous, breezy, free life.' He also predicted that the days of the veterinary surgeon were numbered as electric and steam powered vehicles would soon supplant the horse.⁷ As this is the only letter between the friends that has survived we will never know if Mulqueen contemplated joining his friend. The potential to earn six hundred pounds annually was certainly tempting. Two years earlier John H. Pierce earned sixty-eight pounds during his first year of private practice in Listowel.⁸ In any event, James

¹ Two veterinary schools in Edinburgh were known as 'New Edinburgh' to distinguish them from Dick's school, founded in 1823. John Gamgee founded the first in 1857, William Williams the other in 1873. Williams's school transferred to Liverpool in 1904. See C. M. Warwick and A. A. MacDonald, 'The New Veterinary College, Edinburgh, 1873 to 1904' in *Vet. Rec.*, vol. 153 (27 September, 2003), pp 380-6.

² Seamus O'Ceallaigh and Sean Murphy, *One hundred years of glory: A history of Limerick G.A.A.* (Limerick, 1987), pp 72-4. The final was played at Clonskeagh, Dublin, on 29 April 1888 where the Commercials beat the Louth representatives, Young Irelands of Dundalk, by 1-4 to 0-3.

³ Harold B. Elliot, 'Everyday notes from Hawaii' in *The Veterinary Journal and Annals of Comparative Pathology*, vol. 44, no. 6 (June, 1897), pp 419-21.

⁴ John William Siddall (ed.), *Men of Hawaii: Volume 2* (Honolulu, 1921), p. 141. United States Department of Agriculture, *Index-catalogue of medical and veterinary zoology: Part 4* (Washington, 1940), p. 1221.

⁵ *Nenagh News*, 7 September 1895.

⁶ *Nenagh Guardian*, 20 May 1896, 21 April 1897; *Nenagh News*, 4 April, 17 October 1896.

⁷ Elliot to Mulqueen, 24 September 1896. The letter is in the possession of Charlie McDonnell, a grand nephew of James Mulqueen. Charlie believes Mulqueen was born on his family's farm at Lisnalta, Rosbrien, County Limerick.

⁸ Pierce, 'In my father's time', p. 37.

Mulqueen was probably in no position to leave Ireland as he had on-going health issues and died within a few years.⁹

Although the veterinary profession had become a legally recognised body by the Veterinary Surgeons Act of 1881, as discussed in chapter 3, it still had a long way to go to become fully established. The early decades of the twentieth century were difficult for the majority of those in private practice. Since 1900, the Royal Veterinary College of Ireland had afforded Irishmen the opportunity to train in their own country. Although many of the early graduates entered private practice in Ireland, others, whether by choice or necessity, emigrated to Britain, joined the Army, or took up posts with the expanding Colonial Service. According to the *Register of Veterinary Surgeons 1910*, by December 1909 the Dublin College had produced eight-four qualified veterinary surgeons. Fifty-nine individuals, or seventy per-cent of the total, were in private practice in Ireland, seven in Britain, four had joined the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction (DATI), seven had joined the Army Veterinary Corps (AVC), and six were working in the Colonies, either in private practice or as state or municipal veterinary officers. For example, J. J. Fleury, an Offaly native who graduated in 1905, was State Veterinary Surgeon in Kedah, Malay Peninsula.¹⁰ Any extant accounts of early twentieth century private veterinary practice in Ireland suggest that, in the majority of cases, the veterinary surgeon was required to work hard, availing of every opportunity, to maintain a viable business. Therefore, it is hardly surprising that many of the Dublin graduates opted to leave the country to avail of secure employment elsewhere.

In the early decades of the twentieth-century the horse continued as the vet's dominant patient. The tuition given in the early years of the Dublin College was essentially equine based with only limited instruction given on other species. A college prospectus of c1910 noted that Professor Craig's 'Senior Anatomy' module offered a systematic course of about one-hundred lectures on the special anatomy of the horse,

⁹ Neither Charlie McDonnell nor this author can determine exactly when Mulqueen died. The name James Mulqueen, Rossbrien, Limerick, is listed on the RCVS Registers for four years, 1896-99. However, this does not mean that Mulqueen was alive in 1899 as it often took a couple of years for the names of deceased members to be removed. McDonnell believes Mulqueen died from TB or some other respiratory disease as he often heard, from his aunts, that Mulqueen suffered from breathing discomfort and weakness even during his football playing days. He is last mentioned in the *Nenagh Guardian*, 25 September 1897 as subscribing ten shillings to the Derrycastle Harriers' Hare Fund.

¹⁰ Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, *Register of veterinary surgeons, 1910* (London, 1910), pp 133-285. No information was given regarding one 1904 graduate, R. G. Melville.

and twenty on the comparative anatomy of the ox, sheep, pig and dog.¹¹ Although veterinary colleges had historically been criticised for offering little instruction on the anatomy of other animals, this was hardly surprising in view of the importance of the horse in both the urban and rural settings of early twentieth-century Ireland where the horse was ‘almost essential’ for traction, transport, and leisure pursuits. Therefore, it received the best treatment, including that of a veterinary nature.¹² Even then, there is evidence that the early twentieth-century veterinary graduate was limited in some aspects of equine practice. Pat Hartigan, although stressing that it was probably unfair to make generalisations, noted that his father, whose family were deeply involved with horses, maintained that the early twentieth-century vets could deal with certain conditions, but in other situations the animal’s owner was equally or more knowledgeable.¹³ Nevertheless, equine practice was the qualified vet’s domain. P. J. Howard claimed that in the early part of the century many vets never treated any other animal. Horses were so numerous and their complaints so varied that ‘there was plenty to do.’¹⁴ Howard was a successful country practitioner and also involved in all aspects of horsemanship. According to Professor Harold A Woodruff, writing in 1910, it was ‘almost impossible’ for a veterinary surgeon to succeed in Ireland unless he was a ‘sportsman.’ This was not the case in Britain. Woodruff claimed that Irish sporting vets were look upon as authorities on all aspects of horsemanship by their horse loving clients. He also noted that horse practice was declining in Britain, the motor-car becoming ubiquitous. However, he saw no decline in Irish horse practice, which he attributed to the love for the animal and to poor roads.¹⁵

The most lucrative Irish veterinary practices were urban based. Urban practitioners had contracts to look after the horses of haulage companies and urban corporations. Such contracts involved forge work, doctoring the animals, and giving advice on feeding, purchases and general stable management. For example, Robert H. Lambert, a member of the well-known Dublin veterinary family, had a practice at

¹¹ UCD Archives, RCVI/11 (1), Royal Veterinary College of Ireland, *Prospectus* (Dublin, 1910), p. 27.

¹² Joe Connolly, ‘The progress of veterinary science during the first half of the 20th century’ in *Teagasc, farming & country life 1916* (Carlow, 2016), p. 132; Interview with Vincent Houlihan, MRCVS, Dingle, county Kerry, 14 December 2011. CD 23, Author’s Collection; Pierce, ‘In my father’s time’, p. 38.

¹³ Interview with Pat Hartigan, MRCVS, Trinity College, Dublin, 13 April 2012. CD 42, Author’s Collection.

¹⁴ Howard, ‘Half a century’, pp 372-4.

¹⁵ H. A. Woodruff, ‘Some holiday impressions of Irish practice’ in *Veterinary News*, vol. 7 (24 September 1910), p. 542.

Richmond Street caring for the horses of several large Dublin firms, including the Guinness Brewery and Dublin United Tramway Company.¹⁶ In Cork, most of the horses treated by Edward W. Hoare were ‘city animals’, used for pulling drays, vans and other delivery vehicles.¹⁷ Such practices saw frequent cases of lameness and colic, many of which were recurrent. This was highlighted by the Lambert family’s treatment, for colic, of one particular Guinness horse, *Caesar*, on 119 occasions.¹⁸ Medicine sales and livery continued to play their part in supplementing the income of the vet in larger urban centres. On Peter Murray’s death in 1904 his Tralee practice was described when put up for sale as ‘lucrative’, especially in view of the good livery which a town centre site offered.¹⁹

Rural practice offered less opportunities, with an equal reliance on the equine patient. In Listowel, John H. Pierce treated equine lameness using blisters and liniments or by firing the animal’s leg, and colic with a mixture of linseed oil, turpentine and carbolic acid. Mrs Pierce compounded all the powders, liniments, blisters, mixtures and lotions for her husband’s practice. Amongst the compounds was ‘Walley’s Wound Liniment’, a prescription concocted by Professor Walley of the Edinburgh College, Pierce’s *alma mater*. It consisted of creosote, turpentine and rape oil. Pierce was most frequently called into the countryside for foaling cases or castrations. Castrating colts, at ten shillings each, was considered ‘very profitable’, especially as up to twenty animals from a district were brought to a pre-arranged location, where the vet would perform the operation. Although Pierce treated the dogs of a small number of aristocratic clients, including those of Sir Arthur Vicars, of Irish Crown Jewels fame, his small animal practice was of little consequence. Those who thought it necessary to bring dogs, usually greyhounds, to his surgery did so discretely, ashamed to be seen bringing a dog to a veterinary surgeon.²⁰ Cattle practice remained in an embryonic state.

¹⁶ Anon, ‘Dublin veterinary practice marks centenary’ in *The Veterinarian: An International Journal*, vol. 4, no. 4 (August, 1967), p. 228.

¹⁷ Cecilia V. Gorsuch, ‘My stroll through Cork city in 1918’ in *Holly Bough* (2003), p. 8.

¹⁸ Pat O’Reilly and Donal Nugent, ‘Remembering things past: Ham Lambert’ in *Ir. Veterinary Jn.*, vol. 52, no. 5 (May, 1999), p. 255.

¹⁹ *Kerry Evening Post*, 13 January, 17 September 1904.

²⁰ Pierce, ‘In my father’s time’, p. 38. See also Interview with Bill O’Connell, Askeaton, county Limerick, 13 February 2012. CD 34, Author’s Collection. Bill described how Dr Murnane, a Newcastle West vet, castrated colts around Askeaton in the 1930s and 40s under a similar arrangement. Sir Artur Vicars was an English born herald and genealogist. As custodian of the Irish Crown Jewels he was dismissed for negligence when the jewels were stolen in 1907. He retired to Kilmorna, Listowel, where he had family connections, and was shot dead there by the IRA in April 1921. See

Mary Frost explained that in the 1930s and 40s the vet was called only to a horse or ‘a valuable animal, like a good cow.’²¹ Aleen Cust, the first woman recognised by the RCVS, was a contemporary of Pierce. In a short 1934 memoir, she described her predominately equine ‘rough country’ practice of two decades earlier in counties Galway and Mayo, where she had to rely on her own resourcefulness ‘to an extent undreamed of by the town practitioner of these days.’ Cust suggested that any cattle she treated were those of her ‘horse-loving, horse-knowing’ clients, and normally only when the client had exhausted their own ‘charms and philtres.’ Obstetrics dominated her bovine cases, especially difficult calvings or a prolapsed uterus or vagina.²² As described by Cust country practice was rough with few luxuries. For example, protective waterproof clothing was unheard of. On arriving at a call, John H. Pierce changed into his work clothes, old trousers, a cotton shirt with the sleeves removed and a cotton bib.²³

Poor infrastructure, transport and communications made it difficult for the veterinary surgeon to connect with existing or potential clients. Long journeys into the countryside, in private practice or as a veterinary inspector, were generally made on horseback or by pony and trap.²⁴ In the 1930s, P. J. Howard regularly did calls from Ennis to Killaloe or Kilrush, towns almost thirty miles distant. In the knowledge that long trips necessitated a change of horse, Howard made provisions that his horses were stabled at various locations by his friends from equine circles. For example, Jim White’s grandfather kept horses for him at Tuamgraney, twenty-one miles from Ennis.²⁵ The necessity to make long journeys to one district invariably meant that clients residing elsewhere had a long wait for the vet’s services. Until 1949, with the arrival of Donal Prenderville, there was no resident vet in Killorglin, Kerry. This fact prompted his successor, Owen Mangan, to consider the difficulties formerly encountered by local farmers and horse-owners who wished to avail of a qualified vet’s services. As the nearest vet was based seventeen miles distant in Tralee, Mangan

<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/58134> ; Tomás O’Riordan, ‘The theft of the Irish Crown Jewels, 1907’ in *History Ireland*, vol. 9, no. 4 (Winter, 2001), pp 23-8.

²¹ Interview with Mary Frost, Askeaton, county Limerick, 9 February 2012. CD 33, Author’s Collection.

²² Aleen Cust, ‘Memories and memos’ in *Vet. Rec.*, new ser., vol. 14 (7 April, 1934), pp 363-5.

²³ Pierce, ‘In my father’s time’, p. 39.

²⁴ Interview with Bill O’Connell; Interview with Mary Frost. Both interviewees described how Dr Murnane travelled to his calls from Newcastle West by pony and trap, accompanied by a driver.

²⁵ Interview with Jim White, MRCVS, Patrickswell, county Limerick, 21 February 2012. CD 37, Author’s Collection.

concluded that it might take several days before the vet, consigned to equine transport, might arrive.²⁶ Pakie Ryan concurred, in that it was not unusual to wait two or three days for a vet, even into the 1950s. In some districts, the vets operated a 'round' system, which meant that they called to outlying villages on a regular basis, generally on a particular day of the week. However, such a system was not congruent with dealing with emergencies. Ryan argued that as there was, as such, no phone service, emergency calls were dealt with 'on a haphazard basis, if at all.'²⁷ The client was also required to go to great lengths to contact the vet. As a child in the 1930s, Mary Frost walked to Askeaton village to call Dr Murnane, a Rathkeale vet. She recalled that 'there was only a phone in the post office and if you had his number you could ring him.'²⁸

Over time the veterinary surgeon began to embrace new developments in transport and technology. In October 1911, a correspondent to the *Veterinary Record* declared that the motorcar had become 'a necessary adjunct to a veterinary practice.'²⁹ John H. Pierce was amongst the first veterinarians in this country to introduce automated transport to a practice. During his first twenty-one years of practice he travelled throughout north Kerry by horse and trap or bicycle. In 1912 he purchased two motorbikes, having use for both as one was usually under repair. Two years later a 'Swift' two-seater car was delivered from Dublin, the journey taking eleven hours. The lights were powered by gas and although there was no tarred road and a speed limit of twenty miles per hour the car proved a major boost to the practice.³⁰ The telephone was first used as a 'business instrument' in Irish veterinary practice in 1911, when James McKenny, 116 St Stephen's Green, was connected to the Dublin telephone exchange.³¹ P. J. Howard suggested that his Ennis practice had acquired a telephone by 1919.³² However, it was 1934 before Richard Pierce, on acquiring the Listowel practice on his father's death, installed a phone. This was the first private phone installed in Listowel town. However, because the majority of his clients had little or no access to a phone, calls for help continued to arrive from a messenger, on foot, bicycle or horseback, or

²⁶ Interview with Owen Mangan, MRCVS, Killorglin, county Kerry, 17 January 2012. CD 29, Author's Collection; *The Register of Veterinary Surgeons* shows that in 1940 there were seven practitioners based in Kerry, three in Listowel, two in Tralee and one each in Dingle and Killarney.

²⁷ Pakie Ryan, 'Veterinary around Murroe', p. 24.

²⁸ Interview with Mary Frost.

²⁹ Henry Taylor, 'Motor cars and veterinary practice' in *Vet. Rec.*, vol. 24 (28 October, 1911), p. 275.

³⁰ Pierce, 'In my father's time', p. 37.

³¹ Anon, 'Time capsules' in *Ir. Veterinary Jn.*, vol. 53, no. 1 (January, 2000), p. 24.

³² P. J. Howard, 'Notes on some unexpected results' in *Vet. Rec.*, vol. 32 (23 August, 1919), p. 84.

by a telegram that usually read ‘come quick horse/cow sick.’ Despite these early advances in transport and communications Pierce accepted that there was still no particular urgency in attending calls as ‘everything moved at a leisurely pace.’³³

The survival of the veterinary surgeon in the small town was dependent on two factors, a reasonable private practice, and a supplementary income from a veterinary inspectorship. This is highlighted in surviving records of the Pierce practice in Listowel. John H. Pierce graduated from Edinburgh in December 1893 and subsequently became veterinary inspector to the Listowel Union. He was a native of Causeway, fourteen miles from Listowel, and agreed to reside in the town if elected. The other candidate for the post, William Dagg, would not undertake to do so ‘without consideration.’³⁴ The inspectorship paid sixty pounds, which amounted to forty-seven percent of Pierce’s income for the year. During 1934, his last year of practice, private work earned £370. However, the inspectorship salary of £120, almost a quarter of the total income, still made a significant contribution to sustaining the practice. Over four decades John H. Pierce developed a sustainable veterinary practice based on private work and the part-time veterinary inspectorship. Regardless of hard work and perseverance, developing the private aspect of a practice was ultimately dependent on a sufficient supply of patients. Veterinary surgeons like John H. Pierce were drawn to the inspectorships of larger market towns, with a reasonable equine population, and a predominately fertile hinterland, which offered the potential for cattle practice. If these conditions were absent, the veterinary surgeon, despite the part-time government post, struggled to survive. This was highlighted by the subsequent career of William Dagg, Pierce’s opponent for the Listowel inspectorship in 1894.

William Dagg (Edinburgh, 1888) was the son of a landed Tipperary protestant.³⁵ Although he spent most of his working life in Dingle his ultimate goal was to secure a veterinary inspectorship in either Tralee or Listowel. He arrived in Tralee in 1889 and offered the customary services to horse owners at local hotels.³⁶ Later that year he was unsuccessful in his bid for that Union’s veterinary inspectorship.³⁷ As already noted he declined the Caherciveen inspectorship, refusing to live in the town. He was

³³ Pierce, ‘In my own time’, pp 169-70; For John H. Pierce’s obituary see *Kerry Reporter*, 23 June 1934.

³⁴ *Kerry Sentinel*, 21 April 1894.

³⁵ *Nenagh Guardian*, 9 June 1888.

³⁶ *Kerry Evening Post*, 27 November 1889, *Kerry Sentinel*, 5 March 1890.

³⁷ *Cork Examiner*, 28 November 1889

subsequently appointed to Dingle. Although there was no legal requirement that he would reside in the town, it appears the Guardians hoped that he might do so and establish a private practice there. The chairman, Lord Ventry, informed Dagg that the locals had no claim to his services, unless they employed him privately. Ventry believed that Dagg could garner private work but ‘a great deal will depend on yourself as to whether you distinguish yourself or not.’³⁸ Dagg let his Tralee premises and moved to Dingle, remaining largely inconspicuous.³⁹ He found little private work and spent his time as the RDS’s appointed veterinary surgeon in Kerry, inspecting animals for a national horse-breeding scheme.⁴⁰ His journeys in and out of Dingle were made on the newly opened Tralee and Dingle Railway.⁴¹

In May 1894, Dagg announced that he had again commenced practice in Tralee and would also visit Listowel on Fridays. This coincided with his failed attempt for the Listowel inspectorship.⁴² Because of Dagg’s long periods of absence, the Dingle Union eventually resolved that he should choose either a salary of £60 and visit the district weekly, or £120 and reside permanently in the town. When he declined to entertain either, suggesting that he might accept £60 for fortnightly visits to the town, a decision was made to discontinue with his services.⁴³ Dagg subsequently reapplied for the job and was re-elected on a promise that he would live in town. No doubt this change of mind was accelerated by the presence of another candidate, H. C. Woodriffe, Dublin.⁴⁴ For a period Dagg spent more time in Dingle working for the Union and privately catering for an elite clientele.⁴⁵ However, he never passed up an opportunity to work in

³⁸ *Kerry Evening Post*, 22 February 1893.

³⁹ *Kerry Weekly Reporter*, 11 February 1893.

⁴⁰ Royal Dublin Society, *Register of thoroughbred stallions for service under the Horse Breeding Scheme 1893: Vol. II* (Dublin, 1893), pp i-x, xiv. The scheme offered owners of thoroughbred stallions the chance to register their horses for service. Special importance was placed on the test of soundness, which was carried out by the appointed veterinary surgeon in the owner’s yard. The RDS admitted that the work involved ‘a considerable outlay’ but felt that the expenditure was justified by having a large number of stallions passed through a ‘searching’ veterinary examination.

⁴¹ *Irish Examiner*, 13 September 1894. The paper reported that Dagg appeared as a witness at an inquiry following a fatal accident involving a train on which he was a passenger. See also Patrick B. Whitehouse and A. J. Powell, *The story of the Tralee & Dingle light railway* (London, 1958), p. 69; David Rowlands, Walter McGrath and Tom Francis, *The Dingle train* (Brighton, 1996), p. 5. The thirty-one-mile train journey took at best 155 minutes and initially was the ‘easiest and quickest way to get to Dingle.’ However, when the line closed in 1939 a bus journey, following almost an identical route, took only 105 minutes.

⁴² *Kerry Weekly Reporter*, 12 May 1894.

⁴³ *Kerry Sentinel*, 7 March, *Kerry News*, 3 April 1896.

⁴⁴ *Kerry Sentinel*, 22 August, 26 September 1896.

⁴⁵ *Cork Constitution*, 4 September 1896, reported that Dagg used liquid ammonia to treat a mare, the property of Dr Hayes. Bees, destined for Hayes, which had arrived on the train, stung the animal. They escaped when a servant was placing them in a cart, drawn by the mare. The animal subsequently died.

the more prosperous parts of the county. His absence was again questioned in 1901 following a period acting as *locum tenens* for John Hewson in Killarney.⁴⁶ By now, under the terms of the Local Government (Ireland) Act of 1898, county councils and urban district councils implemented the Disease of Animals Acts. In September 1903 Kerry County Council paid Dagg £30 9s for acting as *locum tenens* for the aging Peter Murray in Tralee.⁴⁷ Murray died within months. Despite a recommendation that ‘Dr. Dagg’s reputation was second to none in Ireland’ he lost out on securing the position permanently to William J. Foley by sixteen votes to seven. The Tralee inspectorship carried a salary of £100 and, more importantly, access to the elite clientele of Kerry.⁴⁸ Meanwhile Dingle District Council were unhappy with Dagg’s absence and informed its parent body that Dagg was reneging on his agreement to live in the town to the ‘great inconvenience of the farmers of this district.’⁴⁹ Its members were divided on whether to dismiss Dagg if he refused to live in Dingle, or to reduce his salary and allow him to live elsewhere. Dagg himself favoured the latter option.⁵⁰ The County Council eventually passed a resolution compelling Dagg to live in Dingle.⁵¹ Some members proposed a pay increase, as ‘the private practice in Dingle is very small.’ Others argued that he was adequately paid, as there was ‘very little’ state work in Dingle anyway. No increase materialised.⁵²

While the councils were arguing about his terms of employment, Dagg was residing in Tralee, continually soliciting potential clients both in that town and in Listowel.⁵³ By mid-September the Chairman of the Dingle Council complained that it was a great wrong that its ratepayers were subsidising a veterinary surgeon in Tralee who ‘never comes to Dingle’, one council member arguing that the Dingle people ‘did not want him at all.’⁵⁴ Dagg was in Dingle by December when he examined horses purchased for the workhouse.⁵⁵ However, he was not prepared to relinquish the prospect of private work which Tralee offered. In February 1905, he employed Frank Relf as his

⁴⁶ *Kerry News*, 9 August, *Kerry Evening Post*, 28 August, *Kerry Weekly Reporter*, 14 September 1901.

⁴⁷ *Kerry People*, 5 September 1903.

⁴⁸ *Kerry People*, 13 February 1904.

⁴⁹ *Kerry Evening Star*, 25 February 1904.

⁵⁰ *Kerry People*, 3, 26 March, 2 April, *Kerry Sentinel*, 23 April 1904.

⁵¹ *Kerry Evening Star*, 12 May 1904.

⁵² *Kerry People*, 30 July, 5 November 1904.

⁵³ See *Kerry Sentinel*, 25 May 1904. Between May and December 1904 Dagg’s newspaper notice appeared in the Tralee papers on more than seventy occasions.

⁵⁴ *Kerry News*, 16 September 1904.

⁵⁵ *Kerry Evening Star*, 15 December 1904.

‘assistant’, to work out of his Tralee premises, Dagg himself attending the town on Thursday and Saturday. A subsequent newspaper notice, posted within weeks, suggested that the vets were in partnership, both working in Tralee.⁵⁶ There is no evidence to suggest that this partnership lasted beyond the end of the year.⁵⁷ Relf married and continued to practice in Tralee for a number of years. In 1909, he was appointed the town’s veterinary inspector to dairies.⁵⁸ Evidently this was Dagg’s final attempt to establish a Tralee practice. From then he appeared to be resigned to living in Dingle, working for the local council and taking whatever private practice he could procure. For example, in May 1906 he wrote to Kerry County Council stating that he had inspected the sheep on the mountains around Dingle and found them free from scab.⁵⁹ His private practice was limited. For example, Monsignor Pádraig Ó Fiannachta, born near Dingle in 1927, remembered Dagg and recalled that ‘around here when I was young I never saw him visiting anybody.’⁶⁰ In 1911, Dagg, aged forty-six, was living at John Street with his wife, a teenage relative and a domestic servant.⁶¹ He lived and worked in Dingle for another four decades, before retiring to his native Tipperary shortly before his death, in 1951.⁶²

The Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction and veterinary science

At the turn of the twentieth century few farmers had any concept of scientific veterinary interventions, predominantly relying on home remedies or the interventions of the local handy-man. In 1901 the newly established Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction (DATI) organised a scheme of ‘Pioneer Lectures’ in towns and villages, to illustrate the general need and use of scientific instruction in agriculture and industry. The County Committees of Agriculture arranged a schedule of venues and dates where DATI organised lecturers, sourced from a variety of institutions and government bodies in both Ireland and Britain, would speak.⁶³ Falkner C. Mason (Edinburgh, 1894),

⁵⁶ *Kerry Evening Star*, 16 February, 30 March 1905.

⁵⁷ The final newspaper notice regarding any association between Dagg and Relf appeared in the *Kerry Evening Post*, 15 November 1905.

⁵⁸ *Kerry Sentinel*, 2 December 1905, 13 November 1909.

⁵⁹ *Kerry Weekly Reporter*, 19 May 1906.

⁶⁰ Interview with Monsignor Pádraig Ó Fiannachta and T. P. O’Concubhair, Dingle, county Kerry, 6 May 2010. CD 5, Author’s Collection.

⁶¹ <http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/reels/nai002478242/>

⁶² *Irish Times*, 16 February 1951.

⁶³ Anon, ‘Science teaching and technical instruction’ in William P. Coyne (ed.), *Ireland Industrial and Agricultural* (Dublin, 1902), p. 174.

incumbent Professor of Materia Medica and Veterinary Hygiene in Dublin, was chosen to deliver lectures on ‘veterinary hygiene.’⁶⁴ The inaugural course, delivered in the west of Ireland, was poorly attended. A report of a lecture from Drumkeerin, Leitrim, noted that Mason gave practical advice to a small number of local farmers on the best methods of preventing diseases such as blackleg and white scour.⁶⁵ However, despite a slow start, the lectures quickly became hugely popular, drawing packed audiences throughout the country. DATI’s *First Annual General Report*, published in 1901, reported that so great was the demand for veterinary lectures that in many cases a single county could have absorbed the whole time of the lecturer.⁶⁶ The *Fifth Report* of 1905 noted that of 462 pioneer lectures delivered, 225 were on veterinary hygiene. The average attendance at all lectures was 134, with veterinary hygiene being ‘specially popular.’⁶⁷ Local veterinary surgeons were occasionally sanctioned to deliver such lectures. In 1904, the Leitrim County Committee announced that they had approval from DATI to select twenty centres across the county, where William A Byrne would deliver veterinary hygiene lectures. DATI would defray all costs.⁶⁸ Although the delivery of veterinary lectures offered practitioners the opportunity to engage with potential new clients, it appears many were unwilling to become involved. In 1906, DATI reported that it had tried to include veterinary as part of the general agricultural instruction given at its ‘winter classes.’ However this was achieved only occasionally when it was possible to secure the services of the local vet.⁶⁹ Although vets were few in number, perhaps they were reluctant to impart knowledge to a farming community historically slow in acquiring their services, believing that they would ultimately gain little for their efforts.

When it came to Department lecturers, Professor Mason had few rivals. Daniel Hoctor attributed Mason’s popularity, partly to a growing interest in veterinary matters, and partly to the Professors ‘human qualities and his aptitude to make a difficult subject appear simple.’⁷⁰ The audience’s ignorance on even basic scientific veterinary thought,

⁶⁴ See Hartigan, ‘The Royal Veterinary College of Ireland’, pp 35-7.

⁶⁵ *Freeman’s Journal*, 30 July 1901.

⁶⁶ *First annual general report of the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction (Ireland), 1900-1901* (Dublin, 1901), p. 42, H.C. 1901, xx, 511.

⁶⁷ *Fourth annual general report of the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction (Ireland), 1903-1904* (Dublin, 1905), p. 35, H.C. 1903-1904, xxi, 261.

⁶⁸ *Leitrim Observer*, 16 January 1904.

⁶⁹ *Fifth annual general report of the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction (Ireland), 1904-1905* (Dublin, 1906), pp 17, 20, H.C. 1906, xxiii, 295.

⁷⁰ Daniel Hoctor, *History of the Department of Agriculture* (Dublin, 1971), pp 47-8.

and Mason's simple explanations, were highlighted in a report from an early meeting at Ballyconnell, Cavan. Mason began by saying that the Department had sent him to instruct farmers 'in many important matters of which they (farmers) knew nothing and which were really simple.' His main message was that many animal diseases were contagious, caused by 'little animals called germs, whose favourite place was among dirt.' However, simple hygiene, such as washing ones hands, could ultimately prevent disease. He also attempted to wean his audience off old ideas, like the belief that the smell of manure was healthy, by advising that manure retained disease and, therefore, should be kept at a distance from the shed. Mason also introduced his audience to the latest concepts in medical science, explaining that several conditions such as Blackleg, widespread in that district and considered fatal, could be prevented by the process of inoculation or vaccination. The lecture was 'enthusiastically received', the lecturer unanimously invited to return.⁷¹

Hector suggested that Mason must have lectured in every parish in the country.⁷² He certainly travelled extensively. For example, he delivered a course of lectures in county Kerry in each of the years 1903, 1904 and 1905, without ever attending at a repeat venue. All twenty-eight lectures were delivered in small country villages, situated in every district of the county.⁷³ Evidence suggests that during his travels Mason spent any spare time inquiring into how the locals cared for their animals. In 1928, *Béaloides* published his short paper on traditional veterinary treatments, which focused on unusual practices of that time. Although he believed many had no 'prosaic explanation', based as they were on fairy and spirit beliefs, others, such as rudimentary vaccines for blackleg, discussed in Chapter 5, were effective. Mason claimed that many of the old practices had become infrequent since the 'rudiments' of veterinary science had been spread by the teachers of the county committees and their Department colleagues.⁷⁴ Mason's own lectures remained a permanent fixture until about two years before his death in January 1932.⁷⁵ Just months earlier he retired as head of the veterinary hygiene branch of the Department of Agriculture. He had also held lectureships at UCD and the College of Science.⁷⁶ However, Mason is best known

⁷¹ *Anglo-Celt*, 14 June 1902.

⁷² Hector, *Department of Agriculture*, p. 47.

⁷³ See advertisements in *Kerry Evening Star*, 29 July, 31 December 1903, 7 September 1904.

⁷⁴ F. C. Mason, 'Traditions concerning domestic animals' in *Béaloides*, vol. 1 (1927-28), pp 223-5.

⁷⁵ For example, see *Drogheda Argus*, 22 March, *Connacht Sentinel*, 2 September 1930.

⁷⁶ *Evening Herald*, 6 January 1932.

for introducing veterinary science to the Irish farming community. Several newspaper obituaries highlighted that ‘his work among the farmers was greatly appreciated.’⁷⁷ Apparently, Mason’s lectures were not always confined to the country’s schools and parish halls. The *Irish Press* reported that he ‘frequently lectured from 2RN’, Ireland’s first radio station.⁷⁸

In addition to its lectures, DATI set about disseminating knowledge amongst farmers and others by means of leaflets, bulletins and the Department’s journal. This was organised by its Statistics and Intelligence Branch. For the farmer leaflets were concise and easily accessible. By 1901, 400,000 leaflets had been issued, giving ‘practical instruction’ on fifteen subjects. Six leaflets dealt with the common diseases of cattle, sheep and poultry. By then the Department had an ever growing mailing list of three-thousand individual names, many of whom took ‘large supplies’ for onward distribution. The aim was to distribute a quarter of a million copies of an ‘important’ leaflet within a fortnight of its publication.⁷⁹ DATI was prolific in publishing new leaflets on agricultural and technical subjects. Its *Fifth Report*, for 1904-05 stated that 1,596,000 leaflets were printed during the previous year.⁸⁰ In 1919 there were 35,000 names on DATI’s mailing list.⁸¹ All leaflets were available free of charge and post free on application to the Department.⁸² In 1932, the Department of Agriculture announced that their ‘instructional leaflets’ were now for sale in bound volumes of 104 leaflets, costing only one shilling.⁸³ Newly published veterinary leaflets were usually reproduced and discussed in the Department’s Journal, and, more importantly, in the farming pages of both the national and provincial press. At a national level the farming section of the *Weekly Irish Times*, published every Saturday, informed its readers about

⁷⁷ *Nenagh Guardian, Meath Chronicle, Wicklow People*, 9 January 1932.

⁷⁸ *Irish Press*, 4 January 1932.

⁷⁹ *First annual general report of the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction (Ireland), 1900-1901* (Dublin, 1901), p. 80, H.C. 1901, xx, 511.

⁸⁰ *Fifth annual general report of the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction (Ireland), 1904-1905* (Dublin, 1906), p. 96, H.C. 1906, xxiii, 295.

⁸¹ *Nineteenth annual general report of the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction (Ireland), 1918-19* (Dublin, 1920), p. 113, H.C. 1920, ix, 171.

⁸² The majority of the early leaflets published by DATI survive in bound form at the NLI, Dublin. For example, leaflets nos. 1-99, excepting no. 98, published between 1902 and 1918, are bound with a number of special leaflets. Call number: Ir 630941 d 7. This author has in his possession Department of Agriculture leaflets nos. 28, 40 and 63, published in 1929/30, relating to Blackleg, Hoose, and Redwater, respectively, and a leaflet on Milk Fever, no. 107, published in 1945. All leaflets noted that copies ‘may be obtained free of charge, and post free, on application to the Secretary, Department of Agriculture, Dublin.’

⁸³ *Irish Times*, 14 May 1932.

any new information disseminated by the Department. For example, in July 1900, the newspaper ‘strongly’ advised its farming readers to apply to DATI for copies of its free ‘Ox Warble Fly’ leaflet and explained that those applying need not send a stamped envelope.⁸⁴

Instructional leaflets on the Warble Fly were representative of how veterinary leaflets were regularly reissued, either at a time of the year when certain conditions were particularly troublesome, or in a revised form when new treatments became available. In the early decades of the twentieth century attacks from the Warble Fly caused great distress and suffering to Irish herds, especially during the summer months.⁸⁵ Characterised by lumps or ‘warbles’ on the animal’s back, the larvae damaged the hide or oesophagus and caused infected animals to lose condition and the ability to produce milk.⁸⁶ In Seanad Éireann, Séan O’Donovan, Fianna Fáil, in calling for concerted measures to eradicate the pest, explained to fellow members that the fly did not sting or bite but merely laid its eggs on the animal’s back. However, the mere presence of the fly led to episodes of ‘gadding’, where individual animals, or entire herds, ran uncontrollably through hedges, barbed wire or other obstructions to seek comfort in the cool waters of a river or the shade of a tree.⁸⁷ Resulting wounds, especially to the udder or teats, frequently required stitching by a veterinary surgeon.⁸⁸ From its foundation DATI considered the warble-fly as a serious hindrance to the agricultural economy. In 1900, the damage done by the parasite to the hides and flesh of cattle was conservatively estimated at £500,000 annually.⁸⁹ The Warble Fly was the subject of the earliest leaflet published by DATI, in June 1900.⁹⁰ It was ‘seasonably’ re-issued in May 1903 and then revised in 1905.⁹¹ From 1900 DATI conducted numerous ‘experiments and observations’ to examine the life cycle of warble-flies and thereby ascertain the most beneficial forms of treatment. Early treatments involved the application of various dressings, containing train oil, spirits of tar and flowers of

⁸⁴ *Weekly Irish Times*, 7 July 1900.

⁸⁵ Interview with Con Curtin, Dromtrasna, Abbeyfeale, county Limerick, 27 January 2012. CD 30, Author’s Collection; Interview with John D. Pierce.

⁸⁶ See L. R. Thomsett, ‘Skin conditions’ in A. H. Andrews (ed.), *Bovine medicine: Disease and husbandry of cattle* (2nd ed., Oxford, 2004), pp 875-8.

⁸⁷ <https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/seanad/1953-06-17/11/>

⁸⁸ *Fermanagh Herald*, 22 May 1976.

⁸⁹ *Weekly Irish Times*, 26 May 1900.

⁹⁰ G. H. Carpenter, ‘The Warble-fly’ in *Journal of the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction, Ireland*, vol. 1, no. 1 (August, 1900), pp 89-92; *Weekly Irish Times*, 30 June 1900.

⁹¹ *Weekly Irish Times*, 16 May 1903; *Freeman’s Journal*, 14 July 1910.

sulphur, which were subsequently found to be ‘valueless and some even harmful.’ In 1907 experiments turned to manually ‘squeezing out’ and killing the maggots.⁹² This method was advocated in another revised leaflet, published in 1911, which also detailed the ‘present state of knowledge on the subject.’⁹³ This pattern of experimentation and frequent revision of advice to farmers continued until the warble fly was practically eradicated in the 1960s. In 1965, a Government Order was introduced that made it obligatory for the entire cattle population, varying from five to seven million, to be treated in the Autumn of each year with an approved organophosphorus ‘pour-on’ insecticide. Harry Thornberry, MRCVS, described the campaign as ‘an outstanding success.’ However, the organophosphorus compounds were subsequently found to have dangerous side-effects, which resulted in the Department of Agriculture having to deal with numerous compensation claims.⁹⁴

DATI’s successful dissemination of veterinary information to stockowners was relatively straightforward, being part of its brief to promote scientific methods. It faced a bigger challenge in answering calls from County Councils and other public bodies to devise some means to enable small farmers to access veterinary services at fees commensurate with their means. In 1907, in conjunction with the local County Council, DATI rolled out a pilot scheme of ‘veterinary dispensaries’ in county Wexford. The scheme was based on the Dispensary Medical Service. It proposed that veterinary surgeons would attend dispensaries at various locations on appointed days to advise farmers on veterinary treatments, or to treat actual cases of disease. If necessary the vet travelled to the farm. A scale of fees was fixed, based on the valuation of the stockholders’ holdings.⁹⁵ Two years later, DATI introduced a Veterinary Dispensaries Scheme for Congested Districts. Structured exactly as was the Wexford scheme, it aimed to provide small-holders in these areas with veterinary aid at specially reduced fees, which varied from 1s to 5s per case. The first dispensaries were opened in the

⁹² H. Thornberry and J. E. Kenny, ‘A review of investigations on the warble fly problem, 1900-1964, in Ireland’ in *Journal of the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries*, vol. 62 (November, 1965), pp 5-6.

⁹³ Anon, ‘Leaflet on the warble fly’ in *Journal of the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction, Ireland*, vol. 11, no. 3 (April, 1911), pp 503-4; *Weekly Freeman’s Journal*, 22 April 1911.

⁹⁴ H. Thornberry, ‘Warble fly eradication in Ireland’ in *Ir. Veterinary Jn.*, vol. 30, no. 6 (June, 1976), pp 83-8. Harry Thornberry, a Department of Agriculture and Fisheries vet, played a crucial role in the Irish Government’s fight against the warble fly; For a comprehensive overview of the side effects of organophosphorus compounds in the treatment of warble fly see A. H. Andrews, ‘Abnormal reactions and their frequency in cattle following the use of organophosphorus’ in *Vet. Rec.*, vol. 109, no. 9 (29 August, 1981), pp 171-5.

⁹⁵ *Wexford People*, 14 September, *Irish Times*, 8 November 1907. For an overview of the human Dispensary Medical Service see Cox, ‘Access and engagement’, pp 57-78.

Ballyhaunis district of Mayo in September 1910, attended by T. J. Flynn, MRCVS, Ballyhaunis.⁹⁶ Others appointed to the scheme were P. J. Howard, Ennis, William Dagg, Dingle, and J. J. Kelly, Kilrush.⁹⁷

At its peak, the scheme provided 141 dispensaries, conducted by thirty-three vets, in counties Clare, Cork, Donegal, Kerry, Leitrim, Mayo, Roscommon, Sligo and Galway. The participating vets received annual salaries varying from £40 to £250, according to the number of dispensaries and the extent of the work. From the onset few stockowners availed of the service. As a result, the scheme was gradually suspended, or allowed to lapse in many areas. By 1943, only sixteen dispensaries, located in Kerry and Clare, and run by four vets, were in existence. By then the total annual cost of the project was a paltry £380. The Department attributed the failure of the service to the fact that sick animals needed to be treated on the farm. Therefore, providing a service at fixed centres, on appointed days, was of little use. Furthermore, the areas served by an individual vet were usually far too large, resulting in high travel costs and inconvenience for both the vet and farmer.⁹⁸ Such an outcome was predicted by the VMAI, as early as 1906, when the idea of veterinary dispensaries were first mooted to it by DATI. Association members resolved that it was their opinion that the scheme was ‘not necessary... [and] even if it were, we consider that the various schemes, based on the Dispensary Medical Service, would prove unworkable.’⁹⁹ In 1915, the *Weekly Freeman’s Journal* suspected that the scheme was suspended or lapsed because of the ‘War Economics of the Department.’ The newspaper regretted this as it believed the scheme provide the only realistic opportunity of offering veterinary services in parts of the country where the distances were so great that the resulting fee of a private veterinary call was prohibitive.¹⁰⁰

An interesting set of documents relating to the Veterinary Dispensary Scheme, taken from the records of the Pierce family, Listowel, survives at the National Archives, Dublin. In 1910, John H. Pierce was appointed to attend dispensaries at Lisselton and Knocknagoshel on alternate weeks, for which he received an annual subsidy of fifty

⁹⁶ *Irish Times*, 30 August 1910.

⁹⁷ *Weekly Irish Times*, 10 September, 22 October 1910, listed the names of some of the veterinary surgeons, initially chosen for the scheme, along with the locations of their dispensaries.

⁹⁸ *Department of Agriculture, Committee of Inquiry of Post-Emergency Agricultural Policy, Third interim report, on veterinary services* (Dublin, 1944), p. 16.

⁹⁹ *Dublin Daily Express*, 19 May 1906.

¹⁰⁰ *Weekly Freeman’s Journal*, 4 September 1915.

pounds.¹⁰¹ DATI supplied posters for display at the RIC Barracks, detailing that Pierce was authorised to give veterinary advice to any ‘*bona fide*’ farmer whose land valuation did not exceed ten pounds. The local national school teachers were also requested to disseminate the relevant information. The posters suggested that the onus was on the vet to determine if individual farmers satisfied rather complicated criteria regarding fees. Advice or simple operations at ‘headquarters or dispensary’ cost a flat rate of one shilling per case. However, ‘severe’ operations cost 2s 6d per case for persons whose valuation was five pounds or under, and 5s if one’s valuation was between five pounds and ten pounds. Double fees applied ‘after sunset.’ In February 1917, DATI wrote to Pierce informing him that, from 31 August, the scheme would be discontinued in the Listowel district, as those eligible had ‘evinced so little desire to take advantage of it.’¹⁰²

The arrival of women to the veterinary profession

One of the greatest changes in the veterinary landscape of the early twentieth-century was the emergence of female practitioners. More than a century after the foundation of the first veterinary schools, students of veterinary medicine were exclusively men. In 1889, the veterinary schools of Alfort and Zurich graduated the world’s first female veterinary surgeons. Throughout Europe the number of women entering the male dominated profession slowly increased. During the Great, there was a shortage of vets so this enabled women to procure veterinary employment, especially in laboratories, slaughterhouses and dairies.¹⁰³ In Britain the RCVS were against women entering the profession, the barrier seen as ‘physical, not intellectual’, with a belief that a woman could not have the skills and strength needed to castrate colts and birth calves, the mainstays of the profession at that time.¹⁰⁴ Opponents of women in medicine and law held similar beliefs, arguing that women were eminently unfit to be doctors or lawyers

¹⁰¹ The recollections of Richard Pierce suggest that ‘veterinary dispensaries’ were nothing more than meeting points, usually farms or public houses, where the vet waited for potential clients. John H. Pierce held dispensaries at public houses, Curtin’s of Knocknagoshel, and Cantillon’s of Lisselton. See Pierce, ‘In my father’s time’, p. 37.

¹⁰² National Archives, Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction files, A 21641-10 and A 8189-17. The files contain correspondence between the Department and Pierce regarding the terms and conditions of Pierce’s appointment, copies of the Department posters, a list of names of local teachers supplied by Pierce, and correspondence on the termination of the appointment.

¹⁰³ Ivan Katić, ‘Pioneer female veterinarians’ in *Medical Sciences*, vol. 37 (2012), pp 137-68; M. M. Aitken, ‘Women in the veterinary profession’ in *Vet. Rec.*, vol. 134, no. 21 (21 May, 1994), p. 546.

¹⁰⁴ Pattison, *British veterinary profession*, pp 152-3.

because of their physical, mental and emotional makeup.¹⁰⁵ Early women doctors predominantly came from well to do backgrounds and were generally supported by their families. However, medical schools were unwilling to accept female students. Elizabeth Garrett Anderson, Britain's first female doctor, studied privately at the Middlesex Hospital, London, before qualifying with a licence from the Society of Apothecaries, in 1865. The medical licencing body in Ireland, the King's and Queen's College of Physicians of Ireland, was the first authority in the British Isles to admit women to examination in 1877.¹⁰⁶ In 1879, the University of London became the first British university to allow women full admission to its examinations on equal terms as men. Four women graduated with a BA the following year.¹⁰⁷ In Ireland, the first women received a university degree, in 1884, at the Royal University, an examining and degree awarding institution, which provided no teaching.¹⁰⁸

The first woman to be admitted to a veterinary college was Aleen Cust. As with the early female medical students, she came from a privileged background, an aristocratic Tipperary family. However, veterinary studies were not seen as appropriate for a lady and she was disowned by her family when accepted as a student at William Williams' New Edinburgh, where she completed the four-year curriculum in 1900. Nevertheless, the RCVS refused to allow her to sit their professional examinations. On Williams' recommendation, she was employed by William Byrne, a Roscommon vet, who, ironically, needed an assistant as he was recently elected to the RCVS Council. Byrne had previously argued that women had every right to be admitted to the profession. At an ICVA meeting, in October 1897, he claimed this would eventually happen but would be delayed because of a majority of 'misogynous old bachelors and

¹⁰⁵ For a contemporary discussion on attitudes to women in the medical and legal professions see Walter Rivington, *The medical profession* (Dublin, 1879), pp 135-8. See also Mary Redmond, 'The emergence of women in the solicitor's profession in Ireland' in Eamonn G. Hall and Daire Hogan (eds), *Law Society of Ireland, 1852-2002: Portrait of a profession* (Dublin, 2002), pp 97-120.

¹⁰⁶ Laura Kelly, 'The art of medicine: Elizabeth Garrett Anderson: An early pioneer of women in medicine' in *The Lancet*, vol. 390, no. 10113 (16 December, 2017), pp 2620-1; Beulah Bewley, "'On the inside sitting alone': Pioneer Irish women doctors' in *History Ireland*, vol. 13, no. 2 (March/April, 2005), pp 33-6; For a comprehensive discussion on the debates surrounding women's admission to Irish medical schools, the geographical and social backgrounds of early women medical students, their educational experiences and their subsequent careers see Laura Kelly, *Irish Women in medicine, c. 1880s to 1920: Origins, education and careers* (Manchester, 2013).

¹⁰⁷ Negley Harte, *The University of London, 1836-1986: An illustrated history* (London, 1986), pp 126-8.

¹⁰⁸ Joyce Padbury, 'Mary Hayden and women's admission to the university: The establishment of the National University of Ireland in 1908' in *Dublin Historical Record*, vol. 61, no. 1 (Spring, 2008), p. 80. (78-86).

hen-pecked husbands' on the RCVS Council. His comments appeared to amuse fellow ICVA members who made facetious comments about the bachelor's love life. When the President, David Fulton, said that women should be kept out of the profession, E. C. Winter, a future President, remarked 'except as sleeping partners.' Owen Coll, Limerick, claimed that a woman would encounter a 'great many difficulties' in everyday practice and even questioned if the lady veterinarian on night calls might be safe with stable boys or 'the gentleman's son' as her protector.¹⁰⁹ Despite criticism from government, the church, the press and hardcore RCVS members, Aleen Cust went on to build a successful career in Ireland, initially as Byrne's assistant and subsequently with her own practice, gaining a veterinary inspectorship in 1906. Apparently, Cust gained the trust and respect of clients and fellow vets because of her competence and 'a mixture of aristocratic finesse and an earthy knowledge of people and animals.'¹¹⁰ The RCVS finally recognised Cust's right to practice in 1922, not on account of any change of mind set, but because they were legally obliged to do so by the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act of 1919.¹¹¹

By 1922, the Act had already allowed five women to enrol at veterinary colleges, two in Dublin, two in Liverpool and one in Edinburgh.¹¹² The first female graduates from Dublin were Olga Blight Woodward, Sandyford, in 1926, and both Katherine Hueffer, England, and Hilda Bisset, Scotland, in 1927.¹¹³ Hueffer was the daughter of the novelist Ford Maddox Ford, who subsequently married the painter Charles Lamb. They lived at Carraroe, Galway, where she practiced.¹¹⁴ It was rare to

¹⁰⁹ Anon, 'The Central Veterinary Association of Ireland' in *Veterinarian*, vol. 70, no. 11 (November, 1897), pp 624-7.

¹¹⁰ For a detailed account of Cust's early years and time in Ireland see Ford, *Aleen Cust*, pp 1-64.

¹¹¹ The Act also enabled women to become barristers, solicitors, jurors and magistrates, to enter other professions such as accountancy and, with some caveats, to enter the higher ranks of the Civil Service. It allowed women to be admitted to incorporated professional societies, and officially gave universities the power to admit women to membership or degrees. At this point, Oxford and Cambridge were the only universities that did not do this. See Mari Takayanagi 'Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act 1919' in Erika Rackley and Rosemary Auchmuty (eds), *Women's legal landmarks: Celebrating the history of women and law in the UK and Ireland* (London, 2019), pp 133-8; Ford, *Aleen Cust*, p. 74. *Weekly Irish Times*, 30 December 1922.

¹¹² Anon, 'The first woman veterinary surgeon' in *British Medical Journal*, vol. 2 no. 3234 (23 December 1922), p. 1236; The LVC did not allow female veterinary students until 1927. See Iain Pattison, *John McFadyean: A great British veterinarian* (London, 1981), pp 188-97.

¹¹³ Margaret Ó hÓgartaigh, 'Female veterinary surgeons in Ireland, 1900-30' in *Ir. Veterinary Jn.*, vol. 59, no. 7 (July, 2006), p. 389; Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, *The Register of Veterinary Surgeons, 1933* (London, 1933), pp 102, 170, 252; Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, *The Register of Veterinary Surgeons, 1962* (London, 1962), pp 24, 123, 207.

¹¹⁴ Max Saunders, *Ford Maddox Ford: A dual life: Volume II: The after-war world* (Oxford, 1996), pp 130, 318; *Evening Mail*, 15 May 1935; *Irish Times*, 16 December 1964.

have more than one vet in a locality in Ireland. This allowed the women who practised here the opportunity to work with a range of animals, unlike their British or American counterparts, who normally specialised in the ‘more feminine’ area of small practice.¹¹⁵ The early female graduates found it especially hard to gain experience. Many had to pay large premiums to see practice, and were often forced to accept rates of pay that were much lower than those offered to men.¹¹⁶ However, in spite of old prejudices, the numbers of female graduates slowly but steadily increased. In 1934 there were only thirty women on the RCVS Register, five of whom had qualified in Dublin. A decade later the overall number had increased to 186, which included thirteen Dublin graduates. According to Maureen Aitken, women vets found more opportunity when the horse fell from prominence. The profession subsequently offered opportunities not alone in equine and bovine practice, but in small animal practice, universities and research centres, Government service, commercial firms and animal welfare centres.¹¹⁷

The effects of the Great War on Irish veterinary practice

During the early years of the twentieth-century, the veterinary corps of the British Army continued as a source of employment for many Irish-born veterinarians. As previously noted, by 1910, seven of eighty-four individuals that had hitherto graduated from the Dublin College were listed as members of the AVC. Officered by veterinary surgeons, the AVC was established in 1903 following substantial losses of animals during the Second Boer War (1899-1902).¹¹⁸ At the outbreak of the Great War there were 364 AVC officers. By 1918 the number had increased to over 1,600, meaning that half the members of the RCVS were at that time serving in the AVC. During the war, officers were involved in the evacuation of wounded horses from the front line to veterinary hospitals, and in their subsequent treatment for injuries, exhaustion, skin diseases, and the effects of gas.¹¹⁹ The numbers of Irishmen in the AVC rose sharply as the Great War intensified. Speaking at a VMAI meeting in May 1916, P. J. Howard remarked

¹¹⁵ Ó hÓgartaigh, ‘Female veterinary surgeons’, p. 389.

¹¹⁶ Anon, ‘Women and the veterinary profession’ in *Vet. Rec.*, new ser., vol. 14 (7 April, 1934), pp 361-5; Julie Hipperson, ‘Professional entrepreneurs: Women veterinary surgeons as small business owners in interwar Britain’ in *Social History of Medicine*, vol. 31, no. 1 (February, 2018), pp 123-4.

¹¹⁷ Aitken, ‘Women in the veterinary profession’, pp 547-50.

¹¹⁸ Smith, *Veterinary Corps*, pp 200-10; John Clabby, ‘A short history’, pp 93-6.

¹¹⁹ Clare Boulton and Alison McClary, ‘Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons’ War Memorial fund and library’ in *Vet. Hist.*, vol. 16, no. 2 (2012), p. 169; For an overview of the RAVC and its organisation during the Great War see Steven J. Corvi, ‘Men of mercy: The evolution of the Royal Army Veterinary Corps and the soldier-horse bond during the Great War’ in *Journal of the Society of Army Historical Research*, vol. 76, (Winter, 1998), pp 272-84.

that the association was ‘well represented’ in the war effort.¹²⁰ According to RCVS records sixty-seven of its members are believed to have died in service during the conflict, including ten graduates of the Dublin College.¹²¹ The Great War was just twenty-nine days old when Lieutenant Vincent Fox (Dublin, 1911) became the first veterinary surgeon casualty.¹²²

In addition to the loss of life, the Great war had a negative impact on the development of the veterinary profession in Ireland. Pakie Ryan remembered a number of vets that returned to private practice having served in the war effort. Alf Carroll (Dublin, 1914) returned immediately to Limerick and, in later years, Major Thomas Hodgins (Dublin, 1917), returned to his native Nenagh. Pakie noted that in the decades following the war, private practice, mostly horse work, was ‘non-viable’ and the veterinary surgeon was largely dependent on the supplementary income as veterinary inspectors.¹²³ Work was scarce as many of the horse-owning Anglo-Irish elite had left the country, depriving the vets of some of their most important clients.¹²⁴ Additionally, those that returned to practice during the Anglo-Irish War, 1919-21, found themselves shunned and ostracised by their countrymen, considered traitors by the IRA and simultaneously considered republican by British forces.¹²⁵ One such individual was Captain Thomas Gordon (Dublin, 1912), a native of Frenchpark, Roscommon.

Thomas Gordon initially practiced at Elphin, Roscommon, and acquired inspectorships at Mohill, in 1913, and at Ballinamore, the following year.¹²⁶ In January

¹²⁰ Anon, ‘The Veterinary Medical Association of Ireland’ in *Vet. Rec.*, vol. 29 (20 May, 1916), p. 532.

¹²¹ For an account of the life of Lieutenant Fox see Paul Watkins, ‘A time for reflection’ in *Cosantóir*, vol. 75, no. 1 (2015), pp 26-7.

¹²² <https://knowledge.rcvs.org.uk/document-library/world-war-one-memorial-1914-1918/>. The data shows that thirty-four died from disease, twenty-four as a result of wounds, nine were killed in action. Retrieved 14 November 2019. A memorial containing the names of the RCVS members who died during the Great War is displayed on the staircase of the RCVS headquarters, Belgravia House, 62-64 Horseferry Road, London; See also Peter K. Matthews, Colin M. Warwick and Alastair A. Macdonald, ‘The War Memorial and roll-of-honour of the Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies’ in *Vet. Hist.*, vol. 18, no. 2 (2016), p. 131.

¹²³ Pakie Ryan ‘Veterinary around Murroe’, p. 23

¹²⁴ The decline of the Ascendancy over the previous century has been attributed to the erosion of their political and economic foundations by agrarian disturbances, agricultural depression, their own extravagance, mismanagement and political obstinacy. See Mark Bence-Jones, *Twilight of the ascendancy* (London, 1987); Terence Dooley, *The decline of the big house in Ireland* (Dublin, 2001).

¹²⁵ See Ronan McGreevy, *Wherever the firing line extends: Ireland and the western front* (Stroud, 2017); Catherine Nash, *Of Irish decent: Origin stories, genealogy, and the politics of belonging* (Syracuse, 2008), p. 169; Mandy Link, *Remembrance of the Great War in the Irish Free State, 1914-1937* (Cham, 2019), pp 57-102.

¹²⁶ *Leitrim Observer*, 12 April 1913, 23 May 2014. The *Registers of Veterinary Surgeons*, 1913 through to 1921 give Gordon’s address as Elphin, Roscommon, thereafter the address published is Mohill, Leitrim.

1915, the *Leitrim Observer* reported that he was ‘sacrificing a lucrative practice’ in Mohill to join the AVC.¹²⁷ Hugh Dolan, MRCVS, Ballinamore, acquired Gordon’s inspectorships for the duration of the war.¹²⁸ Gordon subsequently served with distinction in France, Egypt and India, before returning to Mohill in 1920, purchasing the practice of Dolan, who moved to Carrick-on-Shannon.¹²⁹ According to his son, Peter, the transition to private practice in Leitrim was not easy. His Army superiors did not want him to retire and questioned why he wanted to return to such a ‘godforsaken country.’ Apparently, he was given two revolvers for his safety. Peter Gordon recalled that, on returning to Ireland, his father was attacked by two men on the streets of Mohill, but concluded that any man who came through the Boer War and the Great War was well able to take care of himself.¹³⁰ Others tried to cause friction between Gordon and Hugh Dolan, or, perhaps highlight that Gordon had served in the British Army. At a meeting of Mohill District Council, on 22 July, a number of councillors successfully proposed a resolution condemning Dolan for his ‘unprofessional conduct and unmanliness’ in endeavouring to deprive Gordon of the state positions that he held before the war. They claimed that Dolan had even brought the matter before the Sinn Féin Executive. Dolan wrote to the *Leitrim Observer* denouncing the Council’s actions, stating that he had no desire to retain the positions, nor did he or anybody on his behalf approach Sinn Féin. The resolution was duly rescinded.¹³¹

Thomas Gordon came from a local farming family and it appears his involvement in the Great War was quickly forgotten. He built an extensive practice in Mohill and held several state posts until his death in 1937. His funeral was reported as ‘an imposing demonstration of the esteem in which he was held.’¹³² On the other hand, Aleen Cust, because of her aristocratic background, faced greater challenges. Although prohibited from joining the AVC, she was anxious to contribute to the war effort. In 1915, she drove her own car to Abbeville, France, to assist in the treatment of injured war horses under the auspices of the YMCA. She was subsequently appointed to a bacteriology laboratory associated with an AVC hospital.¹³³ After the war Cust returned

¹²⁷ *Leitrim Observer*, 30 January 1915.

¹²⁸ *Leitrim Observer*, 27 February 1915, 19 February 1916.

¹²⁹ Brian L. Ó Súilleabháin, ‘A fellow named Gordon’ in *Ir. Veterinary Jn.*, vol. 57, no. 5 (May, 2004), pp 284-5. See also Gordon’s obituary in *Leitrim Observer*, 27 March 1937.

¹³⁰ *Irish Times*, 10 November 2018.

¹³¹ *Roscommon Herald*, 24 July, *Leitrim Observer*, 14 August 1920.

¹³² *Leitrim Observer*, 3 April 1937.

¹³³ R. Scott Nolen. ‘Britain’s first woman veterinarian’ in *JAVMA News* (1 June 2011),

to Ireland to re-build her war-torn practice at Athleague. According to her biographer, Connie Ford, she returned to the now Irish Free State, which she no longer found congenial. Once loved and respected in Roscommon, the ‘English Aristocrat’ now found herself regarded with suspicion.¹³⁴ By 1922 she had retired to England. In a newspaper interview she said of Ireland, ‘I went back there after the war, but things became so unsettled I had to leave. When one has the house raided and half a dozen revolvers are pointed at one’s head, it seems time to come home. But they were rather polite.’¹³⁵

The Veterinary Surgeons Act, 1931

Following the establishment of the Irish Free State in 1922, the veterinary profession in the country continued to be governed under the original 1844 RCVS Charter and additional supplementary charters. In 1931, a ‘Veterinary Agreement’ was signed between the British and Irish Governments providing for mutual recognition of the qualification MRCVS, whether obtained following study in a British college or in Dublin. The Veterinary Surgeons Act, 1931 legislated for this agreement. The responsibility of implementing the Act was vested in a newly established Veterinary Council of Ireland (VCI), made up of eight representatives of the profession resident in the country. Four of these individuals also held seats on the Council of the RCVS in London, maintaining the connection between both bodies. The VCI was responsible for the disciplinary control of its members, maintaining educational standards set by the RCVS, and the provision of a register of veterinary surgeons for Ireland.¹³⁶

The importance of the cow-doctor to rural Ireland, as outlined in chapter 6, was highlighted as the Veterinary Surgeons Bill, which led to the 1931 Act, was debated in the Dáil. Section 45 proposed to prohibit veterinary practice by ‘any person’ apart from a registered veterinary surgeon.¹³⁷ This proposition was seen as ‘intolerable’ and caused ‘bitter and justifiable resentment’ amongst the farming community and its representatives, who called for the removal of Section 45.¹³⁸ Séamus Moore, a rural

<https://www.avma.org/News/JAVMANews/Pages/110601v.aspx>. Retrieved 18 November 2019.

¹³⁴ Ford, *Aleen Cust*, p. 72.

¹³⁵ *Freeman’s Journal*, 22 December 1922.

¹³⁶ Anon, ‘Veterinary Council of Ireland’ in *Ir. Veterinary Jn.*, vol. 1, no. 1 (November, 1946), pp 34-5; Ó Nualláin, ‘Profession in Ireland’, p. 135.

¹³⁷ The text of the proposed Section 45 was reproduced in the *Irish Independent*, 3 March 1931.

¹³⁸ See *Leitrim Observer*, 28 February, *Cork Examiner*, 2 March, *Longford Leader*, 21 March 1931.

Fianna Fáil TD, argued that many farmers had no access to a veterinary surgeon, nor could they afford his fees. He claimed that if the Bill were passed, every beast in the country, when it fell ill, would be allowed to die without treatment.¹³⁹ Several correspondents to newspapers highlighted that vets were scarce and farmers were largely dependent on the services of the cow-doctor, whose work was considered legitimate and beneficial.’ In any case, even those farmers with economically viable holdings could not afford the vet’s fee.¹⁴⁰ This view was supported by several County Councils and other Local Government bodies who voted to ask local politicians to strongly oppose the relevant clauses on the grounds that the ‘poor man’ could not afford a veterinary surgeon.¹⁴¹ Furthermore, a consensus existed amongst stock-owners that the Bill was framed merely to benefit the veterinary profession, at the expense of the downtrodden farmer.¹⁴² A Cavan correspondent claimed that every vet ‘worthy of the name’ was overworked and argued that the clauses were introduced to protect those ‘failures’ in the profession that were overshadowed by local cow-doctors.¹⁴³ Veterinary surgeons also had their say in the matter. One practitioner argued that the Bill was not very well understood by any side. If passed it would stabilise a profession that was vital to Irish agriculture. He did not believe the profession wished to prevent the farmer from applying rational treatment to his stock, nor did the profession want to be called upon for ‘every little fiddle faddle.’¹⁴⁴

The widespread opposition to the proposed Section 45 encouraged the Farmer and Independent Dáil deputies to meet and subsequently agree to oppose such restrictions. Deputies Michael Brennan, Independent and Michael Jordan, Farmer’s Party, tabled an amendment as did Fianna Fáil. The *Evening Herald* reported that the Department of Agriculture also submitted an amendment to McGilligan, which they considered to meet the objections raised.¹⁴⁵ By late March it was announced that the objectionable clause had been amended, so that the farmer or his employee would have the right to perform any operation on his stock, or administer any medicine in the

¹³⁹ <https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/dail/1931-02-19/17/>; *Irish Times*, 20 February 1931.

¹⁴⁰ *Kerry Reporter*, 28 February 1931.

¹⁴¹ For example, Limerick and Donegal County Councils and Westmeath County Board of Health passed such resolutions. See *Donegal Democrat*, 28 February, *Westmeath Examiner*, 7 March, *Limerick Leader*, 21 March 1931.

¹⁴² *Nationalist and Leinster Times*, 14 March 1931;

¹⁴³ *Anglo-Celt*, 28 March 1931.

¹⁴⁴ *Nationalist and Leinster Times*, 28 February, *Irish Independent*, 5 March, *Connacht Tribune*, 28 March 1931.

¹⁴⁵ *Evening Herald*, 21 February 1931.

ordinary way.¹⁴⁶ There were few objections to these new proposals. A number of Dáil deputies claimed that cow doctors were victimised and should be allowed to perform minor operations. Concerns were also raised that no provisions had been made for the small farmer who lived away from a veterinary centre.¹⁴⁷ Over the following months other amendments to the Bill were moved, including a failed proposal that qualified vets should not be registered unless proficient with the Irish language.¹⁴⁸

The Bill moved quickly through the Oireachtas and the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1931, was passed into law on 1 August.¹⁴⁹ In reality cow-doctors or handymen had little to fear. Section 46 made it illegal for individuals who were not registered veterinary surgeons to practice or represent themselves ‘directly or by implication’ as practicing veterinary surgery or veterinary medicine. However, Subsection (2) stated that anyone who habitually kept animals for profit, or the servant of any such person, could perform operations on or administer medicine to an animal of any class, whether owned or not by such person. These tasks should be ‘incidental to the usual care and management of animals of that class.’ The Act made no reference to remuneration of any kind. However, Section 45 prohibited the recovery of fees in any legal proceedings by unregistered persons.¹⁵⁰ Therefore, any cow-doctor or handyman, who regularly tended to stock, could treat animals provided that he did not advertise his services or profess to be a registered veterinary surgeon. The matter had received much coverage in the press and at local meetings but, arguably, there were those who had a poor understanding of the Act. The majority of those summonsed claimed they did know they were breaking the law. However, others were more knowledgeable, especially when required. John Lane was called as a witness before Mallow Circuit Court in a case involving the theft of a horse. Some years earlier Lane had treated the horse and quickly informed the court that he had doctored horses ‘before the passing of the Veterinary Surgeons’ Act.’¹⁵¹ In any case, the legislation placed Ireland ahead of Britain, where a statutory ban on unqualified practice was only implemented with the Veterinary Surgeons Act of 1948. Even then, some non-qualified practitioners, who might suddenly be deprived of a livelihood, were placed on a Supplementary Veterinary

¹⁴⁶ *Irish Times*, 27 March 1931.

¹⁴⁷ *Irish Independent*, 18 June 1931.

¹⁴⁸ *Irish Independent*, 25 June 1931.

¹⁴⁹ <https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/bills/bill/1930/24/>.

¹⁵⁰ Veterinary Surgeons Act, 1931 (No. 36), s. 45 & 46.

¹⁵¹ *Kerry News*, 11 November 1935.

Register, imitating that of the Existing Practitioners of the 1881 Act. Limited rights were also given, under licence, to some employees of animal welfare societies, such as the People's Dispensary for Sick Animals of the Poor (PDSA). These individuals were subsequently admitted to the Supplementary Register following the Veterinary Surgeons Act of 1966.¹⁵²

The first person prosecuted by the VCI, under the 1931 Act, was Patrick J. Nolan, an Athenry grocer and publican. During the previous twenty years he had occasionally placed notices in the *Connacht Tribune*, initially advertising that he attended horses at his premises and sold cattle medicines as part of his grocery business.¹⁵³ In April 1932, only weeks before his court appearance, Nolan informed potential clients of his itinerary around local towns castrating horses, removing warts, docking tails and setting bones. His newspaper notices never carried the word 'veterinary.'¹⁵⁴ According to a witness, Nolan charged 5s for work 'done satisfactorily' and apparently earned £5 a day. The defence stated that generations of the Nolan family did such work. He made a living by doing so, and was of great benefit to small farmers, who were charged a small fee. It questioned why the VCI had not issued a warning prior to the summons. The prosecution argued that Nolan 'held himself up' as prepared to undertake all veterinary work. Although the maximum penalty was £100, Nolan gave an undertaking that he would cease practice and was eventually fined £5 for each of three sample cases. Although the VCI secured a prosecution it appeared unhappy with the lenient fine. Its legal team asked that in future cases the courts would deal 'so severely' with such operators as to make their work unprofitable. However, it conceded that small operations might possibly be performed by people of 'special skill and experience.'¹⁵⁵ It appears the VCI continued to monitor Nolan's activities. Exactly a year later, he was back before Ballinasloe Court facing the same charges. One of the witnesses called was the proprietor of a local printing establishment, where Nolan had ordered one thousand notices advertising his practice itinerary. The defence again highlighted Nolan's continued importance to those who could not afford a vet.

¹⁵² Porter, 'Royal charters', pp 542-3; For a full breakdown of veterinary legislation in the UK see <https://knowledge.rcvs.org.uk/heritage-and-history/history-of-the-rcvs/veterinary-legislation-in-the-uk/>

¹⁵³ See, for example, *Connacht Tribune*, 23 April 1910.

¹⁵⁴ *Connacht Tribune*, 30 April 1932.

¹⁵⁵ Anon, 'News of the week' in *The Irish Law Times and Solicitors' Journal*, no. 3413 (25 June 1932), pp 155-6; *Evening Herald*, 16 June, *Cork Examiner*, *Irish Press*, 17 June 1932.

However, the Justice imposed a fine of fifty pounds, describing Nolan's actions as a 'defiance to the Veterinary Council and to himself.'¹⁵⁶

During the following years the VCI issued a small number of prosecutions with varying degrees of success. The courts appeared to have difficulty interpreting the Act and were generally lenient on those prosecuted. A Kilkenny 'groom', who attended neighbours' animals, was fined £1 for putting a plaster on a cow, arguing he did not know it was an offence. The animal's owner stated that he could not afford a veterinary surgeon and gave the defendant 2/6 for a drink. The Council felt 'driven' to bring the proceedings as it was the first case in which they had the available evidence, presumably the plaster.¹⁵⁷ In what could be perceived as the most serious offence under the Act the Honourable Gerald Wellesley, Curragh, Kildare, was summonsed on three counts of unlawfully representing himself as a registered veterinary surgeon. Wellesley was described as 'well known' in racing circles. The summonses arose from the importation of a filly from Britain for which the defendant gave a certificate that the animal was free of disease and added the letters MRCVS after his signature. The defence admitted a 'technical offence' but stated it could raise a number of objections as to where the offence was alleged to have occurred. The Justice applied the probation act and suggested that £5 be placed in the poor box.¹⁵⁸

The VCI appealed two high profile cases to the High Court during 1933. The first involved Peter J. Good, an 'extensive' Cork farmer, charged with performing operations on his neighbours' colts.¹⁵⁹ Justice Sullivan, at Coachford District Court, initially dismissed the case arguing that the operation (castration) was incidental to the usual care and management of colts. Good claimed that he was unaware that he was breaking the law.¹⁶⁰ Mr. Monks, representing the VCI, explained to the High Court that farmers themselves occasionally castrated pigs and calves. However, 'horse doctors' were not capable of dealing with the after-effects of such operations on horses, which required 'a considerable degree of skill and knowledge.' The defence argued that Good was not, or had never claimed to be, a veterinary surgeon. It agreed that a veterinary surgeon or a person of considerable skill, such as their client, should only perform this

¹⁵⁶ *Offaly Independent*, 24 June, *Connacht Tribune*, 22 July 1933.

¹⁵⁷ *Kilkenny People*, 3 March 1934.

¹⁵⁸ *Belfast News-Letter*, *Irish Independent*, 27 February 1940.

¹⁵⁹ *Veterinary Council v Good* [1935] IR 884. See Herbert Hare (ed.), *Irish Law Times reports: Volume 68* (Dublin, 1934), pp xxxii, xxxiii, 133-6.

¹⁶⁰ *Cork Examiner*, 24 August 1933.

surgery. The High Court directed that the onus be on Good to show that he was within that class.¹⁶¹ It remitted the case to the District Court where, at a special sitting, Good explained that he acquired his skills while assisting his father, a registered veterinary surgeon.¹⁶² Personally he had successfully performed this particular operation in his neighbourhood for the previous thirty-five years, without a single accident. Justice Sullivan reiterated his original judgement and, on receiving his report, the High Court upheld this decision.¹⁶³

The VCI was marginally more successful in appealing the second case to the High Court but in doing so caused some controversy. It summoned George Planton and the aforementioned PDSA under sections 46 and 47 of the 1931 Act, respectively prohibiting unregistered persons or bodies corporate from practicing veterinary surgery or medicine.¹⁶⁴ Justice Flood, at Limerick City District Court, dismissed both cases as he found little information in the Act to define whether the term ‘practice’ implied practice for reward or not.¹⁶⁵ The PDSA was founded in London in 1917 by Maria Dickin to charitably provide care for sick and injured animals of the poor.¹⁶⁶ A branch was formed in Limerick in 1931, when the pre-existing Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals received a legacy of £5,000. Dickin travelled to Limerick the following year where she was presented with a ‘travelling’ dispensary van, donated by Major de Ros Rose, at a cost of £352.¹⁶⁷ The VCI approved of the concept but informed Rose that the 1931 Act would be contravened if free treatment was given to the animals of those who could afford the services of a veterinary surgeon. It required that a registered practitioner operate the service. However, the PDSA refused this request on financial grounds. George Planton, an unregistered practitioner with five years of experience, operated the service. He travelled around Limerick and its environs treating mainly dogs and cats. Cows and horses were treated when an owner was ‘in poor circumstances.’¹⁶⁸ Planton previously worked with the PDSA in London, where he was

¹⁶¹ *Irish Independent*, 12 December 1933; *Cork Examiner*, 16 March 1934.

¹⁶² The name A. F. Good (Dublin, 1909) appeared in the *Registers of Veterinary Surgeons* during the early decades of the twentieth-century. According to the registers he initially practiced in county Cork but by 1922 had removed to Wales. In 1937, he was based in Aberdare, Glamorganshire.

¹⁶³ *Southern Star*, 24 March, *Evening Herald*, 3 May 1934.

¹⁶⁴ *Veterinary Council v Planton* [1935] IR 892. For an overview of the case see Herbert Hare (ed.), *Irish Law Times reports: Volume 69* (Dublin, 1935), pp xxxvi-ii.

¹⁶⁵ *Irish Independent*, 16 September 1933.

¹⁶⁶ Thomas Ryan, *Animals and social work: A moral introduction* (Basingstoke, 2011), p. 18.

¹⁶⁷ *Irish Times*, 25 August 1932.

¹⁶⁸ *Nenagh Guardian*, 23 September 1933

once summoned by the RSPCA for treating a dog with a broken leg in an ‘unskilful manner.’ However, evidence from both a doctor and veterinary surgeon suggested otherwise.¹⁶⁹

The Limerick case centred on Planton’s free treatment of a dog in the Society’s van. The animal’s owner said it was successfully cured and added that he could not afford to pay a guinea to a veterinary surgeon. The defence counsel ridiculed the suggestion that the Society had contravened the Act and believed it was ‘going too far’ to say that it was antagonistic to the veterinary profession. No fee was received and a notice displayed on the van emphasised that only worthy cases were treated. Furthermore, the Society had previously, on twenty-seven occasions, employed and paid for a registered practitioner, when it could not offer the appropriate treatment. Major Rose corroborated this account and added that the Society would be ‘only too pleased’ to employ a qualified man if funds permitted. He claimed that only for the Society many valuable and injured animals would find a ‘watery grave.’ Several witnesses ‘of standing’ in Limerick gave evidence regarding the good work done by the PDSA.¹⁷⁰ Justice Hanna, at the High Court, initially adjourned the case and suggested that some arrangement could be arrived at whereby the VCI could be protected and the Society could pursue its useful work under conditions which ‘if not within the letter of the law, would not infringe its spirit.’¹⁷¹

The case returned to the High Court in May 1934. The VCI insisted that although they took a reasonable view of the position of the Society, they would have to perform their lawful duty. Another adjournment saw Hanna arrange a ‘conference’ between the parties but little was accomplished.¹⁷² During October the three presiding High Court Judges unanimously contended that the verb ‘practice’, as used in the Act, meant ‘to practice’ irrespective of reward or not. They agreed that the original summonses should not have been dismissed, and there should have been a conviction. The VCI claimed that they had done ‘everything in their power’ to meet the defendants. The case was remitted to the District Justice for sentencing.¹⁷³ In consequence the operations of the PDSA were suspended. The Minister for Agriculture, when requested

¹⁶⁹ *Gloucester Citizen*, 28 March 1930.

¹⁷⁰ *Irish Press*, 16 September, *Cork Examiner*, 21 September 1933.

¹⁷¹ *Irish Times*, 12 December 1933

¹⁷² *Irish Times*, 4 May 1934.

¹⁷³ *Irish Independent*, 23 October 1934.

by Limerick Corporation and Limerick County Council to introduce specific legislation that would allow the organisation to function, said that his Department had no power to interfere.¹⁷⁴ On 1 March 1935 Justice Flood convicted the PDSA but discharged it under the Probation of Offenders Act without any penalty. He expressed regret that no resolution was reached as the poor were now deprived of a valuable public service. Nor did he see the result as being of benefit to the local veterinary surgeons.¹⁷⁵

The forced suspension of the work of the PDSA received widespread criticism. According to the *Limerick Leader* the charity had the ‘sympathy and active support’ of all those concerned with animal welfare.¹⁷⁶ The veterinary profession’s willingness to provide free treatment for sick animals of the poor was particularly questioned. Sean O’Donovan, Chairperson of the Veterinary Medical Association, in reply to criticism from the Irish Animals Protection Association, said that the profession never refused free treatment. He claimed that ‘a very considerable proportion’ of a vet’s practice comprised free veterinary services to those unable to pay fees. He suggested that veterinary surgeons would co-operate in ‘every possible way’ with any ‘organised’ effort made by charitable bodies to treat the animals of the poor,¹⁷⁷ ‘Tailwagger’, a correspondent to the *Limerick Leader*, asked how the profession reconciled this with their attitude towards the PDSA.¹⁷⁸ J. J. Dundon, Chief Veterinary Officer, Limerick, suggested that the ideal system to treat such animals would be structured on the human medical dispensary. He claimed that the PDSA, who had turned down any suggestions made by the VCI, had the ‘necessary financial aid’ to initiate such a scheme.¹⁷⁹ Major Rose refuted this, claiming that the Council’s demands were unaccommodating. It had proposed that a veterinary surgeon should be employed at £5 5s a week, together with a driver at £2 2s a week. The vets promised ‘free’ treatment to animals provided they were paid £200 per annum, in which case they would allow the van to bring animals to them. The PDSA assistants could not be qualified veterinary surgeons nor attempt a diagnosis. Additionally, the vets wished that a ‘Committee’ would examine each animal before deciding if it were fit for treatment.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁴ *Limerick Leader*, 10 December 1934, 5 January, 9 February 1935.

¹⁷⁵ *Irish Press*, 2 March 1935.

¹⁷⁶ *Limerick Leader*, 15 December 1934.

¹⁷⁷ *Evening Herald*, 17 May 1935.

¹⁷⁸ *Limerick Leader*, 1 June 1935.

¹⁷⁹ *Limerick Leader*, 8 June 1935.

¹⁸⁰ *Limerick Leader*, 6 July 1935.

The PDSA was eventually re-established in Limerick. In September 1936 Rose announced that the ‘illegality’ of sending the van on the road was about to be removed and the vehicle would soon be on the road.¹⁸¹ However, the veterinary profession was, arguably, in full control. In August 1937, PDSA, Ireland, was formed and incorporated in the Irish Free State. Amongst the Council of Management was Professor O’Connor, Principle of the Dublin College. A clinic was established at Catherine St, Limerick, under the supervision of a registered veterinary surgeon, and a hospital at the Ardu residence of Major Rose. The organisation proposed to establish depots throughout Limerick, where animals, whose owners could not afford veterinary fees, would receive free treatment given ‘entirely by veterinary surgeons.’¹⁸² The group’s activities continued to be funded from voluntary donations and from the PDSA in England. On Rose’s death, his widow made ‘gallant’ efforts to continue the work. In 1938, 5,661 cases were treated at the clinic, van and hospital. However, in September 1940 the PDSA in England announced that, owing to the war, it was necessary to temporarily suspend financial support to Ireland. Accordingly, the Irish PDSA suspended its activities for the duration of the war.¹⁸³ Apparently, the case against Planton was never concluded, as he absconded to Britain. By June 1935, he was in the role of ‘Superintendent’ at the PDSA’s Wolverhampton Dispensary.¹⁸⁴

The Veterinary Council eventually turned its attention to eliminate the influence of chemists on veterinary practice. When the first generation of vets established in the smaller towns their ‘main opponents’, besides the cow-doctors, were the chemists.¹⁸⁵ Before the vet was called the chemist’s remedies were usually tried, to which one practitioner attributed receiving the majority of his calls during the afternoon or evening.¹⁸⁶ The chemists usually made up their own products, often derived from traditional recipes. F. J. Molyneux, a licenced druggist of Newport, Tipperary, claimed to have over one thousand ‘Tried and Proved’ remedies in his books, including all the recipes of the late Jack Hayes, Cragg.¹⁸⁷ The older farmers and vets had mixed opinions

¹⁸¹ *Limerick Leader*, 26 Sept 1936.

¹⁸² *Cork Examiner*, 6 August 1937.

¹⁸³ *Limerick Leader*, 2 October 1939.

¹⁸⁴ *Staffordshire Advertiser*, 29 June 1935.

¹⁸⁵ Daly, *A memoir*, p. 22; Interview with Pat Hartigan.

¹⁸⁶ P. J. McCarroll, ‘Some observations on general practice’ in *Ir. Veterinary Jn.*, vol. 5, no. 2 (February, 1951), p. 31.

¹⁸⁷ *Nenagh Guardian*, 17 August 1946. This author can find no further reference to Hayes. The townland of Cragg is a few miles from Newport, suggesting that Hayes lived locally. He was possibly a local herbalist.

on local chemists' products, which remained in widespread use during the 1960s. Some vets felt that chemists, regardless of whether they knew anything of an animal's symptoms, would always dispense some products, usually of 'very little value.'¹⁸⁸ Others were more sympathetic and argued that farmers often had no choice but to seek the chemist's advice. Frank O'Leary, who qualified as a vet in 1962, regretted the loss of certain remedies, which he described as 'good solid stuff.' Vincent Houlihan argued that even though the remedies might not have effected a cure, their ingredient had a purgative effect that relieved the animal.¹⁸⁹ A number of interviewees said that these remedies were 'hit and miss.' However, clients had 'so much faith' in the chemist that they continued to use the service even if a vet was available.¹⁹⁰ Pat Hartigan recalled that it took him 'several years' to get the farmers of Caherciveen to seek his veterinary advice, rather than visit the local chemist.¹⁹¹ Although veterinary practitioners in rural towns usually saw the presence of chemists as part of everyday business life others saw them as a major threat to the veterinary profession. The debate on the proposed Veterinary Bill gave such individuals a platform to air their views. One commentator was highly critical of the veterinary chemists, claiming they advised on cattle disease without the faintest knowledge. He envisaged that, having prescribed his veterinary preparation, the chemist sat by the fireside whilst the vet subsequently dealt with the sick animal and accepted all the responsibilities.¹⁹² 'Country Practitioner' agreed and noted that the chemists and druggists were alarmed by the proposals contained in the Veterinary Bill. He hoped that the Bill would curtail their 'pecuniary selfish considerations' and promote the rational treatment of animals.¹⁹³

As was the case with the large commercial chemical companies, the local chemists regularly produced flyers or booklets to advertise their products. For example, W. F. Knight, veterinary chemists in Newcastle West, offered potential clients their

¹⁸⁸ Interview with Pakie Ryan, MRCVS, Newport, county Tipperary, 12 July 2011. CD 11, Author's Collection; Interview with Jack Powell, MRCVS, Nenagh, county Tipperary, 25 October 2010. CD 10, Author's Collection.

¹⁸⁹ Interview with Frank O'Leary, MRCVS, Cahersiveen, county Kerry, 6 July 2010. CD 9, Author's Collection; Interview with Vincent Houlihan.

¹⁹⁰ Interview with John Daly, Quilty, county Clare, 11 April 2012. CD 41, Author's Collection; Interview with John Joe Conway, Kilfenora, county Clare, 10 April 2013. CD 50, Author's Collection; Interview with Michael Joe McMahon, Miltown Malbay, county Clare, 17 April 2012. CD 44, Author's Collection.

¹⁹¹ Interview with Pat Hartigan.

¹⁹² *Irish Independent*, 3 March 1931.

¹⁹³ *Irish Independent*, 5 March 1931.

‘Veterinary Guide’, *How to treat Horses and Cattle when ailing*, post-free.¹⁹⁴ The VCI complained that this practice of advertising was ‘widely indulged in’ by chemists throughout the country. A small number of chemists were summoned as the wording of their advertisements implied that they were ‘unlawfully’ prepared to practice veterinary medicine, thereby, contravening Section 46 of the 1931 Act. The Council requested substantial fines in order to deter the practice and ‘protect’ farmers and the veterinary profession. All the defendants, whilst admitting placing the advertisements, claimed they were ignorant of breaking any law and were critical of the Council for prosecuting without warning. The aforementioned F. J. Molyneux was summonsed in 1947 for unlawfully representing himself in a newspaper advertisement as practicing veterinary medicine. The offending notice carried the phrase ‘Consult him now about your calves.’ Counsel for the Prosecution argued that these words amounted to an indication that Molyneux was prepared to offer advice on veterinary treatments. Unusually they asked for a more lenient sentence than the permitted £100 as Molyneux had co-operated fully and was pleading guilty. The defence said their client was ‘a country druggist’ who had no knowledge of the rules of the VCI, and was unaware that he was causing an offence. Moreover, it was well known that the defendant regularly recommended farmers to consult veterinary surgeons. The Justice concluded that the summonses had been brought as a ‘deterrent’ and applied the probation Act.¹⁹⁵ A year later, Alphonsus J. Dolan, Daingean, Offaly, received a similar sentence. He was prosecuted for using the phrase ‘Spectacular success in the treatment of animals’ in a newspaper advertisement. The Justice, whilst agreeing that Dolan was in breach of Section 46, said it was ‘not a serious case.’ He concluded that the unfortunate wording of the advertisement was ‘pure bad luck.’ He believed that the defendant was not conscious of having offended and implied that the VCI might have pointed out their objection before issuing a summons.¹⁹⁶ Timothy Kerins, MPSI, Macroom, was fined £5 for breaching Section 46 of the 1931 Act. His Counsel argued that he had merely published advertising pamphlets in ‘the usual way.’¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁴ *Limerick Leader*, 6 August 1927.

¹⁹⁵ *Nenagh Guardian*, 22 March 1947.

¹⁹⁶ Anon, ‘Digest of reported cases this week’ in *The Irish Law Times*, no. 4232 (6 March, 1948), p. 58; *Offaly Independent*, 6 March 1948.

¹⁹⁷ *Cork Examiner*, 13 October, *Southern Star*, 21 October 1950.

The largest fine imposed under the 1931 Act was successfully appealed. Certus Chemical Industries Ltd, Pearse Street, Dublin, was fined £100 on each of two summonses brought against them by the VCI. Witnesses told Dublin District Court that representatives of the company treated their cattle for contagious abortion with a remedy manufactured by the company. In one case forty cows were treated. The company claimed that these agents were instructed not to treat cattle but merely to sell the remedy. Its difficulties were compounded when the ‘infallible’ remedy was exposed as allegedly containing eighty-seven percent common salt. The presiding Justice branded the company ‘an unqualified fraud’ and called on the farming community to extol the virtues of veterinary science.¹⁹⁸ However the company appealed and continued to advertise the product, which was also the subject of an on-going lawsuit regarding the rights to its formula.¹⁹⁹ Within weeks Judge Davitt at Dublin Circuit Court upheld the appeal, citing ‘considerable doubt’ in his mind as to whether the treatments were sufficient to amount, in law, to the practice of veterinary medicine.²⁰⁰ Certus Chemical Industries was liquidated the following year.²⁰¹

Veterinary practice during the inter-war years

In his Presidential address to the VMAI in 1923, E. C. Winter said that the state of the country during the previous years had hit the profession hard, with many practitioners struggling to make a living because of a decline in horse breeding, a depreciation in the value of stock, and the exodus from the country of many moneyed clients. However, he saw a future for the veterinary surgeon in the treatment and prevention of contagious diseases, in meat, milk and dairy hygiene, and in the eradication of diseases, such as bovine tuberculosis.²⁰² During the following years such opportunities became available with the State Veterinary Services and as Municipal and Rural District Veterinary Officers, inspecting meat and dairy products. In 1929, James Doyle, MRCVS, Dublin, highlighted these important roles to the economy, but described the private practitioners, whose numbers were falling due to the centralisation of veterinary services, as the ‘backbone of the profession.’ Doyle claimed there was a great deal of

¹⁹⁸ *Irish Press*, 29 August 1940.

¹⁹⁹ *Irish Press*, 29 June, *Longford Leader*, 31 August, *Evening Herald*, 11 October 1940.

²⁰⁰ *Irish Independent*, 11 October 1940.

²⁰¹ *Irish Press*, 17 January 1941.

²⁰² J. J. O’Connor, ‘Veterinary Medical Association of Ireland’ in *Vet. Rec.*, new ser., vol. 3 (17 November, 1923), p. 840.

‘petty jealousy, competition, and lack of cohesion’ amongst this class, which often resulted in veterinary services being offered at an uneconomic rate. It was by the private practitioner that the profession was judged and it was, therefore, the responsibility of those in private practice to prove to the public that the veterinary surgeon was the only person competent to treat sick animals.²⁰³

Did the veterinary surgeon have the necessary skills to persuade the farmer that he was the most competent person to treat his cattle? As previously discussed, the veterinary graduates of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries left college having received little instruction on the anatomy of farm animals other than the horse. Evidently many of these gentlemen never came to terms with cattle practice: Vincent Houlihan, who established a practice in Dingle during 1961, described his predecessor, William Dagg, as essentially a ‘horse doctor.’ He believed Dagg did little in cattle practice apart from treating milk fevers in cows with a bicycle pump.²⁰⁴ Local elderly farmers agreed. They remembered Dagg as an individual with great ability in treating horses and greyhounds, but with ‘no experience’ regarding cattle. On occasion, it was necessary for a local handy-man to intervene, when Dagg was making no progress with calving cases. Dagg, universally portrayed by interviewees as a ‘gentleman’, accepted his limitations and never held animosity towards the local practitioner, being known to remark that ‘two heads are better than one.’ Several local farmers concluded that even if the locals of the Dingle peninsula could afford Dagg’s services they had little faith in his ability with cattle or sheep.²⁰⁵

The vet gradually became more efficient at non-equine practice. P. J. Howard claimed that veterinary practice was experiencing ‘a big change’ by the end of the 1940s, with less reliance on horse practice. He claimed that for some vets, especially those in the city, dog practice had superseded that of the horse.²⁰⁶ Ham Lambert described how he developed a small animal practice when draught horses were largely phased out in the 1940s. With little training in small animal surgery, Lambert claimed

²⁰³ J. Doyle, ‘Present-day aspects of our profession’ in *Vet. Rec.*, new ser., vol. 9, no. 32 (10 August, 1929), pp 685-7.

²⁰⁴ Interview with Vincent Houlihan.

²⁰⁵ Interview with Donal Griffin and Pat Griffin, Ballbeg, Dingle, county Kerry, 6 May 2010. CD 6, Author’s Collection; Interview with Mattie O’Dowd, Cloghane, county Kerry, 30 June 2010. CD 7, Author’s Collection; Interview with Monsignor Pádraig Ó Fiannachta and T. P. O’Concubhair.

²⁰⁶ Howard, ‘Half a century’, p. 374.

that he acquired much knowledge from his medical friends.²⁰⁷ As veterinary treatments evolved the vet became more involved in treating cattle, sheep, pigs and poultry.²⁰⁸ P. J. Howard highlighted how in 1900 ninety percent of milk fever cases were fatal. Half a century later, ninety-five percent of cases were cured when treated with intramammary injections of potassium iodide. However, Howard remained critical of the training offered by the veterinary colleges regarding domestic animals. He urged the Dublin College to acquire a farm where students were afforded the opportunity to become acquainted with the healthy domestic animal, as it was only through knowledge of a healthy animal that ‘we can hope to deal successfully with it in sickness.’²⁰⁹

John Michael Murphy, President of the VMAI in 1942, similarly questioned if the college curriculum appropriately prepared graduates for practice. He had graduated from Dublin in 1921 and noted that only a small proportion of graduates had thenceforth been attracted to general practice, the majority of graduates being absorbed into either the Department of Agriculture or the Local Authority Veterinary Services. This left general practice in a ‘happy position’, as it was not overcrowded. He noted that ‘most’ practitioners held part-time local authority posts, and claimed that there were districts in the country where a practitioner would find it hard to make a living without this supplementation. However, Murphy was concerned for the future. The large numbers attending the Dublin College could no longer be absorbed into Government positions. Consequently, more graduates would have to pursue private practice. He questioned if the college curriculum appropriately prepared these graduates.²¹⁰ A number of narratives of student life in the Dublin College to 1950 suggested that veterinary instruction had seen little change since the institution’s foundation in 1900. When Jack Powell graduated in 1934 the horse was still the ‘number one animal’ on the curriculum

²⁰⁷ O’Reilly and Nugent, ‘Ham Lambert’, pp 251, 255. For an overview of the scope of Lambert’s small animal practice during the late 1940s see N. H. Lambert, ‘Some experiences in small animal practice’ in *Ir. Veterinary Jn.*, vol. 2, no. 12 (December, 1948), pp 228-40.

²⁰⁸ During the late 1940s and early 1950s the *Irish Veterinary Journal* carried a number of contributions from veterinary surgeons who gave their views on conditions and treatments in their areas. The bovine was now the dominant patient. Dwindling horse practice was more prominent in poorer districts where mechanisation was largely absent. For example, see A. D. Donnelly, ‘Everyday veterinary practice’ in *Ir. Veterinary Jn.*, vol. 2, no. 8 (August, 1948), pp 149-58. Donnelly’s ran a predominately bovine practice in county Louth, with some equine cases. See also McCarroll, ‘Some observations’, pp 31-3. McCarroll saw practice on small holdings, of poor-quality land in Donegal.

²⁰⁹ Howard, ‘Half a century’, p. 374

²¹⁰ J. M. Murphy, ‘The progress of the veterinary profession in Ireland’ in *Vet. Rec.*, vol. 54, no. 21 (May, 1942), pp 203-4.

and facilities and teaching aids were basic.²¹¹ Pat Daly, who attended the Dublin College from 1941, recalled that most lecture notes were hand-written because text books were scarce. Nevertheless, the teaching and practical demonstrations in clinical medicine were excellent, within the constraints of that time, albeit based on the horse and some small animals, mainly the dog. Students were still instructed on aspects of farriery and made aware of the tools and techniques of that trade. Daly believed that the limited instruction on diseases of cattle, sheep and pigs meant that graduates were ‘inexperienced and ill-equipped’ to deal with many of the problems they encountered on entering general practice.²¹²

Pat Daly made his observations on the shortcomings of his veterinary training more than sixty years after the event. An 1947 contributor to the *Irish Veterinary Journal* was fully aware of the deficiencies in training, highlighting the great need for ‘extra mural teaching’ for veterinary students. The writer, D. O’Connor, argued that practical experience, especially in cattle practice, was ‘outstandingly’ lacking in the Dublin College. He stressed the importance of seeing practice as soon as possible after entering college, with at least two veterinary surgeons in different parts of the country. In doing this the student would experience different conditions, methods of treatment and an understanding of the farming community. Without such experience, the newly qualified veterinary surgeon was liable to become ‘annoyed and disheartened’ at the lack of trust he might encounter among stockowners. He or she left the college environment, where scientific knowledge and modern clinical methods were taken for granted, and entered a world that traditionally had a mistrust of new methods. O’Connor had personally experienced a scepticism amongst farmers and stockowners regarding scientific methods and ‘a predisposition towards the loquacious and empirical quackery, which from time immemorial was the only treatment for animal diseases.’²¹³

The veterinary graduate of the mid twentieth-century needed to be more audacious in confronting unfamiliar situations than those of Dagg’s generation. Pat Hartigan remarked that when there seemed little hope of saving an animal ‘you either did something radical or you did nothing.’²¹⁴ Mick Flanagan, who qualified in 1946, argued that graduates had little practical experience on leaving college. Students saw

²¹¹ Interview with Jack Powell.

²¹² Daly, *A memoir*, p. 12.

²¹³ D. O’Connor, ‘Seeing practice’ in *Ir. Veterinary Jn.*, vol. 1, no. 4 (July, 1947), pp 160-1.

²¹⁴ Interview with Pat Hartigan.

some practice with a vet during the summer holidays but this was a quiet time of the year when little skill could be acquired in areas such as calving. Flanagan recalled that he learned more during his first year of practice than during any time spent in college or on practical experience. His graduation coincided with a prolonged period of wet weather that resulted in fodder shortages and more sickness in cattle than normal. He remarked that ‘everything I came across was new...so I had to depend on my own intuition.’²¹⁵ Others acquired their knowledge from those who had experience with animals. Ham Lambert qualified from Dublin in 1931 and decided he wanted to establish a cattle practice in that city. He had no background with cattle but admitted that he picked up most of his knowledge from cattlemen and herders. Ham admitted that business was good as suburban people with any access to money and land kept a few cows and were prone to call him ‘if the cow coughed.’ The gardener normally milked these cows. There were also thousands of milch cows in inner city Dublin, with one milk shop owner keeping 120 cows at the rear of his premises in Clanbrassil Street.²¹⁶

This new generation of vets was also more adventurous in undertaking advanced surgeries, despite having little, if any, training in such procedures. For example, while descriptions of bovine caesarean sections date back to the seventeenth century, given by John Crowshey and Michael Harward, the latter practicing in Ireland, the procedure only came into wider use in bovine obstetrics from the 1940s.²¹⁷ Until then the prognosis from caesareans had remained poor under farmyard conditions, especially as it was used as a last resort, further limiting the chances of success. Both the cow and calf generally died.²¹⁸ From the 1950s the surgery was performed under local anaesthetic. This proved a major breakthrough in terms of cow and calf survival and general animal welfare.²¹⁹ Many of the older vets were reluctant to engage in complicated surgeries. Paddy Nolan recalled performing the first caesarean section in

²¹⁵ Interview with Mick Flanagan, MRCVS, Brosna, county Kerry, 20 October 2011. CD 15, Author’s Collection.

²¹⁶ O’Reilly and Nugent, ‘Ham Lambert’, pp 253-4.

²¹⁷ John Crowshey, *The countryman’s instructor* (London, 1636), p. 9; Harward, *Herdsmen’s mate*, pp 98-9.

²¹⁸ W. A. Cartwright, ‘On the caesarean operation’ in *Veterinarian*, vol. 24, no. 4 (April, 1851), pp 183-8; H. Bell, ‘Surgical conditions in practice’ in *Vet. Rec.*, vol. 48 (1936), pp 141-4.

²¹⁹ P. A. McGeady, ‘Some aspect of bovine surgery’ in *Ir. Veterinary Jn.*, vol. 6, no. 10 (October, 1952), pp 510-3; Peter Jackson, ‘Bovine Obstetrics, 1770-2012’ in *Vet. Hist.*, new ser., vol. 17, no. 4 (2015), p. 398-9. See also B. M. Q. Weaver, ‘The history of veterinary anaesthesia’ in *Vet. Hist.*, new ser., vol., 5, no. 2 (1987/88), pp 43-57.

south Clare. He said that those were the early days of bovine abdominal surgery and the older vets in the district were glad to ‘refer any such case to me.’²²⁰ Jim White performed his first caesarean under local anaesthetic. He never saw a caesarean in college and when the need arose to perform the operation in practice he did it ‘by the book.’ Although White admitted that he incorrectly stitched the animal, it lived for five more years. He claimed that it was through the success of such operations that he ‘made a name for [him]self.’²²¹ Mick Flanagan performed his first caesarean section, never having experienced the procedure in college.²²² John Blake explained that the operation was occasionally unsuccessful. He reasoned that the procedure was not carried out often enough, which resulted in the vet getting little chance to improve his technique.²²³

The pre-World War Two years saw few advances in drug therapy, meaning that vets had few effective drugs at their disposal. The late nineteenth-century breakthroughs of Pasteur, Koch and others in understanding the cause of disease had not been equalled, to any great degree, with the development of new drugs.²²⁴ In fact, the first *British Veterinary Codex*, published in 1953, contained many drugs that were commonplace in the fourteenth century.²²⁵ In the 1930s Dick Pierce’s Listowel practice was still based on the same drugs used by his father almost half a century earlier and treatment was still non-specific. For example, extract of male fern and turpentine were administered to cure fluke in cattle and copper sulphate and oil of chenopodium were used to treat worms in cattle and horses, respectively. Red water was treated with salt and treacle. The arrival of the stomach tube allowed vets to administer large volumes of the dose with ‘innocent farmers often looking at the rear end as the tube was passed down the mouth.’ *Pirevan* was the first synthetic, and indeed unsafe, drug to be used for this complaint.²²⁶ The tradition of compounding drugs for use, or sale, in practice continued. In 1950, the Dublin College’s teaching of *Materia Medica*, the use and formulation of medicines, was akin to how it had been taught half a century earlier.

²²⁰ Interview with Paddy Nolan, MRCVS, Kilkee, county Clare, 14 July 2011. CD 12, Author’s Collection.

²²¹ Interview with Jim White.

²²² Interview with Mick Flanagan.

²²³ Interview with John Blake, MRCVS, Scariff, county Clare on 14 February 2012. CD 36, Author’s Collection.

²²⁴ For an overview of the understanding of disease and its reception by the veterinary community see Worboys, ‘‘Killing and curing’’, pp 53-71.

²²⁵ Bell, ‘Days of the farriers’, p. 6.

²²⁶ Pierce, ‘In my own time’, p. 170; Interview with Anthony Griffin, Dingle, county Kerry, 19 July 2014. CD 51, Author’s Collection.

Students were instructed on composition of medicines which they would subsequently use in practice. The standard textbook was *A Manual of Veterinary Therapeutics and Pharmacology* by Edward Wallis Hoare, first published in 1895.²²⁷ Brian Ó Súilleabháin attended Professor Connolly's pharmacology class in 1950. He recalled that students were taught how to make up 'bottles, pills, drenches and other remedies from prescriptions' and how to wrap, tie and label same with brown paper and string. They were also instructed in the art of writing prescriptions in Latin, which could then be compounded by a pharmacist.²²⁸

The Economic war of the 1930s resulted in further stagnancy for the Irish veterinary profession. On 1 January 1933, there were 306 persons listed in the first *Veterinary Register of Saorstát Éireann*, the majority in private practice supplemented by some part-time state work while the private practice was predominately equine-based with some cattle, sheep and pig work. Small animal practice was almost non-existent outside of Dublin.²²⁹ The new veterinary graduate could expect a salary of around £200 per annum.²³⁰ The Anglo-Irish Economic War saw Irish agriculture in crisis, with the cattle industry, the life-blood of the economy, nearly destroyed. A thirty-five percent reduction in cattle exports and declining prices for beef left Irish farmers in a poor financial position.²³¹ To the ordinary farmer this standoff with Britain meant that cattle were almost worthless.²³² Joe Dineen recalled that calves were 'for nothing, you couldn't sell them, you couldn't sell the pigs or *banbhs* they were dumping them out on the roadside.'²³³ During 1934, in order to reduce cattle numbers, the Department of Agriculture took initial steps to set up a meat canning factory at Roscrea that proposed to slaughter up to one thousand older defective cows weekly.²³⁴ Department officials attended at various centres at specified times and paid a flat rate of £2 10s for

²²⁷ Connolly, 'The progress of veterinary science', pp 132-3.

²²⁸ Michael Doherty and Brian Ó Súilleabháin, 'Veterinary practice in Ireland, 1916-2016' in *Teagasc, farming & country life 1916* (Carlow, 2016), pp 126-7.

²²⁹ The Veterinary Council, *The veterinary register of Saorstát Éireann* (Dublin, 1933).

²³⁰ Anon, 'Time capsules', p. 26.

²³¹ The story of the Anglo-Irish Economic War, 1932-38 has been well-documented elsewhere. For example, see Mary E. Daly, *The first department* (Dublin, 2002), pp 158-209; Kevin O'Rourke, 'Burn everything British but their coal: The Anglo-Irish Economic War of the 1930s' in *Journal of Economic History*, vol. 51, no. 2 (June, 1991), pp 357-66.

²³² Interview with Con O'Gorman, Newcastle West, county Limerick, 25 October 2011. CD 17, Author's Collection.

²³³ Interview with Joe Dineen, MRCVS, Rathmore, county Kerry, 2 July 2010. CD 8, Author's Collection.

²³⁴ Daly, *The first department*, pp 173-4.

the animals.²³⁵ The factory opened in late July 1935 with ‘old cows from Kerry’ the first to be accepted.²³⁶ Ned Breen recalled availing of the scheme and maintained that the price was good in the circumstances since he had sold a healthy two-year-old heifer at a fair for £2 5s.²³⁷

Because of the poor price for cattle it made little financial sense for the farmer to call the vet, as the fee was more ‘than the cow was worth.’²³⁸ Therefore, the outlook for the veterinary graduate was bleak. Any plan to set up practice in a provincial Irish town was best put on hold, and many left to seek practice in Britain. Jack Powell graduated from Dublin in 1936. He recalled that there were ‘no jobs to be had in Ireland’, and answered an advertisement in the *Veterinary Record* to work as an assistant in Cambridgeshire. There he gained valuable experience in general practice, mostly treating cattle and pigs, while his boss, Major Charles Townsend, catered for the needs of his equine owning clientele.²³⁹ Meanwhile, the Irish farmer continued to depend on the local cow-doctor, as vets were scarce and, because of the agricultural depression, expensive. These points were highlighted by Ned Fitzgerald, who recalled that in 1930s Tournafulla his cousin Donal, a local handyman, was always called upon when an animal was sick, firstly ‘because the vets hadn’t come into our area at the time.’ Secondly, he claimed that it would have taken a ‘very serious case’ before either Dick Pierce or William Hennigan was summoned from Listowel, seventeen miles away. Fitzgerald estimated that a call out could cost up to three pounds and that the animals being treated were worth no more than that.²⁴⁰ His estimate on the animal’s worth was about right. As already noted a cow was worth £2 10s at Roscrea. However, the aforementioned Dick Pierce noted that in 1934 a call up to ten miles away, plus a supply of medicine was ten shillings. The maximum fee, no matter what work was involved was £1. On the other hand, a year-old animal could be bought for that amount, with a dry cow costing £2. During the years of the economic war the annual income in

²³⁵ *Irish Independent*, 15 July 1935.

²³⁶ *Tralee Liberator*, 25 July 1935.

²³⁷ Interview with Ned Breen, Kilflynn, county Kerry, 19 April 2012. CD 46, Author’s Collection. The popularity of the Roscrea scheme inspired a song, written from the perspective of an old cow, which, after a lifetime of service to the farmer, faced the trip to Roscrea. A version survives in the folklore archives, see SFC 432:329.

²³⁸ Interview with Pakie Ryan.

²³⁹ Interview with Jack Powell.

²⁴⁰ Interview with Ned Fitzgerald, Tournafulla, county Limerick, 29 November 2011. CD 22, Author’s Collection.

the Pierce practice was only £400.²⁴¹ In truth, an animal's worth should have been several multiples of the vet's fees before the professional man would be called. Stockowners knew that there was a possibility the animal might die whoever treated it so the majority called on some local practitioner and took their chances. Tom Barry, an Ennistymon teacher, maintained that the farmers of that, his parents' generation simply could not afford to call a vet. If the animal did not get better by itself, or with the help of a local handyman, it died.²⁴² Historically, during periods of prosperity in Irish agriculture the veterinary surgeon was gainfully employed, while in periods of depression cattle doctoring was left to the local man. A Leitrim practitioner observed that when the price of cattle was high his clients became 'more veterinary-minded.' On the other hand, when the prices were low the quacks became busy and he had 'time to wash the car.'²⁴³

Bovine Tuberculosis eradication scheme: The making of the Irish veterinary profession

During the early decades of the twentieth century bovine tuberculosis (BTB) was prevalent in Irish herds. The Diseases of Animals Act (1935) made some provisions for the slaughter of animals with advanced BTB, but none for an eradication programme. The arrival of war put paid to any such plans.²⁴⁴ Excepting its implications for human health, the disease severely limited thriving and productivity and was seen as one of the underlying factors behind the poor physical condition of livestock.²⁴⁵ Jack Powell recalled that in the 1940s many of his cases were 'complicated with TB', in that he might treat an animal for a curable condition only to find that his drugs had no effect because the animal's body was already riddled with tuberculosis.²⁴⁶ In 1954 Thomas Walsh, Minister of Agriculture, informed Eamon de Valera that about one-third of Irish cows were affected with BTB. He predicted that serious losses to the livestock export trade would be encountered unless an official scheme to tackle the disease was not

²⁴¹ Pierce, 'In my own time', p. 169.

²⁴² Interview with John Organ and Tom Barry, Ennistymon, county Clare, 15 July 2011. CD 13, Author's Collection.

²⁴³ P. M. Gallagher, 'Some experiences in practice in south Leitrim' in *Ir. Veterinary Jn.*, vol. 2, no. 10 (October, 1957), pp 193-5.

²⁴⁴ Department of an Taoiseach (Dept. T) file S 2392 A. The files are held at the National Archives of Ireland, 8 Bishop St, Dublin. Retrieved 12 January 2017.

²⁴⁵ Information collected from Neilie Ahern, MRCVS, Ballybunion, county Kerry, on 12 February 2004. Author's Collection. Ahern also attributed worms, lice and warble fly as contributing to the poor condition of cattle, prior to effective treatments for those conditions.

²⁴⁶ Interview with Jack Powell.

immediately put in place.²⁴⁷ At the time Ireland's store cattle trade with Great Britain, represented over twenty percent of all Irish exports. Britain embarked on a BTB eradication scheme in 1935 and twenty years later about half the herds there were certified clear of the disease. The British government intended to eradicate the disease by 1961, from which time Irish cattle would not be allowed into Britain without being certified as TB free.²⁴⁸ In 1961 John Charles Nagle, Secretary of the Department of Agriculture, admitted that although Ireland was motivated to eradicate TB because of health concerns, its primary motivation was an economic one.²⁴⁹

The BTB eradication scheme was developed in several phases, with the veterinary profession gradually becoming more involved. A pilot scheme of eradication was initiated in Bansha, Tipperary in 1949-50 as part of the 'Parish Plan' of Fr John Hayes, Parish Priest and founder of *Muintir na Tire*. The plan was launched in October 1948 by the Minister for Agriculture, James Dillon, who promised the resources of his veterinary staff in checking the health and productivity of the parish's livestock.²⁵⁰ J. B. Caffrey, MRCVS was assigned in an advisory capacity to the Bansha Parish Council and found local herds to be severely affected by parasite infestation, mastitis, phosphorus deficiency and contagious abortion. The latter was quickly tackled with a new vaccine. The Department, encouraged by the Bansha initiative, decided to extend this vaccination programme nationwide.²⁵¹ The inaugural scheme for the eradication of BTB from the country was subsequently rolled out in the Bansha area during the following months when 'eight or nine veterinary surgeons were brought to the village to test the cows.' The veterinarians were housed and fed at the presbytery.²⁵² Whether the Bansha experiment can be viewed as a success is debatable. By 1955 the incidence of BTB in the parish itself was still twenty-four percent with an incidence of forty-three percent in the surrounding area.²⁵³ However, as Bansha was predominately a dairying area, presenting many of the problems expected to be met during a national eradication programme, the exercise proved useful in indicating the general pattern on which

²⁴⁷ Dept. T, S13089 D.

²⁴⁸ Robert O'Connor, *A study of the bovine tuberculosis eradication scheme* (Dublin, 1986), p. 25.

²⁴⁹ Dept. T, S 16674 J/63.

²⁵⁰ *Irish Examiner*, 30 October 1948.

²⁵¹ *Irish Press*, 18 August 1949.

²⁵² Stephen Rynne, *Father John Hayes: Founder of Muintir na Tire, people of the land* (Dublin, 1960), pp 252-3.

²⁵³ *Times Pictorial*, 2 April 1955.

nationwide eradication measures should be based.²⁵⁴ A general Bovine Tuberculosis Eradication Scheme was launched in September 1954. The main feature of the scheme was the provision by the Department of Agriculture, free to the herd-owner, of tuberculin testing by a veterinary surgeon of the herd owner's choice. Additionally, the Department purchased any diseased animals at full current market value and made grants available to farmers for the provision of clean water supplies and improved cattle housing.²⁵⁵

The phased development of the scheme over the following years was a complicated affair involving much political manoeuvring and strategic planning. In the early years of testing, herd-owners were merely invited to participate on a voluntary basis in eradication measures. The Diseases of Animals (Bovine Tuberculosis) Act of 1957 gave the Minister powers to facilitate a more progressive eradication of the disease. Farmers who rejected the voluntary scheme were now assigned a local veterinary surgeon to undertake testing on a compulsory basis. Compulsory testing was initially introduced in Sligo and was gradually extended to cover the entire country by 1962. There were over 170,000 diseased cattle (reactors) removed during that year. This figure had fallen to 30,000 by 1965 when the Government optimistically declared that the country was 'attested', meaning virtually free of bovine TB.²⁵⁶ To this point twenty-four Department vets, 210 Department officials and 600 private vets had been involved in administering the scheme.²⁵⁷ Gross expenditure on the campaign was estimated at £54.4 million, of which £36.1 million was paid to herd-owners in compensation and bonuses. Veterinary surgeons fees amounted to £10.6 million or 19.5 percent of the total expenditure.²⁵⁸ By the early twenty-first century the Irish bovine TB eradication programme had considerably reduced rather than eradicated bovine TB, continuing to evolve since its introduction.²⁵⁹ Department of Agriculture figures for 2014 showed that 0.2 percent of 8.4 million animals were affected with the disease with Ireland 'still

²⁵⁴ Dept. T, S 2392 B.

²⁵⁵ Department of Agriculture, *The bovine tuberculosis eradication scheme, and how to avail of it* (Dublin, 1954).

²⁵⁶ Dept. T, S 2392 B & C. For a comprehensive overview of the early years of the BTB eradication scheme see Anon, 'The bovine tuberculosis eradication scheme, 1954-63' in *Journal of the Department of Agriculture*, vol. 41 (1964), pp 210-33; R. C. Watchorn, 'Bovine tuberculosis eradication scheme, 1954-65' in *Journal of the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries*, vol. 43 (1966), pp 243-60.

²⁵⁷ Daly, *The first department*, p. 348.

²⁵⁸ R. C. Watchorn, *Bovine tuberculosis eradication scheme, 1954-65* (Dublin, 1966), p. 22.

²⁵⁹ See Margaret Good, 'Bovine tuberculosis eradication in Ireland' in *Ir. Veterinary Jn.*, vol. 59, no. 3 (March, 2006), pp 154-62.

far away' from the EU's statutory target of 0.1 percent herd prevalence that is necessary for a country to be designated with the official status of being free of bovine TB.²⁶⁰

The eradication scheme provided vets with immediate opportunities and rewards. For several years the profession had envisaged that any state scheme to eradicate BTB had the potential to provide gainful employment for veterinary surgeons practicing in the country. In 1942, John Michael Murphy, President of the VMAI, encouraged an eradication scheme, claiming that it was no longer acceptable to say that the TB problem was 'too big, would cost too much and that it would result in a scarcity of milk.'²⁶¹ Therefore, the 1954 scheme was broadly welcomed by the profession. The *Irish Independent* projected that the scheme would absorb all the graduates of the Dublin College each year.²⁶² Some practitioners were initially sceptical about the scheme and its potential longevity. Joe O'Farrell, a Kilrush vet, when informed that his opposition was actively signing up potential clients, remarked that he wasn't overly concerned and predicted that the scheme would last but two years.²⁶³ However, it quickly became apparent to the profession that a compulsory scheme offered many benefits and opportunities. The unanimous opinion of the eighteen vets interviewed for this study was that the scheme meant new and unprecedented success for the Irish veterinarian. The eradication of the disease certainly improved the general health of the herd allowing any subsequent interventions made by veterinary practitioners a greater chance of success. Owen Mangan stressed that compulsory BTB testing was of paramount importance in attempting to eradicate a disease that had implications for the health of both animals and man. He acknowledged that the scheme became a 'grave train for vets.' As a student entering veterinary college in 1958, he feared that the disease might be eradicated before he qualified in 1964.²⁶⁴ John Hassett concurred with Mangan on the necessity of the scheme, which he felt was highly beneficial to the health of children who were previously drinking infected cow's milk. He agreed that the initiative made a big difference to veterinarians' 'bank balances and pockets.'²⁶⁵ This newfound wealth helped veterinary families to climb the social ladder. As a young vet

²⁶⁰ *Irish Examiner*, 1 June 2015.

²⁶¹ Murphy, 'Veterinary profession in Ireland', pp 203-4.

²⁶² *Irish Independent*, 20 November 1953.

²⁶³ Interview with Paddy Nolan.

²⁶⁴ Interview with Owen Mangan.

²⁶⁵ Interview with John Hassett, MRCVS, Quin, county Clare, 13 February 2012. CD 35, Author's Collection.

assisting with the testing, Jim Watkins was amused that his employers' wives were 'vying with the doctors' and lawyers' wives in clothing and fur coats and all that sort of thing.'²⁶⁶ Although Pat Hartigan admitted that he made a 'good living' from testing he stressed that the 'immediate recourse' it offered to potential clients was of greater importance. Hartigan was the first practitioner to establish a full professional practice in the Caherciveen district and the testing took him 'into the farm and you got to know them [farmers] that way.'²⁶⁷ John Blake tested cattle on substantial holdings around Tulla that had 'never even seen a vet.' Blake quickly built up a relationship with these herd-owners, so much so that the following year he saw substantial growth in his practice including a run of twenty-eight night-calls in one week.²⁶⁸ Farmers also acknowledged the importance of the BTB scheme to the veterinary profession. For example, Paddy Ryan 'Luke' suggested that previous to the testing scheme, which gave vets a 'good cushion', practitioners needed the work of several parishes to be economically viable.²⁶⁹

The BTB scheme was instrumental in the rapid growth of small rural practices, as illustrated by Joe Dineen, a vet based in Rathmore, county Kerry. When Joe qualified in 1947 and set up practice in his native parish there was little call for his services.²⁷⁰ The majority of the veterinary work, such as castrating and calving, was performed by local handy men and women and any medicines were purchased from the chemist. Furthermore, the local population had hitherto little exposure to a veterinary surgeon as Rathmore had never seen a resident vet. Geographically the nearest vets were based in Milstreet and Killarney, eight and thirteen miles distant, respectively, significant distances considering the poor road infrastructure at that time. Joe maintained that 'it would have to be something very important' for those gentlemen to be called upon. Although Joe's business improved as the price of cattle rose he agreed that the big

²⁶⁶ Interview with Jim Watkins, MRCVS, Ballina, county Tipperary, 1 September 2014. CD 52, Author's Collection.

²⁶⁷ Interview with Pat Hartigan.

²⁶⁸ Interview with John Blake.

²⁶⁹ Interview with Paddy Ryan 'Luke', Pa Smyth and Mai Smyth, Cappamore, county Tipperary, 2 February 2012. CD 32, Author's Collection.

²⁷⁰ Joe Dineen retained a diary, dated November 1949-April 1950, in which he wrote brief details of the cases he saw during that period. On average, he attended about four calls daily, the majority of the cases involved bovine obstetrics, fevers in pigs and the administration of Strain 19, widely used for the inoculation of cattle against brucellosis. There appeared to be little equine practice, which Dineen attributed to a lack of horses in the Sliabh Luachra district, dominated by marginal land. Ponies, jennets and donkeys were employed for traction and transport. Joe Dineen gave a copy of the diary to this author during July 2010.

breakthrough for his profession came with the introduction of bovine TB testing. He saw the scheme as having a two-fold effect on his business. Firstly, as the Department was paying for the scheme he was guaranteed payment on a regular basis. Secondly, it helped to build the practice as it introduced one to a new clientele who ‘got used to you, got used to calling the vet.’ Joe tested cattle in his own area of east Kerry but also travelled as far as Sneem, fifty miles distant, to help complete the testing there. The most lucrative work was testing on average sized herds close to home. During the early years of the scheme Joe calculated that the average number of cattle tested in Rathmore herds was nineteen. The land was unsuitable for tillage so livestock numbers were higher than in other areas. As a result, he tested three hundred cattle daily, which he admitted was financially like ‘winning the lottery.’²⁷¹

A shortage of veterinary surgeons hampered progress in eradicating the disease. The Department of Agriculture reported that c1960 there were 320 practitioners working under the scheme, a very unfavourable number compared to the 1,800 veterinary inspectors involved in BTB eradication in Britain, many of whom employed professional assistants. It reported that efforts would be made to increase the intake of veterinary students in Dublin, where there were two hundred names on the waiting list but only forty available places annually.²⁷² To assist with the testing, veterinary surgeons arrived from Britain. Many were enticed by the prospect of high earnings. In December 1959, the *Belfast Telegraph* reported of a shortage of vets in Northern Ireland as many ‘have taken up work in Éire, where the salaries are much higher.’²⁷³ In that year James Ironside arrived in Ennistymon, Clare, to assist Matty McDonough with the testing. He had graduated from Edinburgh in 1956 and subsequently took a locum position in England, earning ten pounds a week. Ironside revealed that his primary motivation for re-locating to Ireland was a financial one, fuelled by rumours that £100 a week could be earned in Ireland testing cattle. Although £100 was an exaggeration he acknowledged that because of the TB scheme Irish country vets ‘were never as flush with money and they were buying Mercedes, this was in the fifties and money was tight.’ Ironside’s story highlighted the opportunities that TB testing offered to veterinary surgeons in establishing new practices in towns and villages that hitherto had not seen a permanent veterinary practice. Initially, McDonough employed six vets to

²⁷¹ Interview with Joe Dineen.

²⁷² Dept. T, S 2392 C.

²⁷³ *Belfast Telegraph*, 30 December 1959.

carry out the testing. Access to thousands of mainly small herds, spread over large geographical areas, offered opportunities for such men to set up new practices throughout Clare. In 1950, there were seven registered veterinary surgeons in the county, by 1965 the number had risen to twenty-two. In 1971, Ironside became a partner in the McDonough practice which serviced over thirteen hundred farms.²⁷⁴

The TB testing scheme was certainly lucrative for veterinarians but it also had its challenges. Firstly, testing equipment was unreliable and facilities were primitive. The milch cows were usually tied up but other stock, mostly horned, was running loose in small dark houses. To facilitate the testing of such animals it was necessary to individually catch the animal and hold it by the nose. According to Jim White restraining cattle was ‘the worst part of the test.’²⁷⁵ Mick Flanagan always employed helpers to assist with the handling of the cattle and remarked that ‘your life was in your hands at times because you met wild animals.’²⁷⁶ The *comharing* system in rural areas also meant that ‘all the neighbours would gather around when the vet was coming.’²⁷⁷ This plentiful supply of help is highlighted in one story from Clare when the vet arrived to a yard where he expected to avail of a newly installed ‘cattle crush’ for restraining stock. He was met by a large group of men ready to manually restrain a wild herd of dry-stock. On inquiring about the availability of the restraining crush he was told it was ‘only put in for show.’²⁷⁸ As the testing developed the level of paperwork escalated resulting in the need for individual vets to provide office space and staff to administer the scheme. Each farm received its own unique herd-number and a number pierced or tattooed inside the animal’s ear initially identified individual animals. Mayo vet, Pat Daly recalled that such ear numbers were often illegible resulting in major discrepancies in animal identification documents. Consequently, this led to much abuse from farmers who blamed the vet if incorrect documentation resulted in an aborted sale on fair day. Daly described the initial testing process as ‘laborious and time consuming’ with an average of nine cattle tested in an hour. However, many of the problems were quickly addressed with the introduction of improved syringes, compulsory cattle

²⁷⁴ Interview with James Ironside, MRCVS, Spanish Point, county Clare, 11 April 2012. CD 39, Author’s Collection.

²⁷⁵ Interview with Jim White.

²⁷⁶ Interview with Mick Flanagan.

²⁷⁷ Interview with Garry O’Riordan and John Cussen, Dromcollogher, county Limerick, 23 November 2011. CD 19, Author’s Collection.

²⁷⁸ Interview with Catherine Talty, Mullagh, county Clare, 17 April 2012. CD 43, Author’s Collection.

crushes and an identity tag made of brass, resulting in the possibility of testing hundreds of cattle daily.²⁷⁹

The introduction of the compulsory TB scheme was recently described as ‘inherently unpopular’ within the farming community. In 1950s Ireland tuberculosis was a word that few mentioned because of the great social stigma associated with human tuberculosis.²⁸⁰ As previously noted farmers initially entered the TB eradication scheme on a voluntary basis. The local vet usually visited farms in his area and explained the benefits of a disease-free herd, offering his services if the farmer decided to sign up. Whilst some herd-owners understood the benefits of the scheme others were less informed, uninterested, suspicious and fearful. Catherine Talty recalled that her late husband Sean signed on a voluntary basis. When the scheme became compulsory a neighbour had a reactor and blamed Sean for introducing the scheme to the district.²⁸¹ Although the compulsory testing brought the practitioner to many new farms, his arrival wasn’t always welcome especially if the herd was subsequently found to be TB positive. An enforced lock-up of such herds meant the farmer could not sell nor buy stock until such time as the herd was deemed free of the disease. A certain stigma accompanied an infected herd and as a result many farmers felt victimised by a situation beyond their control. Although vets were merely instruments in enforcing Department guidelines Jim White admitted that the scheme made ‘them [vets] friends and it made enemies.’²⁸² Farmers traditionally monitored the health of their stock by observing the animal’s coat, flesh covering, appetite and general behaviour. In addition, dairy cows were believed to be healthy if they consistently bore calves and produced a good quantity of milk with a high butterfat content. Therefore, stockowners were reluctant to accept a test that contradicted their observable indications of a healthy animal. Donal Flannery, a Newcastle West vet, recalled a sad story of two bachelor brothers he encountered whilst testing in a remote part of Mayo. They lived in primitive conditions, sharing their dwelling with their two cows and had no previous recourse to a vet. One of the cows tested positive for TB resulting in one of the brothers taking his own life the following day. Flannery felt that even though it was his job to condemn the animal

²⁷⁹ Daly, *A memoir*, p. 30.

²⁸⁰ *Irish Examiner*, 29 July 2013, 24 August 2010.

²⁸¹ Interview with Catherine Talty.

²⁸² Interview with Jim White.

there was a lack of foresight and common sense on his part as the brothers were depending on that cow for milk, heat and a livelihood.²⁸³

Life-saving drugs, improved communications and infrastructure

Although the Compulsory BTB Scheme introduced the vet to every farmer in his locality, this did not necessarily mean that he would gain new private clients. To do so he needed to offer more to potential clients than the local handy-man. Although the vet offered better advice on husbandry and a higher level of diagnostic skills, it can be argued that prior to the 1940s this was not enough to usurp the local man.²⁸⁴ Both were providing the client with skills in calving, foaling, castrating, dehorning and judiciously using medicines that did not interfere with nature's cure. But the veterinary surgeon had actually been given the first opportunity to gain advantage over the local practitioner with the arrival of the 'drugs revolution' in the 1930s. Iain Pattison argued that these new drugs had the ability to fight against 'hitherto fatal disease.'²⁸⁵ The first of these drugs was *Prontosil*, which contained a sulphonamide that specifically attacked streptococci bacteria. It was developed by Gerhard Domagk, a German chemist and became available to doctors in April 1935.²⁸⁶ All these new drugs were initially used in human medicine but quickly made their way to its veterinary counterpart, Dick Pierce first using the drug, under the name *Streptocide*, in 1937.²⁸⁷ Various strains of the sulfa-drugs appeared over the following years. *Sulfapyridine*, better known as M&B 693, was introduced to veterinary medicine in 1939 where it had a more dramatic impact comparable to its effect in human medicine. As the initials suggest the product was manufactured by May and Baker, a British chemical company based in Dagenham. This success prompted the company to venture further into the research and development of veterinary products.²⁸⁸ M&B 693 was widely used by Irish farmers. Donal O'Connor saw his father administering about eighteen tablets to a cow, which he claimed were

²⁸³ Interview with Donal Flannery, MRCVS, Newcastle West, county Limerick, 31 October 2012. CD 48, Author's Collection.

²⁸⁴ See W. M. Brancker, 'General practice in the 1930s' in *Vet. Hist.*, new ser., vol. 4, no. 3 (1986), pp 94-7.

²⁸⁵ Iain Pattison, 'A chronological digest of British veterinary history, Part 10: 1930-1948' in *Vet. Hist.*, new ser., vol. 13, no. 4 (February, 2007), p. 377.

²⁸⁶ John E. Lesch, *The first miracle drugs: How the sulfa drugs transformed medicine* (Oxford, 2007), pp 3-4.

²⁸⁷ Pierce, 'In my own time', p. 170.

²⁸⁸ Lesch, *Miracle drugs*, p. 197. See also Judy Slinn, *A history of May and Baker* (Cambridge, 1984).

excellent to treat pneumonia, mastitis and other infections.²⁸⁹ The drug cured some famous patients. It was said to cure Winston Churchill of pneumonia, in 1943, and the Royal Circus lion, *Nero*, during the following year.²⁹⁰

Several chemical variations of the original sulfa-drugs were developed and continue to be used in veterinary medicine into the twenty-first century. However, when *penicillin* was introduced into veterinary medicine sulfa-drugs were immediately relegated to second place.²⁹¹ While the Great War had a negative effect on veterinary practice, the opposite could be said of the Second World War, which accelerated the development of antibiotics, therapies and diagnostic tools that would become vital as life-saving veterinary treatments. Alexander Fleming discovered *penicillin* in 1928 but it was more than a decade before it was shown that the drug was highly effective against bacterial infections.²⁹² *Penicillin* was then mass produced in the last two years of the war for the treatment of the sick and wounded. When eventually made available to veterinarians it was initially reconstituted with saline for intra-mammary infusions for the treatment of bovine mastitis and proved highly effective. In the years immediately following the war other antibiotics such as *streptomycin* and *chlortetracycline* entered the veterinary market.²⁹³ In Ireland *penicillin* was still scarce and expensive and therefore did not come into widespread veterinary use until the early 1950s.²⁹⁴ The development of the sulfa-drugs and antibiotics coincided with the arrival of a host of new treatments. For example, the first major breakthrough in parasite treatments was *phenothiazine* for worms and *hexachloroethane* for fluke. Until the 1940s there were few efficacious remedies for serious animal diseases excepting various vaccines and sera. By contrast the post war years saw a dramatic growth in and demand for newly developed scientific veterinary medicines.²⁹⁵ Veterinary practice was further improved with the widespread availability of diagnostic aids such as x-ray, microscope, vagino-

²⁸⁹ Interview with Donal O'Connor, Tarbert Island, county Kerry, 24 November 2002. CD 1, Author's Collection.

²⁹⁰ Andrew Godley and T. A. B. Corley, 'Veterinary medicines in Britain: Output and industry organisation since 1900' in *Medical History*, vol. 55, no. 3 (July, 2011), p. 362.

²⁹¹ Debbie T. Ladry, 'Searching for the magic bullet: Veterinary experiences with the first antibiotic' in *Veterinary Heritage*, vol. 25, no. 1 (May, 2002), pp 3-4.

²⁹² James Howie, 'Penicillin: 1929-40' in *British Medical Journal*, vol. 293, no. 6540 (19 July 1986), pp 158-9.

²⁹³ R. H. Gustafson and R. E. Bowen, 'Antibiotic use in animal agriculture' in *Journal of Applied Microbiology*, no. 83 (1997), p. 531.

²⁹⁴ Interview with Frank O'Leary.

²⁹⁵ T. A. B. Corley and Andrew Godley, 'The veterinary medicine industry in Britain in the twentieth century' in *The Economic History Review*, vol. 63, no. 3 (2011), pp 832-54.

scope, and various stains and reagents for conducting microscopic examinations and chemical tests. An editorial in the *Irish Veterinary Journal* noted that such aids would enhance the reputation and income of the practitioner, and reveal to the public the modern aspects of veterinary practice.²⁹⁶

The *Irish Veterinary Journal* was amongst a number of publications that now offered the veterinary surgeon information on the latest drugs, diagnostic aids and treatments. It was first published in November 1946, initially with quarterly issues. Initially, three hundred and fifty copies were printed and supplied free of charge to members of the VMAI. The journal was available to non-members for two shillings. From 1948 it was published monthly but delivery to readers ‘was somewhat irregular.’ However, the journal became invaluable to Irish veterinarians, providing its readers with a mixture of research reports, accounts of practitioners’ clinical experiences, peer reviewed articles and editorial comments.²⁹⁷ The *Veterinary Record*, published weekly in London, was equally popular with Irish practitioners. It was recognised within the pharmaceutical industry as a journal in which any new veterinary products should be advertised and reviewed.²⁹⁸ Pat Daly noted that the *Record* delivered the most up-to-date developments to all practitioners, even in remote areas ‘just for the price of the subscription.’²⁹⁹

When *penicillin* and other new ground-breaking drugs eventually became available to Irish vets, their arrival was welcomed and their impact immediate. The recollections of those who cared for animals at that time highlighted how the new medicines, particularly *penicillin*, changed veterinary practice. One could almost sense a certain wonder from the older vets when describing the efficacy of these new drugs. Pat Daly admitted that the great advances in science during the 1940s contributed enormously to the success of his practice. Although thankful for the sulphonamides, he stressed that it was the ‘explosion’ in the availability of *penicillin* and *streptomycin* in the 1950s that greatly enhanced the chances of recovery from the majority of infectious

²⁹⁶ Anon, ‘Modern methods in practice’ in *Ir. Veterinary Jn.*, vol. 3, no. 2 (March/April, 1949), p. 274; J. W. Heney, ‘Aids to veterinary diagnosis’ in *Ir. Veterinary Jn.*, vol. 3, no. 2 (March/April, 1949), pp 275-8.

²⁹⁷ Pat Hartigan, ‘50 years of the IVJ’ in *Ir. Veterinary Jn.*, vol. 50, no. 1 (January, 1997), pp 20-1.

²⁹⁸ George Brander, ‘The pharmaceutical industry and the Vet. Rec.’ in *Vet. Rec.*, vol. 123, no. 1 (2 July 1988), pp 20-3.

²⁹⁹ Daly, *A memoir*, p. 28.

diseases.³⁰⁰ Ham Lambert noted that *penicillin* proved ‘a great boon’ to his small animal practice, as many of the cases that it successfully treated would otherwise not have responded.³⁰¹ Mick Flanagan claimed that, on its introduction, *penicillin* ‘was curing everything.’³⁰² Vincent Houlihan described the drug as ‘the big thing...the main one.’³⁰³ Donal Flannery admitted that he was ‘lucky’ to have *sulphonamides* and *penicillin* in his medicine chest as outside of those drugs there was ‘very little.’³⁰⁴ The veterinary surgeon was now in a position to cure animals that hitherto would have died. John Blake described using ‘our old friend *penicillin*’ to cure a mare that all the ‘tinkers and all the experts’ said would die.³⁰⁵ Richard Pierce conceded that before the new drugs the veterinary surgeon was ‘only helping the animal to get over the illness by itself. The mortality rate dropped dramatically and the veterinary surgeon gained a new status.’³⁰⁶ Paddy Nolan concurred. His predecessor in Kilrush, Joe O’Farrell, commenced practice in 1948 ‘armed with’ *penicillin*, an injection for red water and a blackleg vaccine. Nolan imagined that any one of those three ‘was enough to make him King, but to have the three of them together made him God.’³⁰⁷ Mattie O’Dowd highlighted the importance of *penicillin* in cementing the relationship between vets and farmers as ‘they (vets) had *penicillin*...it meant the difference between losing an animal and not losing the animal.’³⁰⁸ Pa Smyth claimed that one was now assured a ninety percent cure rate, in comparison to the old methods, which were ‘hit and miss.’³⁰⁹

The new drugs were also available to the farmer and cow-doctor, which caused some concern to the veterinary profession. In February 1952, an editorial in the *Irish Veterinary Journal* highlighted the large numbers of complaints from those in general practice regarding the widespread sale of veterinary drugs, sera and vaccines. The editorial claimed that the practice was reducing the legitimate livelihood of the vet, which would result in a shortage of practitioners, and a farming community without a ‘widespread, active and vigorous’ veterinary service. Regarding animal welfare, the writer argued that the indiscriminate use of medicines resulted in incorrect lines of

³⁰⁰ Ibid.

³⁰¹ Lambert, ‘Some experiences’, p. 240.

³⁰² Interview with Mick Flanagan.

³⁰³ Interview with Vincent Houlihan.

³⁰⁴ Interview with Donal Flannery.

³⁰⁵ Interview with John Blake.

³⁰⁶ Pierce, ‘In my own time’, p. 170.

³⁰⁷ Interview with Paddy Nolan.

³⁰⁸ Interview with Mattie O’Dowd.

³⁰⁹ Interview with Paddy Ryan ‘Luke’, Pa Smyth and Mai Smyth; Interview with Anthony Griffin.

treatment and unnecessary suffering for the animal.³¹⁰ P. M. Gallagher, a Leitrim vet, determined that his clients had become more knowledgeable on animal diseases and their treatments. Such knowledge was gleaned from attending lectures organised by farmers' clubs, reading veterinary columns in newspapers and acquiring Government publications. As a result, a new type of quack evolved who used 'pseudo-technical terms taken from the labels of proprietary [sic] cure-all bottles.' Gallagher witnessed these individuals attempting to examine the contents of his bag and car in an effort to determine the drugs he was using. Furthermore, they watched every move of the vet during cases 'prepared, no doubt, to ape him elsewhere.' Gallagher believed these gentlemen used the syringe 'recklessly.' On a number of occasions, cattle under his care unexplainably died following an injection for red water. He subsequently discovered, on questioning the owner, that local quacks had previously injected the animals. Therefore, he found it necessary to caution all involved on the dangers of lay treatment, and make the farmer understand that he was liable to lose up to £70 worth of animal.³¹¹

The introduction of compulsory BTB testing and the development of new, effective drugs coincided with improvements in the national infrastructure. In the post war years there was a concerted effort between national and local Government to restore the main roads and surface the neglected country roads.³¹² Joe Dineen claimed that improvements in the road surfaces and rural electrification were paramount in the development of his Rathmore practice. When he commenced practice in 1947 only the main road through the town was surfaced while all others were merely sand and gravel so that, as he recalled, a set of springs would last no more than six weeks.³¹³ Pat Daly recalled that improved road surfaces were contemporaneous with a better quality of car, where 'dependability became the norm rather than the exception.'³¹⁴ The Volkswagen Beetle was a favourite with that generation of vets, renowned as it was for handling the rough conditions encountered. Jim Watkins described the Volkswagen as 'the greatest thing to hit the veterinary profession.' He remembered the car as reliable, fast,

³¹⁰ Anon, 'Proprietary medicines' in *Ir. Veterinary Jn.*, vol. 6, no. 2 (February, 1952), p. 299.

³¹¹ Gallagher, 'Some experiences', pp 193-5.

³¹² P. J. Howell, 'Roads and road traffic' in Mark Callanan and Justin F. Keogan (eds), *Local Government in Ireland* (Dublin, 2003), p. 195.

³¹³ Interview with Joe Dineen.

³¹⁴ Daly, *A memoir*, p. 28.

economical, unequalled at driving in fields and capable of starting in severe frost.³¹⁵ Jack Powell bought his first Beetle in 1953, having previously owned a ‘Flying Standard’ and a Vauxhall. He found these cars unreliable but had fond recollections of the Beetle as he ‘went places in that Volkswagen.’ It coped with roads that were ‘anything but good’ and was well capable of traversing fields. In 2010, in his ninety-eight-year, Jack received delivery of his fortieth Volkswagen.³¹⁶

The decades from the 1950s to the 1970s also saw unprecedented improvements in communications and in the general working conditions of the vet. At the VCI dinner in January 1947, the Minister for Agriculture, James Ryan, conceded that the veterinary surgeons encountered primitive conditions in practice. However, he predicted that the vet could look forward to ‘electricity, hot running water, telephones and other amenities on the farm in the not too distant future.’³¹⁷ A successful outcome in veterinary surgical operations was generally dependent on clean working conditions, with a plentiful supply of hot water and adequate lighting. Before rural electrification the vet was ‘depending on candles and lanterns.’³¹⁸ The hot water supply often equated to the contents of a kettle or saucepan. Jack Powell recalled attending a case of a cow with a prolapse. To perform the operation, he needed light and plenty of hot water, which he requested from the animal’s owner. On the client’s arrival with a candle in a jam-jar and a small basin of water Jack declared that ‘I am not going to bloody shave myself.’³¹⁹ Despite such shortcomings veterinary operations were successfully performed. For example, Jim White described how he successfully performed his first caesarean section on a heifer with the light of a ‘tilly’ lamp.³²⁰ Although the electrification of rural Ireland began in 1946 only ninety percent of rural homes had mains electricity in 1971.³²¹ The Black Valley in county Kerry was not connected to the grid until December 1977.³²² The development of rural water supplies, based on Group Water Schemes, occurred in tandem with, and totally dependent on electrification, which was

³¹⁵ Jim Watkins, *Veterinary tales* (Killaloe, 2011), p. 55.

³¹⁶ Interview with Jack Powell.

³¹⁷ *Irish Press*, 14 January 1947.

³¹⁸ Interview with Joe Dineen.

³¹⁹ Interview with Jack Powell.

³²⁰ Interview with Jim White.

³²¹ Michael J. Sheil, *The quiet revolution: The electrification of rural Ireland, 1946-1976* (Dublin, 1984), pp 154-5.

³²² *Kerryman*, 16 December 1977.

needed to operate pumping equipment.³²³ This roll-out also took decades. A 1970 ESRI survey of farms in the west of Ireland showed that only half had piped water.³²⁴ Even though electricity and water were available, not every farmer availed of the new amenities. In the experience of Pat Daly only the ‘more progressive’ farms installed electricity in the sheds and yards.³²⁵ Others took a more conservative view and saw the new amenities as either unnecessary or expensive, as explained by the economist, James Meenan, in 1954. Meenan argued that in 1946 the average age of male farmers was fifty-five years. These men had lived through two world wars, the Irish revolutionary period, the Economic War, the Great Depression and all the business of reconstruction that followed these events. He concluded that ‘it is not perhaps a matter of wonder if farmers today take short views and are reluctant to embark on improvements that, however excellent they may be in theory, are only hostages to the fortunes of prices and the political and economic events that control prices.’³²⁶

Quick and effective communication was essential to the development of veterinary practice in rural Ireland. However, the provision of an efficient and economic phone service in rural Ireland proved difficult. New installations to residences were almost non-existent during the war years. Only Government Departments, Doctors, hospitals and emergency services were ‘explicitly prioritised’ but most applications for new business also received service. In 1951 veterinary surgeons were added to the priority list. This suggested that those of the profession who did not have a landline at the time would quickly avail of the service.³²⁷ The same could not be said of potential clients. In 1961, about thirty percent of all exchanges had less than seven working lines, a similar percentage had between seven and twenty lines, leaving the remaining forty percent with more than twenty subscribers.³²⁸ Therefore, the local post offices continued to play an integral part of the communications network for the veterinary

³²³ ESB Customer Services, *Golden Jubilee Rural Electrification 1946-96* (Dublin, 1996). See <https://esbarchives.ie/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/rural-electrification-50th-pr1.pdf>. Retrieved 29 November 2019.

³²⁴ Damien F. Hannan and Louise A. Katsaiouni, *Traditional families? From culturally prescribed to negotiated roles in farm families* (Dublin, 1977), p. 63.

³²⁵ Daly, *A memoir*, p. 28.

³²⁶ Government Publications Office, *Report of the Commission on Emigration and Other Population Problems, 1948-54* (Dublin, 1955), p. 377. See also Shiel, *The quiet revolution*, p. 116.

³²⁷ Roddy Flynn, ‘The development of universal telephone service in Ireland 1880-1993’ (PhD thesis, Dublin City University, 1998), p. 191. (http://doras.dcu.ie/18734/1/Roddy_Fynn_20130509140820.pdf) (Retrieved, 15 December 2016).

³²⁸ A. J. Litton, ‘The growth and development of the Irish telephone system’ in *Journal of the Statistical and Social Inquiry Society of Ireland*, vol. 115 (1961-62), p. 89.

surgeon. Not only could the client call the vet but a visit to any post office meant that the vet could call his office to see where his next call might be, often saving a round trip of several miles. Pat Daly was thankful to the many postmasters and postmistresses he encountered in his early years of practice and admitted that this communication system ‘though primitive, was a very effective one.’³²⁹ Jim Watkins employed similar routines. On visiting the post office in Doon, county Limerick, he found the phone covered in cobwebs, from lack of use.³³⁰

A real breakthrough in communication for the vet came with the mainstream introduction of the radiotelephone. Clients could now phone the veterinarian’s office and any messages could then be relayed to the vet over the new radio system.³³¹ Pat Hartigan installed a radiotelephone shortly after commencing practice in Caherciveen. The rugged terrain limited the usefulness of the device, but with experience he knew the exact points on the road where a signal could be received. Hartigan argued that although the device was far from perfect it was still very useful because in the interests of developing a practice ‘you needed to be able to respond when someone needed you.’³³² Evidence suggests, that in some areas at least, the veterinary profession was more progressive than its medical equivalent in embracing the new technologies. During 1973 both the Western and North-Eastern Health Boards debated whether to provide funds to install radiotelephones in doctors’ cars in order to improve services, the veterinary profession having done so for some time. Jimmy Costello, a Roscommon member of the Western Board, argued that veterinary surgeons installed this equipment at their own expense ‘and personally I don’t see why doctors should not do likewise.’³³³

Summary

During the early decades of the twentieth-century, equine medicine continued as the cornerstone of veterinary practice. While in urban settings, established practitioners could procure lucrative work caring for the horses of commerce, the rural practitioner

³²⁹ Daly, *A memoir*, p. 28.

³³⁰ Interview with Jim Watkins.

³³¹ Although various forms of wireless phone had existed for a number of decades in the shipping and aviation industries, it was the 1950s before radiotelephones came to mainstream use. It appears the veterinary profession worldwide were embracing the new technology. For example, see Anon, ‘Radiotelephone an aid in veterinary practice’ in *Canadian Journal of Comparative Medicine and Veterinary Science*, vol. 24, no. 8 (August, 1960), p. 255.

³³² Interview with Pat Hartigan.

³³³ *Western People*, *Mayo News*, 19 May, *Connacht Tribune*, 6 July, *Meath Chronicle*, 11 August 1973.

was largely dependent for survival on the supplementary income from a veterinary inspectorship. Poor communications, infrastructure, and a persisting trust in traditional practices and practitioners made it difficult for the vet to win the confidence of the rural stockowner. The Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction attempted to introduce veterinary science to the Irish farming community through lectures, easily understood leaflets, and, in some districts, low-cost veterinary services. Nevertheless, the vets were still perceived as horse-doctors, and, in reality offered little more than the local practitioner, as they had few effective drugs at their disposal. Although Irishmen could now train as vets in Dublin, it was necessary for many graduates to leave the country to procure gainful employment, in Britain, the colonies, or the army. The outbreak of the Great War saw many more join the AVC. Those that survived returned to a country undergoing great political change, devoid of many influential clients, who had left to escape the turmoil. One of the few positive changes on the veterinary landscape was the eventual recognition of women practitioners by the RCVS, with the graduation of Aileen Cust, in 1922.

The Economic War of the 1930s frustrated any attempts at advancing the profession in the country. Cattle were largely worthless and stockowners were unwilling to pay a veterinary fee greater than the value of the animal so that if a traditional intervention failed the animal was left to die. The profession did little to help its own cause. The Veterinary Surgeons Act of 1931 created the VCI to control the profession's interests in the country. The Council's efforts to enforce those sections of the Act prohibiting the practice of veterinary surgery or medicine by unregistered persons or corporate bodies, often proved controversial. In many cases, cow-doctors or chemists, largely unaware of the Act, were prosecuted. Especially unpopular was the Council's efforts to curtail the PDSA, a charity providing care for sick and injured animals of the poor. The profession finally made a significant breakthrough with the introduction of a compulsory scheme to eradicate bovine tuberculosis from the country. Testing all the cattle in the country provided ample employment for Irish based vets, and saw an influx of others from Britain, to assist with the work. The scheme coincided with improved communications and infrastructure, and, most significantly, the introduction of new and effective drugs, especially penicillin. The vets were now required to visit each farm in their district and when they did these life-saving treatments finally gave them a distinct advantage over the cow-doctor. Trust eventually

grew between the farmer and the vet, and the traditional practices, examined in the closing chapter, largely disappeared.

Chapter 6: The Parallel World of Traditional Veterinary Practices and Practitioners

In 1923, a contributor to the popular weekly *Ireland's Own* claimed that the contemporary veterinary surgeon was a busy man in discharging his professional duties. She wrote that his position was 'so perfectly secure' that it was hard to believe that less than a century earlier his place had been filled by the cow-doctor or wise-woman, 'with surprising success.'¹ The writer's assumption that the veterinary surgeon of the 1920s was gainfully employed is questionable, as outlined in chapter five. Furthermore, her suggestion that traditional veterinary practitioners had largely disappeared is inaccurate. At that time, the emerging official veterinary profession in Ireland was indeed making some strides in its organisation and its functionality to agriculture, yet was struggling to convince farmers of its scientific methods.² Furthermore, the numbers of trained veterinary surgeons in the country was small, predominantly engaged in urban equine practice.³ In such circumstances, farmers continued to rely on a system of indigenous veterinary practices, based on folk beliefs and traditional knowledge and skills.⁴

This system's 'veterinary' practitioners, numbering in their thousands, were readily accessible, and its treatments easy to prepare and administer, at little or no cost.⁵

¹ Bridie T. O'Donnell, 'Disappearance of the cow-doctor' in *Ireland's Own* (25 July, 1923), p. 61

² For example, in 1940, Professor Kearney, Dublin Veterinary College, speaking at the Annual Congress of the Irish Shorthorn Breeders Society, held in Limerick, condemned the continued reliance on traditional treatments and stressed to farmers that 'yours is a scientific career and it is up to you to adopt scientific methods to make it successful.' See *Kerryman*, 3 February 1940

³ According to the *Register of veterinary Surgeons, 1920*, pp 350-6, there were 376 registered veterinary surgeons in the country. The greatest numbers were concentrated in the counties with the largest urban centres. Dublin had 49 practitioners, Cork 43 and Antrim 35. On the other hand, there were only 2 practitioners in Longford, 3 in both Donegal and Offaly, and 4 in Sligo. As previously noted, the number had fallen to 306 in 1933.

⁴ Although not explored to any great extent, there is a recognition amongst scholars of Irish medical history that similar 'alternative beliefs and understandings' about health and illness existed alongside official medical discourses. For example, see Catherine Cox and Maria Luddy 'Introduction' in Catherine Cox and Maria Luddy (eds), *Cultures of care in Irish medical history, 1750-1970* (London, 2010), p. 9.

⁵ See NFC 814:1-460. The scope of those surviving traditional veterinary practices was especially highlighted in this manuscript, which contains information collected on the Dingle peninsula in 1941. The collector, P. J. O'Sullivan, informed Seán Ó Súilleabháin at the Irish Folklore Commission that he had recorded 'almost all the known diseases of cattle.' Twelve informants, ten farmers, a mason and a horse dealer provided 460 pages of material detailing the 'diseases and ailments' of cattle, sheep and horses. The manuscript is rich with the local terminology for diseases, their associated lore, and a wealth of information on traditional cures for specific ailments; See also Doherty, 'Folklore of cattle diseases', pp 41-75.

It had provided the only treatments for animal diseases ‘from time immemorial’ and its survival well into the twentieth century, parallel to the emerging professional veterinary system, is deserving of a prominent place in the present study.⁶ This chapter will examine the scope of these traditional practices, and explore the relationship between regular and irregular veterinary practice in early twentieth-century Ireland. It explores the factors influencing the acceptance of practitioners, whether regular or irregular, by stockowners, and assesses the importance of economics, community and reputation on a practitioner’s chances of success or failure. Initially, the chapter looks at how traditional veterinary treatments, whether preventative or remedial, were predominantly undertaken by the farmer and his family, and questions if these treatments had any merit. It then explores how magic and religion were employed in animal health-care, stockowners often going to great lengths to avail of their imagined powers. The chapter then looks at the evolution, scope, and demise of three distinct traditional ‘specialist’ veterinary practitioners, the cow-doctor or handyman, the blacksmith, and the charmer.

The personal testimony given by the several interviewees is invaluable in providing insights into many of these otherwise elusive areas. Many methodological challenges are involved in the exploration of this oral history, especially in relation to how interviewees are selected and how to deal with their evidence in view of the shifting and fallible nature of memory.⁷ However, much of the oral evidence dovetails with that from documentary sources, especially in relation to both change and continuity in the social hierarchies of the period. Moreover, the varied regional and occupational backgrounds of those interviewed provides balance and context, as well as a remarkable agreement on the relations between farmers and veterinarians and the overall attitude to animals in the Irish rural world pre-1960.

⁶ By the 1940s the formal veterinary profession claimed to have the ‘means to confer great benefits on the livestock community.’ See O’Connor, ‘Seeing practice’, p. 161.

⁷ Donald C. Swain, ‘Problems for practitioners of oral history’ in *The American Archivist*, vol. 28, no. 1 (January, 1965), pp 63-9; Ronald J. Grele, ‘Movement without aim: Methodological and theoretical problems in oral history’ in Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (eds), *The oral history reader* (London, 1998), pp 38-52.

The farming family: Primary animal health-care providers

Rather than calling on any professional veterinary services, farming families administered the majority of veterinary treatments, with basic veterinary interventions and remedies passed down through the generations. The farm men were primarily concerned with the care of horses and full-grown cattle. The milking of cows, raising poultry, rearing calves and feeding pigs were typically seen as ‘women’s work.’⁸ Farming women were in direct daily contact with the stock and, therefore, ideally placed to observe any onset of disease. Paddy Nolan, a Clare vet, highlighted the role women played in the health care of farm animals. As the men spent long hours away from home, at fairs or in the bog, it was requisite for the woman to make a ‘major decision’ regarding the immediate care of a sick animal. In his experience Nolan observed that it was invariably the woman who outlined the animal’s symptoms, kept a ‘notional’ account of previous treatments, and paid the bill.⁹ Children also contributed to the veterinary care of stock, particularly in observing stock for obvious signs of disease. Ninety-six-year-old Catherine Talty recalled that, being an only child, she was invariably sent by her father to collect the cows for milking. She was warned to watch out for ‘anything unusual’ as red water was a problem within the herd.¹⁰ Stockowners knew the environment in which they worked, were keenly aware of the location of vital minerals, medicinal plants and herbs and recognised that factors within that environment could impact on the health of their stock, for better or worse. For example, grazing practices impacted on the incidence of Liver Fluke, a disease caused by infestation of parasitic worms. Grazing stock on wet, low-lying pastures exacerbated the disease, whilst grazing on lands growing Male Fern, a common plant, offered a cure. Farmers knew of fields that grew a plentiful supply of the plant and, therefore, brought their ‘flukey cattle’ there to graze.¹¹ From the 1920s the extract of the Male Fern plant was extracted by several provincial chemists and sold commercially.¹² In

⁸ Conrad Arensberg, *The Irish countryman: an anthropological study* (London, 1937), p. 46; Hannah Barker, ‘Women and work’ in Hannah Barker and Elaine Chalus (eds), *Women’s history: Britain, 1700-1850* (Abington, 2005), p. 127; Deborah Simonton, *A history of European women’s work: 1700 to the present* (London, 1998), pp 20, 32; Joanna Bourke, ‘Women and poultry in Ireland, 1891-1914’ in *Irish Historical Studies*, vol. 25, no. 99 (May, 1987), pp 293-5.

⁹ Interview with Paddy Nolan.

¹⁰ Interview with Catherine Talty.

¹¹ Questionnaire completed by Sean McQuinn, Tubrid, Ardfert, county Kerry, on 10 January 2004. Author’s Collection; Tom Munnally, ‘Plant lore from west Clare’ in *Béaloidias*, vol. 73 (2005), p. 166.

¹² Questionnaire completed by Donal O’Connor, Tarbert Island, county Kerry on 22 September 2003. Author’s Collection; Provincial newspapers regularly carried advertisements from local chemists

county Clare, John 'Farmer' Moroney acted as an agent, purchasing the fern from local farmers. Interviewed in 2012, Michael Joe McMahan, Milltown Malbay, described digging, washing and drying the plants during the 1940s and 50s, before selling them to Moroney for five shillings a bag. He believed the product was sent to Scotland to be processed.¹³ The plant extract was available in either capsule or liquid form and was amongst the treatments recommended by the Department of Agriculture before the development of the modern drug, Triclabendazole.¹⁴

Writing in the 1960s, Kevin Danaher recognised the importance of farm animals to the rural economy and believed that sickness in a cow or a calf caused 'consternation', not only because of illness to that animal but the possibility that the disease might spread and infect many more. Therefore, it was imperative to find a cure and any and every means had to be tried.¹⁵ John Cussen, a Limerick farmer, agreed and said that farming people always believed that 'there was no loss like a dead loss.'¹⁶ The reasons for self-reliance were obvious. Veterinary surgeons were scarce and paying them was beyond the means of most stock owners. Therefore farmers were faced with the choice of either letting the animal die or finding a cure, using 'home-grown stuff.'¹⁷ Some practices, such as the use of herbs and plants, were based on a substantial element of rationalisation and a high degree of primitive reasoning based on long and acute observation. Others had outrageous features, their very irrationality lending a certain validity derived from tradition, which like religious faith, was independent of the scientific values of orthodox thinking.¹⁸ The Irish Folklore Commission recorded many of the traditional remedies and practices during the 1930s and 40s. However, information collected from the interviewees to this dissertation suggested that many of these veterinary ministrations continued until much later in the last century, and were fundamentally sound. Constance McCorkle categorised traditional veterinary

advertising their specific preparations of Male Fern extract. In the 1920s the product was prepared by chemists such as Wilsons, Longford, and Stacks, Westport. See *Longford Leader*, 28 February 1925, *Mayo News*, 4 February 1928.

¹³ Interview with Michael Joe McMahan; Interview with Catherine Talty.

¹⁴ For example, a Department of Agriculture leaflet, *Fluke or liver rot*, published in 1928, advocated the use of either carbon tetrachloride or Male Fern extract as a potential cure. It concluded that the effectiveness of each depended on purity and quality, with no definitive results. The leaflet was reproduced in the *Irish Times*, 21 June 1928.

¹⁵ Kevin Danaher, 'The murrain' in *Biatas*, vol. 12, no. 1 (April, 1968), p. 21.

¹⁶ Interview with Garry O'Riordan and John Cussen.

¹⁷ Interview with John Organ and Tom Barry.

¹⁸ J. M. I Pérez, 'Encountering the irrational: Some reflections on folk healers' in *Folklore*, vol. 99, no. 2 (1988), p. 182.

techniques into three categories, pharmacology, manipulative techniques and magico-religious techniques.¹⁹ The use of plant-based medicines to treat diarrhoea in young animals, early forms of inoculation, and a magical knot, were illustrative of these three categories, respectively, and are briefly discussed below. Although their origins were unknown they had arguably been part of traditional veterinary practice for centuries, and continued to be so in the early decades of the twentieth century.

Various rational remedies, based on herbs and plants, were previously employed to treat scouring [diarrhoea] in young calves.²⁰ Vincent Houlihan, MRCVS, believed that, prior to a scientific understanding of the disease, fifty percent of calves died from the condition.²¹ Homemade electrolyte mixes, made up of salt, soda, and glucose, were administered to replace lost fluids, but most likely lacked enough of the vital ingredients of salts and energy to be effective, only in mild cases.²² Alcohol, especially locally produced poteen, was widely used as a stimulant in treating scour. It had astringent properties and warmed the young animal's system.²³ However, Professor Kelly questioned the use of alcohol as an animal medicine. In the 1950s, he advised his veterinary students that it would be more beneficial for the vet or farmer to drink the alcohol themselves.²⁴ Scouring was also treated with locally sourced plants and herbs. Teas made from briar roots, oak bark or hay were administered as a scour treatment.²⁵ The common components were naturally occurring tannins, which twentieth-century scientific studies have identified as having astringent and anti-inflammatory properties in the gastro-enteric tract.²⁶ Inflammation of the bowel was relieved by infusions of

¹⁹ C. M. McCorkle, 'An introduction to ethno-veterinary research and development' in *Journal of Ethnobiology*, vol. 6 (1986), pp 134-7.

²⁰ For an overview on modern scour treatments see, <https://www.teagasc.ie/media/website/animals/beef/dairy-beef/Segment-002-of-Section6-Calf-health.pdf>.

²¹ Interview with Vincent Houlihan.

²² Interview with Catherine Talty; Interview with Garry O'Riordan and John Cussen. This information was given by Garry's daughter Nora, who was present on the day. Also present was Margaret Heffernan.

²³ Interview with Johnny O'Halloran, Murtyclough, Burren, county Clare, 4 January 2012. CD 28, Author's Collection; Interview with Donal O'Connor; K. H. Connell, *Irish peasant society* (Oxford, 1968), p. 6; NFC 2249:149.

²⁴ Questionnaire completed by John D. Pierce, Market St, Listowel, County Kerry on 16 June 2004. Author's Collection.

²⁵ Interview with Paddy Pyne, Kilmaley, county Clare, 17 April 2012. CD 45, Author's Collection; Questionnaire completed by Anne Dillon, Janemount, Listowel, county Kerry on 13 May 2004. Author's Collection; SFC 407:533-4; NFC 2249:153.

²⁶ F. Bonelli, L. Turini, G. Sarri, A. Serra, A. Buccioni and M. Mele, 'Oral administration of chestnut tannins to reduce the duration of neonatal calf diarrhea' in *BMC Veterinary Research*, vol. 14, no. 227 (2018). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12917-018-1549-2>. See also Susan G. Wynn and Barbara Fougère, *Veterinary herbal medicine* (St. Louis, 2007), pp 327-8; Sean Henry, *Tales from the west of Ireland*

willow bark, which contained pain-killing attributes associated with aspirin.²⁷ John Joe Conway remembered sods of earth from the field given to scouring calves to lick, and concluded that the most likely reason was that the soil contained minerals lacking in the animals' diet.²⁸ According to Pushkar Kaul, over a period of millennia, man, discovered and recorded the biological actions of thousands of products derived from plants, animals and minerals.²⁹ Donal O'Connor, a Kerry farmer, believed that the medicinal properties of plants were often discovered by observing what animals ingested, and noting the subsequent effects. In the 1980s, he noticed that one of his cows had cured herself of scour by seeking out a certain type of plant that grew on the shores of the Shannon Estuary.³⁰ Not all scour cures were rationally based. In the 1930 a Clare informant advocated dosing the animal with milk, in which 1d worth of envelopes had been boiled.³¹

Although some practices, such as the production of early blackleg vaccines, might be perceived as irrational, they were actually effective and the forerunners of modern preventative approaches. Blackleg is an acute, highly fatal disease of young cattle and sheep, caused by the bacterium *Clostridium Chauvoei*, which is found in the soil. The name derives from the fact that the site of infection is most often a leg muscle that becomes dark in colour.³² In 1814 Francis Clater recognised that the disease was usually fatal, prevention being the best course of action.³³ By 1879 three French veterinarians, Arloing, Cornevin and Thomas, had taken the first steps in producing effective blackleg vaccines by inoculating healthy animals with virulent material obtained from others that had died from the condition.³⁴ Evidence suggests that primitive, but effective, vaccinations of this nature were long in use in Ireland and

(Cork, 1980), p. 26; Interview with John Organ and Tom Barry. Organ believed that, before the introduction of herbicide sprays, hay contained many medicinal plants and herbs.

²⁷ Interview with Tadhg Horan, MRCVS, Listowel, county Kerry, 3 December 2002. CD 4, Author's Collection; Shawn Messonnier, *Nutritional supplements for the veterinary practice* (Lakewood, 2012), p. x.

²⁸ Interview with John Joe Conway.

²⁹ Pushkar N. Kaul, 'Drug discovery: Past, present and future' in Ernst Junker (ed.), *Progress in drug research: Vol. 50* (Basel, 1998), pp 9-19.

³⁰ Interview with Donal O'Connor.

³¹ SFC 449:234.

³² See Camila C. Abreu and Francisco A. Uzal, 'Blackleg' in Francisco A. Uzal, J. Glenn Songer, John F. Prescott, Michel R. Popoff (eds), *Clostridial diseases of animals* (Oxford, 2016), pp 231-42.

³³ See Francis Clater, *Every man his own cattle doctor* (London, 1814), pp 76-84.

³⁴ Hervé Bazin, 'Pasteur and the birth of vaccines made in the laboratory' in Stanley A. Plotkin (ed.), *History of vaccine development* (New York, 2011), p. 42; John R. Mohler, 'Blackleg: Its nature, cause and prevention' in *U. S. Department of Agriculture Farmer's Bulletin*, no. 1355, (October, 1930), pp 1-12.

continued to be so until at least the middle of the twentieth century. For example, the practice of cutting the affected limb from an animal that had succumbed to the disease, and leaving it to dry and smoke in the kitchen chimney, was widespread. It was often seen as a prophylactic talisman to subsequently protect the herd against disease, evil spirits and ill luck.³⁵ However, in 1928, Professor Falkner Mason recorded that scrapings of the dried muscle were spread on tapes which were inserted as a seton through the skin of a healthy animal. He noted that the process bore a ‘remarkable similarity’ to one of the latest preventatives of the disease.³⁶ Mason’s observation is interesting and suggested that he came to better appreciate the efficacy of traditional methods during his career. In 1905, while introducing a laboratory prepared vaccine to farmers, he described hanging the leg in the chimney and the use of setons through the dewlap, as ‘most peculiar and sometimes comical.’³⁷

Michael Doherty claimed that the process described by Mason would have ‘stimulated a crude protective immune response’ in the animal.³⁸ The bacteria in the dried, smoked limb could survive for decades, preserving a supply of vaccine for further generations of calves.³⁹ Jim White, MRCVS, remembered that calves were vaccinated by piercing the dewlap, the fold of loose skin hanging from the neck, with copper wire, which was first inserted into the preserved limb.⁴⁰ The majority of interviewees to this study remembered the practice of piercing an animal’s dewlap and then fixing copper wire, or to a lesser extent goatskin, pig rings or tape, through the wound.⁴¹ The purpose of fixing such objects was primarily to keep the wound open. When an animal is resting on its recumbent position the dewlap and brisket are always in contact with the ground. Where there is an open wound in the brisket any organism in the environment can gain

³⁵ Information collected from Laurence Tuomey, Kilflynn, county Kerry, on 6 April 2008. Author’s Collection. Laurence, a retired farmer, recalled that he found the perfectly preserved leg of a shorthorn calf hanging in his chimney, whilst renovating his house in the 1980s; Sean McQuinn Questionnaire; *Irish Farmer’s Journal*, 25 April 1998; NFC 616:4, 628:442, 782:368, 1137:338.

³⁶ Mason, ‘Traditions’, p. 223.

³⁷ *Dundalk Democrat*, 29 April 1905. Mason gave this opinion at a veterinary lecture, delivered at Kilcurry, county Louth on 11 April 1905.

³⁸ Doherty, ‘Folklore of cattle diseases’, p. 64.

³⁹ Interview with Tadhg Horan. See also Claire Throp, *The horror of the bubonic plague* (Oxford, 2017), pp 41, 43. According to Trop the bacteria that caused bubonic plague, *Yersinia pestis*, can similarly survive, in the soil, for a long period.

⁴⁰ Interview with Jim White.

⁴¹ For example, see Interview with Jer Dowling, MRCVS, Cloonbeg, Tralee, county Kerry, 29 November 2002. CD 3, Author’s Collection; Interview with Jim Magner, Glebe House, Kileedy, county Limerick, 27 January 2012. CD 31, Author’s Collection; Interview with Paddy Pyne; NFC 211:563, 658:440, 2249:132, 153.

access to the animal's system and the animal is then exposed to these bacterial organisms. This exposure is not overwhelming, as the brisket does not have a large supply of rich nutrients for bacteria to multiply rapidly. Therefore, the animal is given time to build up immunity.⁴² Although vaccines were available, it appears stockowners continued to rely on these traditional practices until the 1950s and 60s.⁴³ Paddy Nolan suggested that many farmers only came to use modern vaccines in the 1950s, when they began to call more on the services of the veterinary surgeon.⁴⁴

Other practices were magico-religious in nature. The term *ruathar péiste*, which translates as raid or onset of the worm, was found extensively in Irish folklore archives, and generally described griping or colic in cattle, especially young calves.⁴⁵ Until the middle of the last century there was a widespread belief that colic or griping pains were caused by the presence of worms in the animal's intestine, or to some form of intestinal obstruction, usually a knot or contortion of the bowels.⁴⁶ In 1902, the antiquarian William Wood-Martin described that the 'uneducated peasantry' employed a rope charm, called the 'worm-knot', in Irish *Snaidhm na péiste*, to relieve griping pains in the abdomen, in both humans and animals. The knot was tied on a piece of string over the affected animal and then loosed by the 'instantaneous snap', which the peculiarity of the knot made possible.⁴⁷ The formation of the knot was described by a number of writers, who highlighted its widespread use until at least the 1940s.⁴⁸ In reality, the knot was merely a basic conjurer's trick, a form of 'the dissolving knot', described as 'one of the basic, classic effects in magic.'⁴⁹ Some accounts stressed that loosing of the knot

⁴² Interview with Tadhg Horan; Interview with Donal O'Connor.

⁴³ Interview with Séan O'Halloran, Noughaval, Kilfenora, county Clare, 3 January 2012. CD 25, Author's Collection; Interview with Owen Mangan; Interview with John D. Pierce.

⁴⁴ Interview with Paddy Nolan.

⁴⁵ SFC 608:190; 622:79; 625:309; 626:122, 295; 634:513-4.

⁴⁶ Interview with Dr Joe Kelleher, Lahinch, county Clare, 24 August 2012. CD 47, Author's Collection; Interview with Vincent Houlihan; T. J. Westropp, 'A study of the folklore of the coasts of Connacht, Ireland' in *Folklore*, vol. 33, no. 4 (31 December, 1922), p. 396; SFC 621:227; 622:11-2; W. F. de Vismes Kane, 'The worm knot, "snaidhm na péiste"' in *Folklore*, vol. 27, no. 4 (31 December, 1916), p. 423.

⁴⁷ W. G. Wood-Martin *Traces of the elder faiths of Ireland* (2 vols., London, 1902), ii, 192-3. See also Seosamh Mac Grianna, *An druma mór* (Dublin, 1969), p. 7. The knot charm was variously called *snaidhm na péiste* (the worm's knot), *cleas na péiste* (the worm's trick), *cas na péiste* (the twisted worm), or the 'Vanishing Knot', see SFC 342:187; 415:25; 449:37; NFC 613:378, 714:222, 1242:432; Terence P. Dolan, *A dictionary of Hiberno-English* (Dublin, 1999), pp 64, 249.

⁴⁸ Caoimhín Ó Danachair, 'Snaidhm na péiste' in *Sinsear*, vol. 2 (1980), p. 102-8; J. G. Delaney, 'Cutting the worm's knot' in *Folk Life*, vol. 24 (1985-86), pp 113-7; An Seabhac, 'Blodha béaloideas ó Chiarraige' in *Béaloideas*, vol. 1, no. 3 (June, 1928), pp 212-3; SFC 621:352.

⁴⁹ See Marc Wilson, *Magic tricks* (Philadelphia, 1993), pp 35-6; Anon, 'Easy tricks with string' in *Popular Mechanics*, vol. 49, no. 5 (May, 1928), pp 819-20.

must be faultless for if the string became tangled the animal died.⁵⁰ Another account contradicts this, stating that the procedure could be repeated when it went wrong.⁵¹ Paddy O'Connor, interviewed in his one-hundredth year, recalled making the knot and simply noted that the belief was 'if it didn't come out free the calf was not cured.'⁵² The procedure had a religious aspect. The performance was often accompanied by prayers, or the making of the sign of the cross.⁵³ As divine intervention was sought, reverence was shown by not wearing a cap or hat.⁵⁴ 'Cutting' the knot was not confined to those with any special gift, or to members of one sex. Ninety-four-year-old Francie Kennelly remembered that both his father and mother could make the knot. He claimed that it was important for the woman of the house to be able to do so if a calf got gripe while the man was away.⁵⁵ Mai Smyth learned *snaidhm na peiste* from her mother, who used the rope over 'calves that would have pains.'⁵⁶ Certain individuals acquired a reputation for the practice. Dr Joe Kelleher, whilst visiting a patient in the 1960s, recalled seeing a local publican, known for success with *snaidhm na péiste*, arrive at the same house, by taxi, to perform over a four-legged patient.⁵⁷

The majority of the farmers and vets interviewed for this study were familiar with *snaidhm na péiste*, and had differing views as to its efficacy. Recorded in 2011, Tom Scanlon, an eighty-seven-year-old Limerick cow-doctor, said that he had cut the knot as part of his veterinary work and fully believed that the act cured the calf's griping. He noted that no prayers accompanied the procedure, which he repeated nine times.⁵⁸ James Ironside, a veterinary surgeon who arrived in Ireland in 1959, saw the knot used to successfully cure calves with stomach complaints. He queried the process but concluded 'how do you explain that? I don't know, but it did.' He was regularly

⁵⁰ Interview with Francie Kennelly, Milltown Malbay, county Clare, 11 April 2012. CD 40, Author's Collection; Ó Danachair, 'Snaidhm', p. 104; Delaney, 'Worm's knot', p. 115.

⁵¹ NFC 782:356.

⁵² Interview with Paddy O'Connor, Abbeyfeale, county Limerick, 2 January 2012. CD 24, Author's Collection.

⁵³ Interview with John Organ and Tom Barry; NFC 1248:82.

⁵⁴ SFC 406:123.

⁵⁵ Interview with Francie Kennelly.

⁵⁶ Interview with Paddy Ryan 'Luke', Pa Smyth and Mai Smyth.

⁵⁷ Interview with Dr Joe Kelleher. It wasn't unusual for clients to send a taxi to collect the handy-man. See Interview with Anthony Griffin. Anthony described how Mike Dolan, a west Kerry bonesetter and cow-doctor, always waited at his house to be collected by clients. As few clients had cars the local taxi was often dispatched.

⁵⁸ Interview with Tom Scanlon, Athea, county Limerick, 23 November 2011. CD 20, Author's Collection.

shown how to make the knot but could never master the process.⁵⁹ John Cussen recalled how, in 1949, a farm-worker successfully made the knot over a calf that swelled having drunk a ‘most awful bucket of milk.’⁶⁰ Others had less belief in its efficacy. Although Catherine Talty knew how to make the knot, she never did so as a cure, and believed her forward-thinking father would ‘scoff’ at the idea of a rope charm.⁶¹ Both Liam Enright and Paddy Pyne associated the knot with the relief of bloating, but used a needle to vent animals with such symptoms.⁶² Ned Fitzgerald, a Limerick farmer, noted that *snaidhm na peiste* was ‘commonly done’, but he himself had no belief in its efficacy.⁶³ In 1942, a west Kerry informant remarked that many people had no belief in such cures and either let the animal ‘get out of it...or give them a small dose of castor oil.’⁶⁴

Mechanical means were also employed in an attempt to resolve a perceived knot or blockage in an animal’s intestine. Tadhg Horan recalled hearing a story where an obstruction in an animal’s bowel was apparently successfully removed by dosing the animal with a live eel, which should be caught in a well. The idea was that the eel, with its frantic wriggling movements, would swim its way through the intestine, mechanically freeing the obstruction.⁶⁵ A similar story was collected in west Kerry during 1942. The informant claimed that the operation was occasionally successful, but suggested that farmers would ‘resort to anything’ if there was any hope that an animal might live.⁶⁶ An attempted cure for red water, also used in Scotland, was to thrust a frog, tied by its leg, down an animal’s throat, until the beast would chew the cud.⁶⁷ The physical presence of the frog may well have reactivated the system. Furthermore, the skin of certain frogs contains several substances, which are employed in pharmacy.⁶⁸ Although these procedures had some merit, the idea of desperation probably best underlines why herd-owners resorted to such practices. The main power lay in their

⁵⁹ Interview with James Ironside.

⁶⁰ Interview with Garry O’Riordan and John Cussen.

⁶¹ Interview with Catherine Talty.

⁶² Information collected from Liam Enright, Clounlehard, Ballyhahill, county Limerick, on 7 March 2012. Liam, born on 25 September 1925, was a retired farmer. He preferred not to be interviewed; Interview with Paddy Pyne.

⁶³ Interview with Ned Fitzgerald.

⁶⁴ NFC 814:146-51.

⁶⁵ Interview with Tadhg Horan.

⁶⁶ NFC 814:99. See also NFC 96:130, 1177:563.

⁶⁷ NFC 5:236; SFC 407:528-34; Mary Beith, *Healing threads: Traditional medicines of the highlands and islands* (Edinburgh, 1995), p. 176.

⁶⁸ *Irish Times*, 27 September 2001.

psychological effect.⁶⁹ According to theories of anxiety relief and control, irrational practices were used to restore a sense of control, especially in high stress situations. People turned to magical beliefs where there existed a sense of uncertainty and potential danger and no apparent solution.⁷⁰ Donal O'Connor believed that every effort was made to cure an animal. If it recovered the cure had worked, if not it was God's will.⁷¹

From the existing accounts there is no doubt that the majority of animals recovered following the execution of irrational practices, such as the worm's knot. Does this mean that these colourful and superstitious exercises had any influence in occasioning a cure? Traditionally the recovery of a patient was usually attributed to whatever remedy was used not long before a condition took a decided course for the better.⁷² Furthermore, the experience of veterinary practitioners is that seventy percent of animals will get better if left untreated and that ninety percent of colic will remedy itself.⁷³ Tim Griffin and John Joe Conway noted that all the calves they ever saw with colic, lying and tossing on the ground, 'got up eventually and walked away.'⁷⁴ As early as the fifth century BC the Hippocratic school recognised that sickness, by the power of nature, *Vis Medicatrix Naturae*, usually tended to eventually abate, regardless of treatment.⁷⁵ Some accounts attributed the animal's rising to the chastising it received during the ritual. In 1937, Micheal Ó Tuama, principal of Burrane School, Killimer, denounced the rope charm as 'superstitious and nonsensical.' As a boy he saw the charm, known locally as '*ruaig ar piast* (chase the reptile)', performed by a local 'witch-doctor.' Ó Tuama attributed the calf's rising to the 'tremendous kick' given to the animal by the operator on completion of the prayers and knot. Although O Tuama denounced the practice he accepted that others had 'absolute belief' in it.⁷⁶ Similar methods were used in Athea in the 1930s, where the practitioner having mumbled some words, which he refused to divulge, then hit the animal with the rope causing it to jump up and run away.⁷⁷ Tadhg Horan argued that traditional veterinary practitioners had a

⁶⁹ Aidan Farren and Mary McIvor, *Folk cures and charms from the northwest* (Limavady, 1992), p. 4.

⁷⁰ Giora Keinan, 'The effects of stress and desire for control on superstitious behavior' in *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, vol. 28, no. 1 (January, 2002), pp 102-8.

⁷¹ Interview with Donal O'Connor.

⁷² J. J. Walsh, 'The cures that have failed' in *Studies*, vol. 10 (1921), p. 58.

⁷³ Interview with Tadhg Horan.

⁷⁴ Questionnaire completed by Tim Griffin, Ennismore, Listowel, county Kerry on 3 February 2004. Author's Collection; Interview with John Joe Conway.

⁷⁵ N. H. Booth and L. E. McDonald (eds), *Veterinary pharmacology and therapeutics* (6th ed., Ames, 1988), p. 4.

⁷⁶ SFC 600:48-8a.

⁷⁷ NFC 96:130.

limited understanding of the source and physiology of disease. However, in the case of the *snaidhm na péiste*, he maintained those involved had a ‘fundamental’ belief that some sort of obstruction or knot in the bowel might cause the symptoms exhibited. Without the aid of practical knowledge or medicines that might generate a cure, all that could then be done was to project their mental image of the problem on to the animal and then attempt a solution based on that projection. He believed that the idea behind *snaidhm na péiste* was that by undoing the knot, one was also projecting undoing the knot in the intestine.⁷⁸ Ó Danachair agreed, explaining that the knot action was extended homoeopathically to the imagined obstruction to free it.⁷⁹ Folklorists would argue that two forms of magic are at work here, sympathetic and reverse.⁸⁰ The notion of a reversal of something bad and a return to the better certainly underlies the ritual.⁸¹ Other practices such as ‘turning the sod’, which involved digging and turning over the sod where the diseased leg of an animal with foot-rot had stood, displayed similar traits and continued in use until at least the 1980s.⁸²

In 2012, ninety-two-year-old Mary Frost, described how her father stuck a pin in the ground where a cow, suffering from red-water, had urinated. This was a commonly recorded practice, where the objective of the operator was to transfer the disease to the pin, and away from the animal.⁸³ Liam Enright, an eighty-six-year-old Limerick farmer, noted that he had performed the act, using only a common safety-pin, and ‘it worked.’⁸⁴ The belief that disease could be magically transferred to or from an object is based on a simplistic conception of disease as a foreign element, which has penetrated the body and can be extirpated by transmitting it to someone, something, or someplace else.⁸⁵ The transference might be accomplished through contact or could take place symbolically, as with the pin.⁸⁶ Thomas McCarthy, MRCVS, related a story

⁷⁸ Interview with Tadhg Horan.

⁷⁹ Ó Danachair, ‘Snaidhm’, p. 104.

⁸⁰ See Susan Greenwood, *The anthropology of magic* (Oxford, 2009), pp 45-52.

⁸¹ Wayland D. Hand, ‘Folk curing: the magical component’ in *Béaloides*, vols. 39-41 (1971-73), pp 144-7.

⁸² Doherty, ‘Folklore of cattle diseases’, pp 43-4, 49-51.

⁸³ Interview with Mary Frost; See also NFC 7:220, 628:547, 658:231; SFC 406:123, 407:531; Doherty, ‘Folklore of cattle diseases’, p. 73.

⁸⁴ Information collected from Liam Enright.

⁸⁵ Luc Lacourcière, ‘Folk medicine in French Canada’ in W. D. Hand (ed.), *American folk medicine* (Oakland, CA, 1976), p. 212; W. D. Hand, ‘The magical transference of disease’ in *North Carolina Folklore*, vol. 8 (1965), pp 83-109.

⁸⁶ D. W. Yoder, ‘Folk medicine’ in R. Dorson (ed.), *Folklore and folklife: An introduction* (Chicago, 1972), p. 203; Thomas Davidson, ‘Early farming transfer charm cures’ in *Agriculture: Journal of the Ministry of Agriculture*, vol. 64, no. 9 (1957), pp 458-61.

than when he worked in county Sligo, in the early 1990s, he was aware of a local farmer tying a thread around a given tree in a graveyard to cure a severe lameness in a horse. Presumably the thread had previously been in contact with the injured limb.⁸⁷ Symbolic transference often took extreme forms. Ned Fitzgerald related the story of a carter, whose livelihood depended on his horse. When the animal became ill, the local priest, requested to intervene, told the man to put the horse in a field with a donkey. Apparently, the following morning the horse had recovered and the donkey was dead.⁸⁸

Storage, safekeeping, burial, casting off, and floating away were amongst the processes common in magical transference or disposal.⁸⁹ In south Kerry, the head of a dead animal was cut off and buried in a *lios*. Otherwise, it was placed under a bridge, so that the disease would be taken away by the stock of the first person that passed above, or by the waters of the river.⁹⁰ Boundaries and crossroads were considered amongst the most magical of places, where supernatural creatures congregated and the sick healed.⁹¹ Dick Pierce described that, in the early twentieth-century, horses in north Kerry were taken to various crossroads in an attempt to cure a form of lameness. The people believed that the disease would be left there to be picked up by some other creature. He noted that the practice might be conceived to have worked as exercise was the basis for its successful treatment.⁹² Another practice that was perceived to work was the placing of an aborted foetus in the neighbour's land or dunghill. This was done deliberately, following an outbreak of contagious abortion, caused by brucellosis, and ultimately caused great distress and loss to farming families.⁹³ Brucellosis is a self-

⁸⁷ Questionnaire completed by Thomas McCarthy, MRCVS, Ardfert, county Kerry, on 19 January 2004. Author's Collection. See also NFC 1174:329. Collected in 1949, at Lixnaw, Kerry, this account recorded that mastitis in a cow or mare was treated by removing a brown flagstone from the yard, rubbing it to the affected udder, and placing it back in exactly the same position in which it was found. The account stipulated that the stone should be kept face upwards at all times, this face should also be rubbed to the udder.

⁸⁸ Interview with Ned Fitzgerald; See also NFC 1337:301-2. This account, recorded in 1953, described disease being transferred from a valuable greyhound to a bullock. Another account, SFC 413:343, said that if an animal was sick an iron should be put in the fire and thrown towards the first person that came in. The animal would recover and the person would die.

⁸⁹ W. D. Hand, 'Measuring and plugging: The magical containment and transference of disease' in *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, vol. 48, no. 2 (Summer 1974), pp 222-3.

⁹⁰ NFC 616:4.

⁹¹ Hand, 'Folk curing', p. 141. See also Martin Puhvel, *The crossroads in folklore and myth* (New York, 1989).

⁹² Pierce, 'In my father's time', p. 38.

⁹³ Interview with Denis Mulcahy and Jim Mulcahy, Ballagh, county Limerick, 25 October 2011. CD 18, Author's Collection; See also Seán Ó Súilleabháin, 'Foundation sacrifices' in *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, vol. 75, no. 1 (March, 1945), p. 46. Ó Súilleabháin described a process known as *aistriú na feóla fuaire*, the changing of the cold meat, where diseased animal parts were put near a neighbour's boundary fence, so the disease would follow his stock henceforth. Similar

limiting disease and animals that became exposed to the bacteria quickly became immune to the condition. Therefore, the following year the perpetrator's cows would show no sign of the disease whilst the neighbour's herd were infected had they come in contact with the foetus.⁹⁴ Although the transference of disease through contaminated products is now easy to understand, the use of symbolic rites, such as turning the sod or pinning for red water, were difficult to comprehend. However, Erwin Ackerknecht, in his study of primitive medicine, emphasised that those who undertook such rituals firmly believed that their actions would have a positive outcome in combating the illness. He further argued that it should not be so difficult for many Christians to understand this mechanism, as the central rite of the Roman Catholic religion, the eating and drinking of the body and blood of Christ, was based on 'very similar' symbolism.⁹⁵

Religious interventions

The Catholic Church with its priests, saints, relics and verbal trappings, traditionally provided a system of protection and relief against disease, and the inimical forces that were believed to be responsible for its onset.⁹⁶ The priest was commonly presented in Irish folk tradition as a man of power, *par excellence*, as exemplified in Ned Fitzgerald's story of the carter's horse.⁹⁷ Another account said that a priest at Feakle, Clare, responded to illness and deaths among cattle in the district by consecrating a local well, for the people to bless their stock.⁹⁸ Holy water, either from the local holy well or that blessed in the church, was regularly taken home to evoke protection for animals, especially at turning out time in the spring.⁹⁹ John Daly and Francie Kennelly both remarked that holy water was the 'big thing.' It was always sprinkled on the cows before going to grass, or to the bull, or on May Eve.¹⁰⁰ The St Benedict medal, used to

practices occurred throughout the British Isles. See Herbert Southam, 'Veterinary practice' in *Folklore*, vol. 18, no. 4 (December, 1907), p. 437; J. G. Frazer, 'Sympathy' in *Folklore*, vol. 16, no. 3 (September, 1905), p. 337.

⁹⁴ Interview with Tadhg Horan; Interview with Donal O'Connor.

⁹⁵ E. H. Ackerknecht, 'Problems of primitive medicine' in *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, vol. 11, no. 5 (May, 1942), pp 503-11.

⁹⁶ K. C. Smith, 'The wise man and his community' in *Folklife*, vol. 15 (1977), p. 25.

⁹⁷ See Dáithí Ó hÓgáin, *The hero in Irish folk history* (Dublin, 1985), pp 204-15; Pádraig Ó Héalaí, 'Cumhacht an tsagairt sa bhéaloides' in *Léachtaí Cholm Cille*, vol. 7 (1977), pp 109-31.

⁹⁸ SFC 592:32.

⁹⁹ See also Patricia Lysaght, 'The use of sacramentals in nineteenth and twentieth-century Ireland: With special reference to brown scapulars' in Nils-Arvid Bringéus (ed.), *Religion in everyday life* (Stockholm, 1994), p. 194; Patrick Logan, *The holy wells of Ireland* (Gerrard's Cross, 1980), pp 13-9; SFC 407:940.

¹⁰⁰ Interview with John Daly; Interview with Francie Kennelly.

call down God's blessing and protection, was particularly familiar to those interviewed for this study.¹⁰¹ John Cussen joked that his mother had a cupboard full of them.¹⁰² Those medals blessed by the monks of Glenstal or by the missionaries, during a parish mission, were considered particularly efficacious in west Munster.¹⁰³ Ned Fitzgerald recalled that in the late 1930s his family farm suffered great losses of fowl, cattle, and pigs, which were attributed to piseogs. An Abbeyfeale priest advised that Benedict medals be put in the four corners of the land to 'break their power.'¹⁰⁴ Paddy Pyne claimed that in the 1990s a severe outbreak of salmonella scour, which the vets failed to control, disappeared when, as advised, he buried a medal blessed by the friars in Ennis. When questioned, he stopped short in saying he believed in such power, but concluded that 'it worked for me.'¹⁰⁵ James Ironside, MRCVS, expressed similar sentiments. He occasionally saw an animal, with medals and relics hanging from its neck, unexpectedly recover. He acknowledged that his treatments had failed and was convinced that these practices 'weren't actually orthodox but worked for some inexplicable reason.'¹⁰⁶

Many of the rituals regarding fertility or the warding off or curing of animal disease came with the annual cycle of traditional festivals and seasonal activities, as demonstrated by the use of holy water and holy medals on May Eve, a date on which cattle were deemed most susceptible to evil influences.¹⁰⁷ Whilst the majority of such rituals occurred in the farm yard, others were more elaborate and involved pilgrimage undertaken by stockowners, occasionally accompanied by their cattle. Of the three wells dedicated to St John on Musherá Mountain, four miles from Millstreet, the 'well for cattle', where herdowners prayed for the health and prosperity of their herds, was

¹⁰¹ Helen Hoffner, *Catholic traditions and treasures: An illustrated encyclopaedia* (Manchester, NH, 2018), p. 87.

¹⁰² Interview with Garry O'Riordan and John Cussen.

¹⁰³ Interview with John Organ and Tom Barry; Interview with Paddy Ryan 'Luke', Pa Smyth and Mai Smyth; Tim Griffin Questionnaire.

¹⁰⁴ Interview with Ned Fitzgerald.

¹⁰⁵ Interview with Paddy Pyne.

¹⁰⁶ Interview with James Ironside.

¹⁰⁷ For examples of calendar customs specific to the protection and curing of cattle see Seán Ó Súilleabháin, *Irish folk custom and belief* (Cork, 1967), pp 23-7; Billy Mag Fhloinn, 'Martinmas traditions in south-west county Clare: A case study' in *Béaloidéas*, vol. 75 (2007), pp 86-93; Séamas Ó Catháin, 'The festival of Brigid, the holy woman' in *Celtica*, vol. 23 (1999), pp 236-42; Kevin Danaher, 'May Day' in *Biatas*, vol. 12, no. 2 (May, 1958), pp 97-100. For a general discussion on Irish calendar customs see R. H. Buchanan, 'Calendar customs' in *Ulster Folklife*, vol. 8 (1962), pp 15-34; Kevin Danaher, *The year in Ireland: Irish folk customs* (Cork, 1972).

least accessible.¹⁰⁸ Nevertheless, a local observer, Denis McSweeney, stressed that for time immemorial the sole place of pilgrimage was to the cattle well and called the modern, embellished site ‘a usurper, an imposter.’¹⁰⁹ A remarkable pilgrimage was made to ‘The City’, a large sub-circular stone *caher*, at Shrone, near Rathmore, Kerry.¹¹⁰ The site and nearby Paps of Anu mountains were traditionally associated with the fire festivals of Bealtaine where cattle were driven between fires to protect them against murrain or other pestilential diseases during the following year.¹¹¹ Several literary accounts suggested that this practice continued in Ireland until at least the late nineteenth-century, not on May Day, but on St John’s Eve, 23 June.¹¹² A number of informants to the Folklore Commission in the 1930s and 40s suggested that small fires were still lit on individual farms at convenient locations where the cattle, especially milch cows, would pass through the smoke.¹¹³ Patricia O’Hare suggested that although St John’s Eve celebrations continued until the 1950s with the lighting of communal fires, the use of fire and smoke to protect cattle was largely replaced by the sprinkling of holy water.¹¹⁴ In 2013, John Joe Conway recalled seeing hundreds of fires and accompanying smoke throughout north and west Clare. Although he never heard of the cattle being driven between or near fires, the local tradition was to make the sign of the cross on the animals, with the ashes, the following morning. Although the tradition was practically dead he continued to light the fire in honour of the saint.¹¹⁵

¹⁰⁸ Timothy Broker, *Sráid an Muilinn: A history of its people, by its people, for its people* (Millstreet, 1937), p. 35. Broker was a pseudonym of Fr William Ferris; Mary O’Brien (ed.), *St. John’s Well* (Millstreet, 1987), p. 6.

¹⁰⁹ *The Kerryman/Corkman*, 29 August 1986; Eilín Ní Chadhla, ‘Mushera’ in *Seanchas Dúthalla*, vol. 14 (2016), p. 81.

¹¹⁰ Archaeological descriptions of the site are found in Créde: Sliabh Luachra Heritage Group, *Cathair Crobh Dearg ‘The City’* (Killarney, 2004); Frank Coyne, *Islands in the clouds: An upland archaeological study on Mount Brandon and the Paps* (Tralee, 2006), pp 20-7.

¹¹¹ Dan Cronin, ‘The city of Kerry’s kingdom’ in *Sliabh Luachra*, vol. 1, no. 1 (June, 1982), pp 29-32. Such practices were also common in parts of Britain. See Ronald Hutton, *Stations of the sun: A history of the ritual year in Britain* (Oxford, 1996), pp 218-25.

¹¹² James Frazer, *The golden bough* (3rd ed., 12 vols., London, 1906-15), vii, p. 159; See also T. F. Thiselton-Dyer, *British popular customs: Present and past* (London, 1876), p. 224; Albanicus, ‘Curious fact relating to the worship of Baal in Ireland’ in *The Gentleman’s Magazine*, vol. 65 (1), no. 2 (February, 1795), pp 124-5; *Liverpool Mercury*, 29 June 1867; NFC 956:196, 234, 253.

¹¹³ NFC 956:238, 253, 292; SFC 441:268.

¹¹⁴ Patricia O’Hare, ‘St. John’s Eve traditions in county Kerry, c. 1850-1950’ in *Béaloides*, vol. 76 (2008), pp 66-7, 86-8.

¹¹⁵ Interview with John Joe Conway. On St John’s Eve 2013, this author accompanied John Joe as he lit his small fire of hay, dry rushes and an old overcoat, in honour of the saint. He said that in the previous year his guests were a nun, on a visit home from south America, and the local Parish Priest, who was delighted that the feast was honoured and kept alive in north Clare.

At the Rathmore site, fire rites were similarly replaced with blessing the cattle with the water of a holy well, situated inside the *caher*. The well was believed to have the virtue of preserving cattle from all contagious distempers during the ensuing year.¹¹⁶ In 1841 John O'Donovan observed that on each May Eve sickly cattle were brought inside the *caher* and given the well waters to drink.¹¹⁷ Local tradition recorded that large numbers of cattle were driven from as far as twenty-five miles away and kept in a pound overnight.¹¹⁸ The practice of bringing cattle to the well was eventually curtailed, ironically because of the fear of the spread of bovine disease. It then became the norm to take the water home for blessing or to give to sick cattle in their food.¹¹⁹ In May 1870 the *Tralee Chronicle* reported that pilgrims from all parts of Ireland had resorted to the well on that May Eve.¹²⁰ Another account said that many people made the annual pilgrimage by train to Rathmore and then walked five miles to 'the city well', before returning home with bottles of water to ceremoniously bless their cattle.¹²¹ In the 1930s, local school children recorded that rounds were currently given at the well during the first twelve days of May 'for every disease, spiritual or temporal, and for the living and the dead and likewise for cattle, pigs and horses.'¹²² At that time Paddy Counihan filled the thousands of bottles of water for the pilgrims, usually receiving a donation of 1*d* or 2*d*.¹²³ The large numbers attending were highlighted when in 1938 his takings for the day were £38, the largest donation being 6*d*.¹²⁴ The secular festivities at the site were augmented in 1925 with the celebration of mass by Fr William Ferris, the Parish Priest of Rathmore.¹²⁵ In his sermon he recalled the history of the site and noted that pilgrims now offered prayers for temporal prosperity, food, crops and herds.¹²⁶ Pilgrims continue to collect holy water from the well on the day of the annual

¹¹⁶ The transition from Pagan to Christian beliefs at the City was captured in poetry. See Cornelius Lacey, 'Cahir Crobh Dhearg' in *Sliab Luacra*, vol. 1, no. 14 (December, 2010), p. 43.

¹¹⁷ John O'Donovan (ed.), *Ordnance survey names books, county Kerry* (6 vols., 1841), iii, 262.

¹¹⁸ SFC 441:251, 452:2, 453:138, 200, 278.

¹¹⁹ SFC 452:3, 453:139, 457:16.

¹²⁰ *Tralee Chronicle*, 31 May 1870.

¹²¹ Mananaan Mac Lir, 'The folk-lore of the months. IV, May' in *Cork Hist. Soc. Jn.*, ser. 2, vol. 2, no. 19 (1896), pp 317-8.

¹²² SFC 452:33.

¹²³ SFC 451:283, 452:218, 456:482, 457:13.

¹²⁴ *Irish life and lore collection*, county Kerry, first series, CD 42, Dan Cronin recorded by Maurice O'Keefe.

¹²⁵ Dan Cronin, *In the shadow of the Paps* (Killarney, 2001), pp 48-9.

¹²⁶ Fr. Ferris Papers. Unpublished archive of Fr. William Ferris from the Parish of Rathmore, 1924-28. Ferris ministered in seven Kerry parishes between 1914 and 1969, collecting the history and folklore of each parish. The archive is held at Kerry Library Archives, Tralee. See also Broker, *Sráid an Muilinn*, p. 35.

mass.¹²⁷ On 4 May 2014, Denis Lynch, an elderly pilgrim, informed this author that he continues to bless his cattle with the water and said that the people ‘always did.’¹²⁸

A lesser known, but perhaps more remarkable, pilgrimage was made by the stockowners of the Dingle peninsula. In 1938, an Seabhac recorded that long ago in the townland of Caherquin, near Ballyferriter, a ‘*turas*’ was made on May Day with the intention of keeping farm animals free from disease during the following months.¹²⁹ Another brief account said that the pilgrimage started at a *cuas* or cavity on Black Strand named *Log na gCorann* and was completed at *Tobar Chiaráin* in the neighbouring townland of Baile an Rannaigh.¹³⁰ A recent archaeological survey described *Tobar Chiaráin* as no more than a hollow in a rock, where rain and sea-spray collect.¹³¹ Ó Danachair’s 1957 study of the local holy wells made no reference to this *Tobar Chiaráin*, or the May pilgrimage, suggesting it was long gone from memory.¹³² However, an account collected by T. P. O’Concubhair from Seamusín Seán Jim Ó Súilleabhain, suggested that the Mayday rituals at the site were extensive and had continued well into the second half of the nineteenth-century. Ó Súilleabhain heard about the practices from his father. Apparently, cattle might spend ‘a couple of days on the road’ being driven there from distances of up to thirty miles. They were kept overnight in pens, where the Ballyferriter locals were paid to feed them. On May Day they were driven through *Log na gCorann*, onto the land and between two fires before drinking from *Tobar Chiaráin*. The cattle weren’t allowed a drink of water for some time prior to this ensuring that they would drink the ‘well’ waters, which might contain salt.¹³³ A similar tradition prevailed at Clonmany, Donegal, where it was formerly

¹²⁷ The Mass at the City is now celebrated on the afternoon of the nearest Sunday to 1 May. The original well, inside the caher was eventually filled in and replaced by another just outside the stone wall.

¹²⁸ Even in 2014 there was a great belief by the older members of the congregation in the holy waters as a protective agent against disease and sickness, with many travelling large distances to collect the holy water. Denis Lynch had travelled from Toghher, Ballymakeera, Cork, twenty miles distant. Several informants to this study highlighted the continued use of holy water to protect cattle. For example, see Interview with Jim Magner.

¹²⁹ An Seabhac, *Triocha chéad Corcha Dhuibhne* (Dublin, 1938), p. 106.

¹³⁰ Doncha Ó Conchúir, *Corcha Dhuibhne i Aos Iorruis Tuaisceart agus Uí Fhearba* (Dublin, 1973), pp 44-5. Black strand is known locally as trá Chúl Dorcha.

¹³¹ Judith Cuppage (ed.), *Archaeological survey of the Dingle peninsula* (Ballyferriter, 1986), p. 352.

¹³² Caoimhín Ó Danachair, ‘The holy wells of Corkaguiney’ in *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, vol. 90, no. 1 (1960), pp 67-78. Ó Danachair examined 51 wells during 1957 and recorded only two wells dedicated to St Ciarán, one in Ventry, the other in Ballydavid.

¹³³ Interview with Monsignor Pádraig Ó Fiannachta and T. P. O’Concubhair; Further communication with T. P. O’Concubhair, 15 April 2016.

believed that if cattle were driven between a shore-side well and the shore it would ‘render them immune from disease.’¹³⁴

The evolution of the cow-doctor or handy-man

While farmers administered many basic veterinary treatments some conditions, such as difficult calving cases, required more specialised attention. In such circumstances the farmer could either call on a college trained veterinary surgeon, or some unqualified individual, usually the local cow-doctor. In Irish folk tradition, the terms cow-doctor, handy man, charmer and quack were used interchangeably to describe local veterinary practitioners. For example, little distinction was made between the cow-doctor and charmer. Both were associated with superstition and ignorance, and thought to communicate with the ‘good people’ and consequently remove fairy influences from sick cattle.¹³⁵ However, a more comprehensive study of traditional veterinary specialists suggests that each came to have a distinct and well-defined role in providing healthcare to domestic animals. The cow-doctor or handyman was an individual who was skilled or handy with cattle. The charmer relied on magic, superstition and religion to enact a cure.¹³⁶ This separation appeared from the mid nineteenth-century. In 1857, *The Illustrated London News* characterised the Irish cow-doctor as being romantic, mysterious, rustic and cunning, but did not associate him with charms and magic. In fact, there was a distinct ‘scientific’ character to his skills as, having made a diagnosis, his pertinent remedies were compounded, albeit ‘with great secrecy’, from ingredients purchased at the local chemist. The newspaper portrayed the cow-doctor as having an air of self-importance, yet as expecting to receive little more than entertainment and hospitality for his ‘professional’ services.¹³⁷

By the early twentieth-century the cow-doctor had again evolved. Whilst the mid-nineteenth-century practitioner relied on experience and knowledge passed through the generations, this individual was more progressive, had acquired a

¹³⁴ Énrí Ó Muirgheasa, ‘The holy wells of Donegal’ in *Béaloides*, vol. 6, no. 2 (June-December 1940), p. 158; W. S. Mason, *A statistical account, or parochial survey of Ireland: Vol. I* (Dublin, 1814), p. 185.

¹³⁵ Royal Irish Academy, Ms. 24 E22. Hudson Collection. *The fairy mythology of Ireland: Collection of folk tales*; O’Donnell, ‘Disappearance’, p. 61; Lageniensis, *Irish folk Lore: Traditions and superstitions of the countryside* (London, 1870), p. 51.

¹³⁶ Anne Dillon Questionnaire. Anne described Jack O’Sullivan, Clontubrid, Listowel as the “local vet”, handyman or cow-doctor. See also J. A. Murray (ed.), *Oxford English dictionary* (Oxford, 1933), pp 110, 292.

¹³⁷ *Illustrated London News*, 21 February 1857.

‘smattering’ of scientific training and carried a medicine chest. Furthermore, he took fewer pains to insist on his importance to the community at large. Nevertheless, his predecessor was described as being of a more genial personality, who was ‘a loss to the neighbours.’¹³⁸ A Scottish informant perhaps gave the most accurate assessment of the folk veterinary practitioner of the late nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries. He claimed that ‘they were interested in it [doctoring animals], and the more they did the more they got better at it.’¹³⁹ Another account, collected in 1958, described how a Longford practitioner, although the owner of a substantial farm, had an interest and love of ‘quackin cattle and other bastes.’¹⁴⁰

A 2001 worldwide study identified more than one hundred types of practitioners of traditional veterinary techniques. Such individuals included ‘exceptionally knowledgeable’ farmers, as well as locally and regionally recognised specialist.¹⁴¹ In early twentieth-century Ireland, every locality had an individual, or individuals, with an extra competence in some area of veterinary healing, described by Arensberg and Kimball as ‘always without benefit of law, apprenticeship, or formal training, and merely follows a technique of which everyone knows something.’¹⁴² In 2012, Pa Smyth, Cappamore, then aged ninety-one, recalled a variety of such individuals who had previously practiced in the locality during his youth. He remembered

James Doyle and Tom Doyle, William Ryan ‘Jerry’, they’d be like doing the castrating of cattle and then Jim Doyle bringing calves and Tom Doyle was great at the calf job, Thady Ryan then had the bottles, composed of linseed oil and treacle, for dosing for the worm and red water.¹⁴³

Smyth’s account highlighted that local practitioners were predominantly male, with women rarely featured as hands-on traditional veterinary practitioners. However, in east Kerry, Kate O’Brien was renowned for helping with a difficult farrowing. Her services were very much in demand during the 1940s and 50s when a post war increased

¹³⁸ D. M. L., ‘The cow-doctor’ in *St. Patrick’s*, vol. 3 (27 December, 1902), p. 699.

¹³⁹ D. A. MacDonald, ‘Cures’ in *Tocher*, vol. 57 (2003), p. 51.

¹⁴⁰ NFC 1430:63.

¹⁴¹ M. Martin, E. Mathias and C. M. McCorkle (eds), *Ethnoveterinary medicine: An annotated bibliography of community animal healthcare* (London, 2001), pp 18-22.

¹⁴² C. M. Arensberg and S. T. Kimball, *Family and community in Ireland* (2nd ed., Cambridge, 1968), p. 246.

¹⁴³ Interview with Paddy Ryan ‘Luke’, Pa Smyth and Mai Smyth.

demand for pork products in Britain and Europe saw a large growth in the Irish pig population. Apparently small hands were requisite to successfully farrow a sow.¹⁴⁴

The cow-doctor or handy man acquired his knowledge and skill by various means. Many inherited the calling. Tom Scanlon recalled that he had followed in the footsteps of his father, a cow-doctor who practiced in the 1930s and 40s.¹⁴⁵ Generations of the Glynn family were herdsmen to the McNamara in Clare and cured cattle in the Doolin area.¹⁴⁶ An account from county Longford, collected in 1948, dismissed any suggestion that cow-doctors were influenced by supernatural means. The informant highlighted that the majority of the local cow doctors started out as herds on the larger farms and estates, and got their information and experience whilst working with their employer's herd. One practitioner became so popular with, and necessary to the local farmers that they built and furnished a cabin for him. Many became farmers in their own right and were able 'to take' holdings with the money they received from animal doctoring.¹⁴⁷ Pat Daly claimed that the 'quacks', who practiced in the 1950s, consisted mainly of stud grooms and farm labourers who had gained experience on the larger estates or in racing stables.¹⁴⁸ In the 1950s, Con 'The Colonel' Cronin, Rathmore, was skilled at calving cows. He acquired this expertise whilst working as a 'servant boy' in county Limerick to a farmer who assisted his neighbours with difficult calving cases. As this gentleman grew older he left the heavy work to Cronin who quickly became accomplished at the task.¹⁴⁹ Tomás Horgan, Listowel, got his cure for fluke, in use in 1950, while working with the Knight of Glin, where there 'were people coming there from all parts, Scotland, England and Wales.'¹⁵⁰ As already stated cow-doctors often gleaned information from veterinary books that had been brought into their locality. Joe Dineen described how Michael Carroll, a 'skilled and careful' cow-doctor enhanced his skill by consulting veterinary books of unknown origin. Carroll compounded effective drenches and powders from ingredients purchased from the chemist and mixed in

¹⁴⁴ Dineen, 'Farcy', p. 60.

¹⁴⁵ Interview with Tom Scanlon.

¹⁴⁶ Interview with Micheál Shannon, Doolin, county Clare, 04 January 2012. CD 26, Author's Collection.

¹⁴⁷ NFC 1056:35-6, 128-9.

¹⁴⁸ Daly, *A memoir*, p. 22.

¹⁴⁹ Dineen, 'Farcy', p. 62.

¹⁵⁰ NFC 1178:59.

accordance with the formulae and instructions given in the books.¹⁵¹ Pat Culhane, an elderly Limerick practitioner, similarly consulted a veterinary book in his practice.¹⁵²

The local practitioner was generally seen as proficient and a vital part of the local community. Jack Powell, a Tipperary vet, recognised that up the 1950s there were few vets and animal owners had to do the best they could by calling the local practitioner. He described his own father, a farmer who was handy with cattle, as one of those who had acquired a certain amount of knowledge through ‘intelligence, experience and observation.’¹⁵³ Pakie Ryan’s father was also a farmer who had a reputation of being ‘fairly good with cattle.’ Pakie was complimentary of his father and the many cattle-doctors that practiced around Newport, county Tipperary. He highlighted that these individuals could replace a prolapsed uterus in a cow as efficiently as any vet and would do so without any epidural and often without hot water or electricity. Pakie was aware that the local practitioners often worked together at difficult calving cases and that there was little competition or animosity between them as cow doctoring was a ‘thankless job’ with few rewards.¹⁵⁴ James Ironside noted that the majority of the cow-doctors around Milltown Malbay in the 1960s were ‘very skilled’ at calving cows. Because of the faith shown in such individuals he saw himself as a ‘last resort’ to the farmers.¹⁵⁵ The stockowner was at ease with the local veterinary practitioner, who was normally a trusted neighbour, sharing the same social background as his clients.¹⁵⁶ As well as they knew their own community, so were they themselves known and trusted.¹⁵⁷ Evidence suggests that the majority of cow-doctors merely practiced in their own locality. James Lane and John Cussen both highlighted that the local cow-doctors rarely ventured beyond their own neighbourhoods, and were highly regarded by their neighbours. When asked if the handy man held a certain status in his community, Cussen replied ‘by God you wouldn’t fall out with them in case you would want them.’¹⁵⁸ Mattie O’Dowd, an elderly west Kerry farmer, described this sense of neighbourliness and ‘the beautiful way’ the old people of the Dingle peninsula treated

¹⁵¹ Dineen, ‘Farcy’, p. 62.

¹⁵² Interview with Garry O’Riordan and John Cussen.

¹⁵³ Interview with Jack Powell.

¹⁵⁴ Interview with Pakie Ryan.

¹⁵⁵ Interview with James Ironside.

¹⁵⁶ SFC 229:141; Dominique Camus, *Paroles magiques: secrets de guérison* (Paris, 1990), pp 12-3; Smith, ‘The wise man’, p. 24.

¹⁵⁷ P. W. Nolan, ‘Folk medicine in rural Ireland’ in *Folklife*, vol. 27 (1988-89), p. 45.

¹⁵⁸ Interview with James Lane, Abbeyfeale, county Limerick, 20 October 2011. CD 16, Author’s Collection; Interview with Garry O’Riordan and John Cussen.

their neighbours. When an animal died it was customary for the neighbours to visit and sympathise. If an animal were sick, the handy man ‘dropped tools no matter what’ and came to help. This was done ‘out of the goodness of their hearts’ and no reward was expected.¹⁵⁹

Eugene McGrath, MRCVS, Tralee, questioned whether some of the procedures undertaken by some traditional practitioners were ‘very progressive or sheer enthusiasm.’¹⁶⁰ Regardless of what drove these individuals they were certainly capable of attempting intricate and dangerous procedures. Owen Mangan, who acknowledged that there was a ‘great need’ for the cow-doctor prior to the 1950s, believed that some cases, especially difficult calvings, were surely beyond the local practitioner’s skills. From his experience he had seen calving cases that were even beyond inexperienced veterinary surgeons.¹⁶¹ John Hassett, MRCVS, agreed and noted that calving problems were exacerbated in the 1960s with the introduction of ‘big bloody continental bulls’, which resulted in the physical impossibility of a calf passing through the pelvic canal.¹⁶² However, it appears that even in such circumstances the cow-doctor attempted difficult procedures, similar to those of the veterinary surgeon. When Pat Daly graduated from Dublin in 1946 he had no training in birthing a calf by caesarean section. However, his college textbook on obstetrics advocated embryotomy, where the foetus, whether alive or dead, was cut up in the uterus. Daly described the procedure as ‘horrific.’¹⁶³ The procedure was not confined to the college-trained man. In fact, Michael Joe McMahon claimed that ‘most of the old lads’ [cow-doctors] could perform the operation, commonly known as ‘quartering.’ The procedure was performed on cattle, horses and sheep, but success was not guaranteed.¹⁶⁴ Present-day veterinarians employ a special wire, handles and hooks, under sterile conditions.¹⁶⁵ The cow-doctor had nothing more than a sharp knife. Jim White witnessed one individual quarter a calf with a ‘special small knife’, expertly edged. White, a vet, knew it took great skill to vaginally place a

¹⁵⁹ Interview with Mattie O’Dowd.

¹⁶⁰ Questionnaire completed by Eugene McGrath, MRCVS, Market St, Tralee, county Kerry, on 16 June 2004. Author’s Collection.

¹⁶¹ Interview with Owen Mangan.

¹⁶² Interview with John Hassett. Hassett’s views were supported by a survey on calving difficulties with Charolais bulls, first introduced into Ireland in the 1960s. See J. P. Crowley, ‘The effect of Charolais bulls on calving performance’ in *Irish Journal of Agricultural Research*, vol. 4, no. 2 (October, 1965), pp 205-13.

¹⁶³ Daly, *A memoir*, p. 25; See also Interview with James Ironside.

¹⁶⁴ Interview with Michael Joe McMahon; Interview with Catherine Talty; Interview with John Joe Conway; Interview with Michel Shannon; Interview with Paddy O’Connor.

¹⁶⁵ Philip R. Scott, Colin D. Penny and Alastair I. Macrae, *Cattle medicine* (London, 2011), pp 44-5.

sharp knife inside the animal without causing further injury.¹⁶⁶ In 1941, a west Kerry informant described quartering a foetus as ‘the last thing that is tried’, if the calf was not taken its mother unquestionably died.¹⁶⁷ The procedure was carried out in Ireland since at least the seventeenth century. Michael Harward described the operation, using a knife ‘which hath no more of a blade than a man can hide in his hand.’¹⁶⁸ Paddy Nolan admired the enthusiasm and courage shown by the cow-doctors in tackling such difficult tasks without drugs or equipment. He felt that these men got a certain kick from cattle doctoring and were always looking for a chance to show their skill and do good as ‘virtue is its own reward, there’s a pleasure in doing good which sufficiently pays itself.’¹⁶⁹ One such individual was Jim Naughton, Broadford, a cow-doctor who practiced in the 1930s and 40s. Interviewed in 2011, in his ninety-third year, Garry O’Riordan, a Dromcollogher farmer, remembered Naughton as ‘nearly better than the vets at the time.’ He noted that Naughton, unlike other local practitioners, travelled extensively throughout county Limerick. However, he never took payment, as he was ‘only obliging every one of them [clients]...he took pride in what he did.’¹⁷⁰

These sentiments were echoed by two cow-doctors interviewed for this study. John Lyons, Sixmilebridge, was a progressive farmer with a keen interest in doctoring animals. His speciality was repairing ‘slipped shoulders.’ The process involved an intricate operation requiring nails, twine, a cobbler’s awl and a bicycle pump. Lyons learned this intervention from his granduncle, whose advice was never to take any monetary reward as he was doing it for the ‘sake of the beast.’ Although this work took him into neighbouring counties, covering a radius of almost fifty miles, he never took money, even when a valuable animal was saved. He admitted that money never entered the equation as he thoroughly enjoyed the work as ‘tis in your blood...there might be a drink or so but I used to do it for the sake of the beast.’ In his own neighbourhood Lyons assisted with calving, dehorning and castration and took great pride in this work believing that the local farmers knew him and trusted him more than the vet. Lyons continued to practice in 2011, at the age of sixty-nine. In later years his son, who had learned the shoulder technique, accompanied him to cases but Lyons admitted that the

¹⁶⁶ Interview with Jim White.

¹⁶⁷ NFC 814:59-67.

¹⁶⁸ Harward, *The herdsman’s mate*, pp 96-7.

¹⁶⁹ Interview with Paddy Nolan.

¹⁷⁰ Interview with Garry O’Riordan and John Cussen.

younger neighbouring farmers no longer believed in the local man and were now totally dependent on the vet.¹⁷¹ Unlike John Lyons, whose personal fulfilment from the job was obvious, Tom Scanlon appeared to have taken less contentment from his role as local cow-doctor in the Athea district of west Limerick. Although he liked helping the neighbours it was more from a sense of duty rather than any passion for animal doctoring. When asked if he was happy doing such jobs, he replied ‘I was obliging, I couldn’t say no, I wouldn’t like to say no, I like to help. I helped out a lot of people.’ Tom never charged for his work but hinted that some form of thanks was expected after a successful treatment. He claimed that he successfully treated the heifer of an Ardagh businessman after the vet had failed. Later at a local fair, on enquiring of its owner about the animal, Tom received a rather sarcastic ‘I don’t know if it is you or the vet that cured her.’ He concluded the story with ‘He didn’t ask me to have a drink, that was my thanks for that.’ On the other hand, a local farmer, whose horse Tom had cured, cut Tom’s hay later in the summer with that same horse. Scanlon eventually discontinued with animal doctoring as it began to take its toll on his health.¹⁷² This was the fate of many practitioners. Jim Naughton, an ‘awful strong giant of a man’, was forced to retire because of injuries to his hands from calving cows.¹⁷³

Drawing from the National Folklore Collection and UCD archives, Catherine Cox’s study of the medical marketplace, at the turn of the twentieth-century, highlighted lay pragmatism, based on perceived efficacy, culturally preferred treatments, and costs, when choosing between formal healthcare practices and the services of a diversity of traditional practitioners.¹⁷⁴ The same could be said for those choosing between traditional and formal veterinary practitioners. From his experiences as a veterinary surgeon, Frank O’Leary sensed that many farmers did not call the vet because of their belief in the proficiency of the local man and the fact that money was rarely exchanged between the farmer and the cow-doctor. He noted that it was generally a barter system with favours called in when needed, usually help at the bog, in the garden, at hay or herding animals to the fair. Occasionally the cow-doctor was given

¹⁷¹ Interview with John Lyons, Sixmilebridge, county Clare, 4 October 2011. CD 14, Author’s Collection.

¹⁷² Interview with Tom Scanlon.

¹⁷³ Interview with Garry O’Riordan and John Cussen.

¹⁷⁴ Catherine Cox, ‘The medical marketplace and medical tradition in nineteenth-century Ireland’ in Ronnie Moore and Stuart McClean (eds), *Folk healing and healthcare practices in Britain and Ireland: Stethoscopes, wands and crystals* (Oxford, 2010), pp 55-79.

money at Christmas.¹⁷⁵ Another account said that some small monetary token might be exchanged ‘so that no bad luck may fall on his [cow-doctor’s] own cattle.’¹⁷⁶ Arensberg and Kimball described money payment as the mark of the outsider, gift and barter that of the fellow in the local community.¹⁷⁷ A number of informants to the Irish Folklore Commission recorded that clients wholeheartedly acknowledged the work of the cow-doctor who assisted his neighbours whenever their cattle were sick, setting aside his own work to do so. Therefore, there was never ‘the least bother’ gathering a *meitheal* for a local cow-doctor, nor was he expected to repay a *meitheal*.¹⁷⁸ In 1940 it was recorded from Rathmore, county Kerry, that far more young men that were required helped with cutting the turf of a local practitioner, resulting in an ‘easy day, a late start and an early finish.’¹⁷⁹

In her study of co-operative labour in rural Ireland Anne O’Dowd agreed with such sentiment and argued that those that were deemed ‘special’ members of the community, including the priest, the carpenter, cow-doctor and blacksmith were generously assisted with voluntary labour from the community. Such an individual fulfilled important functions, which contributed to the well-being of the community and therefore he had no difficulty in procuring help as ‘it was considered wrong to have his time occupied by the less-skilled occupations of ordinary farming.’ It was expected that those invited or asked were bound to attend to this work and it was usual that more help than was required assembled on the appointed day.¹⁸⁰ Food, drink and hospitality were readily available to the cow-doctor, in addition to the *meitheal*. The pub regularly offered drunken adulation if an animal was successfully treated.¹⁸¹ Denis Mulcahy, a ninety-two-year-old farmer, recalled that the local cow-doctor was always paid with a few drinks as ‘it was all porter [Guinness], no cash involved, you’d have to have the drink for him.’¹⁸² Mike Dolan, a Dingle bonesetter and handy man, was paid with tobacco and whiskey. Clients kept him in the pub all night, which infuriated his wife.¹⁸³

¹⁷⁵ Interview with Frank O’Leary.

¹⁷⁶ NFC 616:10.

¹⁷⁷ Arensberg and Kimball, *Family and community*, p. 252.

¹⁷⁸ NFC 1640:347, 1506:359, 384.

¹⁷⁹ NFC 876:186.

¹⁸⁰ Anne O’Dowd, *Meitheal: A study of co-operative labour in rural Ireland* (Dublin, 1981), pp 85-96.

¹⁸¹ Interview with Paddy Pyne; Interview with Jim White.

¹⁸² Interview with Denis Mulcahy and Jim Mulcahy.

¹⁸³ Interview with Monsignor Pádraig Ó Fiannachta and T. P. O’Concubhair.

Hospitality in the clients' house could be abused. Urgency rarely featured in a case and the disappearance of the symptoms usually marked the cure as complete. One individual concluded that the cow-doctor was often dearer than the vet because he stopped as long as the animal was sick and was fed 'on the best all the time and maybe a drop along with it.'¹⁸⁴ Therefore, the handyman often built up a good relationship with the woman of the house, which he also used to his advantage. A Kerry practitioner, who retired in the 1950s, was known for telling the farmer's wife that her husband was slow in calling for his services if an animal was sick. Consequently, if an animal showed even the slightest symptoms, he was invariably called on. This led to extra payment and an enhanced reputation, for curing an animal that was not sick to begin with.¹⁸⁵ Other payments were more unusual. Thomas Burke, Milltown Malbay, was a Farmer's Party/Independent TD for Clare from 1937 to 1951. He was known throughout the county as a bone-setter. Traditionally bonesetters received no direct payment nor did they request it, instead Burke asked his clients to vote for him. Burke made little contribution to the Dáil and it is generally accepted that the people of Clare were merely furnishing Burke with a wage in payment for his bone-setting skills.¹⁸⁶ Catherine Talty recalled seeing Burke successfully mend the leg of her granduncle's cow. Similarly, a local politician from Mullagh received votes in payment for his services in cases of bovine obstetrics.¹⁸⁷ In the 1940s a north Kerry practitioner never received money but the services of a farmer's 'Premium' bull were always available to impregnate his cows.¹⁸⁸

The veterinary surgeons interviewed for this paper were generally complimentary to the cow-doctor and believed that traditional practitioners usually did good work in difficult circumstances. Jim Byrne acknowledged the importance of these skilled people to their communities, as vets were scarce, and believed many became 'quite competent' at their work. He was in 'no doubt' that the arrival of the vet into a district resulted in a certain amount of rivalry with the handy man, as most professions were inclined to be 'very possessive', with a desire to retain status and knowledge.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁴ NFC 1430:64.

¹⁸⁵ Sean McQuinn Questionnaire.

¹⁸⁶ See <http://www.rte.ie/radio1/doconone/2011/0222/646639-the-curious-ear-doconone-bonesetter-td/>

¹⁸⁷ Interview with Catherine Talty.

¹⁸⁸ Interview with James 'Heck' Collins, Purt, Abbeyfeale, county Limerick, 29 November 2011. CD 21, Author's Collection.

¹⁸⁹ Interview with Jim Byrne.

A sick call into the country was an irregular occurrence for the veterinary surgeon of the 1930s and 40s and usually resulted in a crowd gathering. The occasion was often a flash point for tension between the practitioners. Invariably the cow-doctor and his cronies would gather to watch and possibly goad the college man. Eddie Breen recalled such an incident with a clash of egos between Tralee vet, Tom O'Hara, and a cow-doctor, Robert 'Da' Stack, in the 1940s.¹⁹⁰ Eugen McGrath told of another incident from Tipperary.¹⁹¹ Traditionally stories of exchanges between the parties portrayed the vet as a serious individual with 'book learning; the alternative practitioner, however, usually wins the day with his wit and cunning.¹⁹²

In 1957, Pat Hartigan established a practice in Caherciveen, where numerous cow-doctors continued to practice. He described some as 'an absolute nuisance', others as 'fairly competent.' He never knew if they held any animosity towards 'a foreigner' because he never engaged with them nor did he criticise them to the farmers who employed them. Ironically, the only time Pat engaged with these individuals was when he called to their farms to carry out the TB test.¹⁹³ John Blake established the first permanent practice in Scariff in the early 1950s. He claimed that the most prominent cow-doctors, 'very good men', welcomed his presence because they were so busy. He never knew anything about a number of others who merely helped a few neighbours.¹⁹⁴ Donal Prenderville established a practice in Killorglin in 1947 and was welcomed to the town by Mick Brosnan, a prominent cow-doctor, who suggested that they might work together and 'learn from each other.' Prenderville naturally declined but they became good friends.¹⁹⁵ Jer Dowling, a Tralee vet, occasionally worked with the aforementioned Danny O'Leary whom he described as 'nearly as successful as any vet I know.'¹⁹⁶ Pat Daly recalled that he often developed trusting relationships with the local men based on mutual respect and never felt any ill will or prejudice.¹⁹⁷ A number of cow-doctors displayed similarly admirable qualities. Jim Naughton, Broadford,

¹⁹⁰ Questionnaire completed by Eddie Breen, Kilflynn, county Kerry, on 10 February 2004. Author's Collection. Breen described how everyone in the crowd, except Stack, out of respect, addressed the vet as Dr O'Hara; See also Interview with Monsignor Pádraig Ó Fiannachta and T. P. O'Concubhair; Interview with Paddy O'Connor.

¹⁹¹ Eugene McGrath Questionnaire.

¹⁹² D. M. L., 'Cow-doctor', p. 699.

¹⁹³ Interview with Pat Hartigan.

¹⁹⁴ Interview with John Blake.

¹⁹⁵ Interview with Owen Mangan.

¹⁹⁶ Interview with Jer Dowling.

¹⁹⁷ Daly, *A memoir*, p. 22.

described as having ‘no smallness about him’, and Donal Fitzgerald, Tournafulla, respected both the vet and the farmer who preferred to call on the vet’s services. They were always accessible if a vet was unavailable.¹⁹⁸

The farmer often had to choose between the veterinary surgeon and the local handyman. As previously noted, the local man, for a variety of reasons, was usually engaged, but worked in difficult conditions so results were mixed. The handy man might be proficient at tasks that he dealt with every day but lacked experience or understanding in relation others. For example, Vincent Houlihan recalled a case where an individual used a bottlebrush, with a bamboo as a handle, to try and clear the throat of a calf that was coughing and wheezing. The problem was in the animal’s lungs.¹⁹⁹ Consequently, a sick animal occasionally endured more suffering that was necessary. When complications, such as ruptures to the uterus or oesophagus, septicaemia and tetanus arose, the vet was usually employed.²⁰⁰ Ernie Earnshaw claimed that whilst on locum in county Mayo in 1944 much of his day was spent rectifying ‘the awful mess’ some of the local men had inflicted on sick animals.²⁰¹ The vet was told that the handy man was there before him, only if the client thought it absolutely necessary to do so. Apparently, a vet once found a bar of soap in a cow’s uterus, having being told that no one else was involved. A number of farmers mentioned that the vets ‘frowned on’ the fact that they were often left to pick up the pieces in cases where the cow-doctor had failed.²⁰² James Ironside understood the situation but claimed a colleague ‘would explode’ if he knew that the cow-doctor had seen a case before him.²⁰³ Jim White remembered being ‘really vexed’ in such circumstances but ultimately understood that the cow-doctor, who had done his utmost, was the farmer’s first choice. He saw it as part of his practice, believing that if he ultimately saved the animal, the farmer might call on his services again.²⁰⁴

His clients rarely questioned the shortcomings of the handy man, especially if he was a neighbour who merely worked at a local level. ‘Heck’ Collins’ grandfather

¹⁹⁸ John D. Pierce Questionnaire; Interview with Garry O’Riordan and John Cussen; Interview with Ned Fitzgerald.

¹⁹⁹ Interview with Vincent Houlihan.

²⁰⁰ Daly, *A memoir*, p. 22.

²⁰¹ R. E. Earnshaw, *Veterinary ventures* (Oxford, 2006), p. 33.

²⁰² Interview with Mickey Vaughan, Ballyvaughan, county Clare, 4 January 2012. CD 27, Author’s Collection; Interview with John Daly.

²⁰³ Interview with James Ironside.

²⁰⁴ Interview with Jim White.

practiced as a cow-doctor in the early decades of the twentieth century and Heck believed that it was necessary that such practitioners had acquired good knowledge and experience because they had a lot of responsibility to neighbours who depended on them.²⁰⁵ However, Paddy Ryan ‘Luke’ believed that one ‘didn’t belittle’ the local man that occasionally displayed poor judgement or attempted something irrational.²⁰⁶ The same could not be said for the cow-doctor who ventured further than his own district, came with a reputation and charged for his services.²⁰⁷ Some built up large practices and were highly thought of. For example, Danny O’Leary, a north Kerry cow-doctor whose 1950s practice extended to a twenty-five-mile radius, travelled by motorcar and charged a fee.²⁰⁸ Reputations such as that of O’Leary were built up over time by farmers but could be torn down very quickly.²⁰⁹ The handyman was only as good as his last job and often became known for his failures more than his successes. For example, in the 1940s the suffocation of a horse during castration led to the operator’s sacking and the subsequent employment of a veterinary surgeon. Another individual was ridiculed by the local school children after they heard that he had caused an animal’s death. This man practiced until the mid-1950s and was usually given up to a pound for his services.²¹⁰

The blacksmith

Throughout many world cultures the blacksmith was associated with healing both humans and animals, often by magical means.²¹¹ Irish folklore similarly afforded the blacksmith magical status and supernatural powers both in healing and in counteracting the malevolent practices of fairies, spirits and workers of magic. Special powers were accredited to the forge water, anvil and iron used by the smith.²¹² Because of his

²⁰⁵ Interview with James ‘Heck’ Collins.

²⁰⁶ Interview with Paddy Ryan ‘Luke’, Pa Smyth and Mai Smyth

²⁰⁷ Interview with John Daly.

²⁰⁸ Interview with Ned Breen; Interview with Jer Dowling; Eugene McGrath Questionnaire; NFC 2249:156.

²⁰⁹ Arensberg and Kimball, *Family and community*, p. 246.

²¹⁰ Sean McQuinn Questionnaire; John D. Pierce Questionnaire.

²¹¹ See Gabrielle Hatfield, *Encyclopaedia of folk medicine: Old world and new world traditions* (Oxford, 2004), pp 34-5.

²¹² Dáithí Ó hÓgáin, *Myth, legend and romance: An encyclopaedia of Irish folk tradition* (London, 1991), p. 457; Kevin Danaher, *Irish country people* (Cork, 1966), pp 86-7. Numerous accounts of the powers of the blacksmith are found in the collection of the National Folklore Commission. Volumes 876-87 of the collection carry the results of material recorded by part time collectors and by a network of correspondents throughout Ireland, during the 1940s, in response to a questionnaire on blacksmiths. Question two asked if there were special powers attributed to the smith, including the ‘ability to cure human and animal complaints.’

assumed powers, the blacksmith himself was often considered to be in league with fairies.²¹³ For example, a Kerry blacksmith, Thomas Shannon, renowned for curing sick animals, was nicknamed ‘the Fairy Shannon’ because people believed he was in league with the fairies. Others dismissed such nonsense and argued that Shannon administered cures that had existed for centuries and remembered him as ‘a fine steady going old man’, who always gave good veterinary advice.²¹⁴ Another Kerry informant believed such advice might not, in itself, have been sound but was however accepted as such by ‘the plain people who knew no better.’²¹⁵ Kevin Danaher argued that it was little wonder that an uneducated, superstitious peasantry might believe that a man of such varied skills and knowledge was in touch with ‘powers outside of nature.’ However, he described the blacksmith as a ‘rock of common-sense’, whose advice was sought and valued in his community, and a healer of both man and beast.²¹⁶ When questioned about blacksmith superstitions, Martin Myles, an eighty-three-year-old Limerick blacksmith, laughed dismissingly but admitted that, even in the mid-twentieth-century, locals had regularly come to his forge for the water. They had also brought the coulter of the plough to throw in his furnace, in an effort to ward off piseogs.²¹⁷ The forge water was believed to cure numerous ailments in both animals and humans. It was employed to treat sore breasts, flesh-worms and farcy in horses, murrain and poor lactation in cows, and liver disease in humans.²¹⁸

During the early decades of the twentieth-century blacksmiths continued to provide veterinary care for horses, and occasionally other animals. As previously noted, those who traditionally made and applied horseshoes invariably became aware of lameness and other equine disease. In 1941, Robert O’Neill, an elderly Limerick blacksmith, noted that, from the nature of his work, he became intimately associated with every horse in the locality and thus became ‘a capable judge of horse flesh.’²¹⁹ According to Martin Myles, blacksmiths showed varying degrees of competency in treating horses’ feet. It was routine matter to shoe a horse until some fault was found in

²¹³ NFC 876:440-1, 878:64.

²¹⁴ NFC 876:443.

²¹⁵ NFC 876:6, 173.

²¹⁶ Kevin Danaher, ‘The blacksmith’ in *Biatas*, vol. 19, no. 8 (November, 1965), pp 544-5.

²¹⁷ Interview with Martin Myles, Kilmeedy, county Limerick, 31 October 2012. CD 49, Author’s Collection. Myles was born in 1932 suggesting that such practices continued well into the middle of the twentieth century. For an example of the use of the coulter charm see NFC 879:315-6.

²¹⁸ NFC 876:440, 462, 878:64, 879:200, 317.

²¹⁹ NFC 879:266.

the hoof. A competent practitioner would know there was something wrong, detect the fault, and treat it accordingly.²²⁰ A number of accounts suggested that until the mid-twentieth-century certain blacksmiths were held in high regard as animal doctors.²²¹ For example, Denis Murphy, known as *Din Gabha*, who had cures for horses and other animals, was described as being the ‘unofficial vet’ for the *Sliabh Luachra* district in the early 1900s.²²² An account from the 1940s noted that Stephen Malone, a renowned Ennis blacksmith was known to cure ‘all the gentlemen’s horses... he was as good as a veterinary surgeon.’²²³

Informants to a blacksmith’s questionnaire, circulated by the Irish Folklore Commission in the early 1940s, suggested that contemporary blacksmiths treated a wide range of equine conditions and employed a diverse range of treatments. Amongst the conditions treated were farcy, flesh worms, gripes, lampers, pole evil, ringbone, sand cracks, scalds, skin eruptions, spavin and splints.²²⁴ They bled horses and compounded medicines from plants, herbs and simple chemical ingredients.²²⁵ For example, in 1941 a south Kerry blacksmith cured farcy by applying *múnlac*, the run off from the dung heap, to the horse’s leg.²²⁶ Sand-cracks in horses’ hooves were treated with an ointment consisting of Stockholm tar, beef tallow, bee’s wax and garlic.²²⁷ Ringworm was treated with a poultice made from an unidentified plant, *meacan an Taraba* [sic].²²⁸ Kevin Danaher described a smith flushing out a horse’s nose or mouth with a syringe made from a pig’s bladder and a short length of elder twig.²²⁹ The red-

²²⁰ Interview with Martin Myles.

²²¹ Jack Mulveen, ‘Old Galway’s occupational fraternity’ in *Journal of the Galway Archaeological and Historical Society*, vol. 53 (2000), p. 117; NFC 876:366.

²²² Bart Cronin, ‘The forge at New Quarter’ in *Sliabh Luachra*, vol. 1, no. 14 (December, 2010), p. 104.

²²³ NFC 878:53-4.

²²⁴ See NFC 876:189, 225, 440-1, 878:193, 202, 879:56, 200, 243.

²²⁵ NFC 876:414.

²²⁶ NFC 876:32. Patrick S. Dineen, *Foclóir Gaedilge agus Béarla* (Dublin, 1904), p. 503, translated *Múnlac* as ‘a puddle; dirty water; a sink; animal urine or excrement’, basically the runoff from the dung stead. Another account from south Kerry, collected at Derreenneanav School (SFC 467:308) noted that ‘cuts on animals were washed with *múnlac* from the farm yard to cure them.’ Ned Fitzgerald recalled that the ‘juice’ from the dung heap was rubbed to the cow’s udder to cure mastitis. Elements of ‘dirty pharmacy’, which included urine, dung, soot, and mud, are known to contain many minerals pertaining to healing and are often employed in traditional veterinary practices both in Ireland and throughout the world. See Martin, Mathias and McCorkle, *Ethnoveterinary medicine*, p. 23.

²²⁷ NFC 878:163.

²²⁸ NFC 876:238. This author can find no plant by the name *meacan an taraba*. However, the word *meacan* suggests some tap-rooted plant. The plant was most likely Burdock, variously translated as *Meacan-tobhach-dubh*, *meacan tuabhail* and *meacan tuain*, the roots of which traditionally made a ringworm poultice in Ireland. See John Cameron, *Gaelic names for plants* (Edinburgh, 1883), p. 38; Dineen, *Foclóir*, p. 471; Margaret Baker, *Discovering the folklore of plants* (London, 1996), p. 35.

²²⁹ Kevin Danaher, *Country people*, p. 84.

hot irons of the forge were habitually applied to treat many of these conditions in a process known as firing.²³⁰ The injured area was cauterised with the objective of causing more rapid healing by increasing the blood supply. The process was enhanced by then applying a blister or ointment to the affected area.²³¹ Firing was a common treatment first described by Vegetius in the fifth century but today is generally regarded as an outmoded practice for which there is no scientific justification.²³² Jim White believed that many practices were undertaken because of a ‘lack of knowledge.’ He described the burning of a young horse’s mouth to remove a growth over the animal’s palate as ‘very cruel.’²³³ This operation to remove ‘lampers’ or ‘codan’, which was thought to prevent the animal from grinding its food, was regularly undertaken in the 1930s and 40s. To exacerbate the animal’s suffering salt was often rubbed on the wound.²³⁴ These practices had been criticized a century earlier. William Miles, in his treatise on systems practiced at the London College, wrote that the greatest brutality of the blacksmith was the ‘application of red-hot iron to the uncomplaining and tortured horse.’ Miles was particularly critical of practices in Ireland, as certain ‘barbarous disfigurements’, such as the burning of lampers and docking and nicking of tails, had been largely discontinued, except ‘in some dark parts of the sister island, where animals thus mutilated and deformed are still to be seen.’²³⁵

The blacksmith occasionally doctored livestock. In 1941, at Ballyduff, county Kerry, the role of the smith as a healer was clearly defined. He was ‘highly thought of as a vet’ but only in the case of horses. The local cow-doctor administered to cattle.²³⁶ However, other accounts suggested that blacksmiths applied veterinary care to all species.²³⁷ Danny Corcoran, of Sliabh Luachra, was described as one ‘of the old smiths’

²³⁰ NFC 876:32, 878:156.

²³¹ Questionnaire completed by Donal O’Connell, MRCVS, Dromartin, Ballyduff, county Kerry, on 25 January 2004. Author’s Collection.

²³² See K. G. McCullagh and I. A. Silver, ‘The actual cautery: Myth and reality in the art of firing’ in *Equine Veterinary Journal*, vol. 13, no. 2 (1981), pp 81-4; Tom Ivers, *The bowed tendon book* (Neenah, 1994), pp 85-90.

²³³ Interview with Jim White.

²³⁴ NFC 876:51, 224, 878:63, 163-4, 1177:531; SFC 571:89. Lampers (or Lampas) is a condition in which a hard swelling occurs in a young horse’s palate. Once thought to be a growth or tumor, this swelling is now recognized as part of the normal growth process. See Edward Boden and Anthony Andrews (eds), *Black’s student veterinary dictionary* (22nd ed., London 2017), p. 498.

²³⁵ W. J. Miles, *Modern practical farriery: A complete system of the veterinary art as at present practiced at the Royal Veterinary College, London* (London, 1875), pp 366-8.

²³⁶ NFC 876:256.

²³⁷ Interview with Monsignor Pádraig Ó Fiannachta and T. P. O’Concubhair; NFC 878:21, 27, 879:189, 214, 286.

who was called upon by farmers to administer ‘traditional cures’ for both cattle and horses. Corcoran died in 1970 aged sixty-five and was regarded as one of the last of such practitioners in the district.²³⁸ The blacksmith at Shanagolden was said to cure cows and heifers of sickness when the cow-doctor had failed.²³⁹ John Blake remembered a blacksmith being called upon to calve a cow on his family’s farm c. 1940.²⁴⁰ The smith was naturally in demand to treat cattle with diseased feet.²⁴¹ At Killimer, the local blacksmith shod an unusually heavy prize bull, with tender feet, for the four-mile walk to Kilrush, from where it was being shipped to Glasgow.²⁴² Veterinary surgeon, Tadhg Horan, relayed a story of how a Kerry blacksmith utilised his forging talents when treating a cow for pleurisy in the 1950s. He shaped two plates of iron roughly in the shape of the beast’s ribcage, calculating that the device would cover the animal’s lungs. Having first placed a blanket over the animal he then heated the device to a moderate temperature and placed it in position. The irons were reheated periodically. Horan believed that the blacksmith understood the pathological process and was brave enough to put his theories to the test. He claimed the procedure had a two-fold effect in promoting healing. Firstly, the maintenance of heat on the chest promoted the circulation of blood to the area and, secondly, it kept the animal warm, raising its temperature further, thus counteracting the growth of bacteria. The animal made a full recovery.²⁴³

The blacksmith’s interest in animal doctoring was either hereditary or earned through apprenticeship or past experiences. Patsy Dan Murphy, Rathmore, who was ‘noted for doctoring animals’ came from generations of blacksmiths. He travelled all over the district attending sick beasts, suggesting that the blacksmith’s veterinary ministrations were not confined to his forge alone.²⁴⁴ Others became familiar with the animal diseases either through apprenticeship with some knowledgeable person, or through working in some capacity with animals, especially in the army. Martin Myles succeeded his father, also Martin, as a blacksmith at Kilmeedy, county Limerick. He described how his father, a native of Mountcollins, served an apprenticeship there to

²³⁸ Donal Hickey, ‘Some of the old blacksmiths of Sliabh Luachra’ in *Sliabh Luachra*, vol. 1, no. 14 (December, 2010), p. 101.

²³⁹ NFC 879:289.

²⁴⁰ Interview with John Blake.

²⁴¹ Interview with Donal Griffin and Pat Griffin; NFC 879:203.

²⁴² NFC 878:11-2.

²⁴³ Interview with Tadhg Horan.

²⁴⁴ NFC 876:172, 175.

Martin Brosnan, who was ‘a great man at horses.’ He subsequently spent eighteen years in the British Army as both a machine-gunner and shoeing smith. Six of those years were spent in India where he also shod working bullocks. However, it was in France during the Great War that his interest in horses went beyond shoeing as he spent a number of years working in a Blue Cross hospital.²⁴⁵ On his return to Ireland Myles Snr.’s wartime experiences earned him a reputation at being good at horses. Animals ‘with different faults’ were brought to his forge at Kilmeedy, county Limerick. He consistently made use of firing and blistering to treat such injuries. He also compounded various doses, including a bottle for worms. Myles Jnr. claimed that his father’s veterinary work was far from lucrative, and that he never received payment, not even in kind. He noted that his father was an old man before he ‘copped himself on’ and focused on paying work. He himself never became involved in horse doctoring.²⁴⁶ For Myles Snr. to receive no payment was highly unusual. As previously noted, the blacksmith was deemed a special member of the community, who was paid either by voluntary labour or with farm produce for his services.²⁴⁷ An account from Mayo said that during the nineteenth-century it was customary to kill a beef animal at Easter and Christmas and for the blacksmith to be entitled to the head of every beast killed in the parish. However, the custom ended in ridicule when a local smith was given a horse’s head instead of the agreed cow’s head.²⁴⁸

Charmers and charms

The practices of the worm knot, turning the sod and sticking the pin, as described earlier, were considered simple charms that could be executed by anyone, at any time. Other charms were confined to those with a special gift, who had to be called upon to

²⁴⁵ The Blue Cross was founded in 1897 as Our Dumb Friends League, to care for London’s working horses. In 1906 the group established its first veterinary hospital in the city, the Victoria Animal’s Hospital. A fund was then established to provide care for horses during the 1912 Balkan War and re-opened at the outbreak of the First World War. Four animal hospitals were subsequently established in France where wounded and disabled horses ‘direct from the Battlefield’ were given care and attention. Veterinary supplies were also distributed to more than 3,500 units of the British army. By 1918 almost £170,000 had been spent in treating more than 50,000 horses in France alone. See <https://www.bluecross.org.uk/our-history-helping-horses>; Our Dumb Friends League, *Blue Cross fund for wounded horses at the front* (Pamphlet, c. 1914); Anon, ‘The Blue Cross (Our Dumb Friends League): some interesting facts’ in *Vet. Hist.*, new ser., vol. 9, no. 4 (1997), pp 153-7; Kenneth B. Haas, ‘The Blue Cross veterinary emblem’ in *Historia Medicinae Veterinariae*, vol. 23 (1998), pp 35-40.

²⁴⁶ Interview with Martin Myles.

²⁴⁷ NFC 879:268-9.

²⁴⁸ John D. O’Dowd, ‘Perquisite of hereditary smiths’ in *Béaloideas*, vol. 10, nos. 1-2 (June-December 1940), p. 287.

execute this gift. Charms were amongst the more popular applications of magic to folk medicine and a way of coping with sickness, disease, misfortune and the anxieties which occurred in everyday life.²⁴⁹ Ulrika Wolf-Knuts suggested that charms were rituals performed in a crisis and can be understood as a psychological coping mechanism, similar to the psychology of religion. If an animal were sick its owner could either give in or employ any possible method to affect a cure. If the animal died the owner would find some explanation for the unsuccessful outcome and blame was usually attributed to some circumstance, person or malevolent force.²⁵⁰ Charmers, because of their special powers, were often seen as having a connection with black magic or supernatural beings. However, according to Owen Davies, there was no ambiguity about what charmers did. They were ‘merely custodians of a God-given gift, not masters of equivocal magical forces.’²⁵¹ Charmers did not diagnose and usually restricted themselves to healing accidental injuries, namely bleeding, burns or choking, and skin disease, such as ringworm and warts.²⁵² For a Kerry contributor to the Schools Folklore Collection the stopping of blood was ‘the greatest of these charms.’²⁵³

Previous studies on charming suggested that from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries charmers throughout western Europe generally came from a similar social milieu, and were ‘often very respectable people.’ The majority were farmers, tradesmen or clerks, and were ‘remarkable for their ordinariness.’ Although they did not regard their gift as something extraordinary, they, nevertheless, recognised a responsibility to help those in their community.²⁵⁴ Charmers and charming are frequently mentioned in the collections of the Irish Folklore Commission. The informants occasionally included information as to the social backgrounds of the

²⁴⁹ W. G. Black, *Folk medicine* (London, 1883), p. I.; See also Joseph Wright (ed.), *The English dialect dictionary* (6 vols., London, 1898-1905), i, p. 565; Jonathan Roper, ‘Introduction’ in Jonathan Roper (ed.), *Charms and charming in Europe* (Basingstoke, 2004), pp 1-2; Lea T. Olsan, ‘Charms in medieval memory’ in Jonathan Roper (ed.), *Charms and charming in Europe* (Basingstoke, 2004), p. 60.

²⁵⁰ Ulrika Wolf-Knuts, ‘Charms as a means of coping’ in Jonathan Roper (ed.), *Charms, charmers and charming: International research on verbal magic* (Basingstoke, 2009), pp 62-70.

²⁵¹ Owen Davies, *Popular magic: Cunning folk in English history* (London, 2003), p. 83; Sabine Baring Gould, *Devonshire characters and strange events* (London, 1908), p. 143.

²⁵² Davies, *Popular magic*, p. 42; Lea Olsan, ‘The corpus of charms in middle English leechcraft remedy books’ in Jonathan Roper (ed.), *Charms, charmers and charming: international research on verbal magic* (Basingstoke, 2009), p. 230.

²⁵³ SFC 408:58.

²⁵⁴ Owen Davies, ‘Charmers and charming in England and Wales from the eighteenth to the twentieth century’ in *Folklore*, vol. 109 (1998), p. 42; Camus, *Paroles magiques*; Nolan, ‘Folk medicine’, p. 49; C. S. Burne, *Shropshire folklore* (London, 1883), p. 181.

charmners, who operated in the early decades of the twentieth century. For example, Johnny Landers, Annascaul, was a farmer.²⁵⁵ Pat Lahiff, of Scariff, worked as a blacksmith.²⁵⁶ Mickey Roche who had a charm for farcy in horses, was described as a ‘poor man.’²⁵⁷ John Silk and Michael Lynch were described as ‘travelling folk’, who could cure both animals and humans.²⁵⁸ Michael Kineen, a mid-nineteenth-century Galway charmer was described as ‘a very clever man and a great Irish scholar, regarded as a harmless bible reader.’²⁵⁹

During the 1930s, school children collected many stories about Mickey Hussey, a north Kerry charmer, who had died only a decade earlier.²⁶⁰ These stories give a good account of common charming practices. Hussey was also a small farmer and cow-doctor. Paddy O’Connor knew a man that had employed Hussey to cure farcy in a horse. Having split a briar, the charmer gave it to the animal’s owner to hold, and as he began his incantations the sections of briar came back together and fused. The horse recovered.²⁶¹ Hussey mended broken limbs in a similar fashion.²⁶² He also used ‘an ointment, which had as foundation unsalted butter’, suggesting that he also possessed some knowledge of pharmacology.²⁶³ Apparently, Hussey could perform his charms without actually going to see the patient.²⁶⁴ This concept of remote or distance healing was widely practiced by charmners, especially in cases of bleeding or choking.²⁶⁵ Con Curtin, Abbeyfeale, knew of a neighbour whose bleeding horse was remotely cured from county Tipperary.²⁶⁶ Up to the 1970s cattle were fed potatoes, turnips and mangolds, which invariably became lodged in the oesophagus. Removing the objects

²⁵⁵ NFC 841:264.

²⁵⁶ SFC 591:419; NFC 878:203.

²⁵⁷ NFC 658:426.

²⁵⁸ NFC 415:170.

²⁵⁹ NLI, Kineen Ms., Photostat. A collection of charms compiled by Michael Kineen, Monateigue, county Galway, 1847. The manuscript contains a remarkable collection of almost thirty charms, ranging from finding love to stopping blood. Instructions for use were included, written in both Irish and English. Kineen noted that he completed the compilation on 24 October 1847. The compilation is accompanied by two explanatory letters, written in the 1940s by John Flaherty.

²⁶⁰ SFC 407:31; NFC 1177:21.

²⁶¹ Interview with Paddy O’Connor.

²⁶² NFC 1177:22; SFC 408:59, 412:192, 286-7.

²⁶³ SFC 408:142.

²⁶⁴ Information collected from Mike Joe Thornton, Irremore, Listowel, county Kerry, on 5 February 2004. Author’s Collection.

²⁶⁵ See Daniel J. Benor, ‘Distance healing’ in *Subtle Energies and Energy Medicine*, vol. 11, no. 3 (2000), pp 249-64; Elizabeth Whitler, *The animal healer* (London, 2009), pp 142-52

²⁶⁶ Interview with Con Curtin.

manually was dangerous to both the farmer and animal.²⁶⁷ Therefore, setting a charm, either remotely or whilst attending the animal, was a safe and expeditious alternative.²⁶⁸ Evidence suggests that the charm took various forms. Francie Kennelly saw a charmer using a glass of water and a haw to remove the obstruction. He dropped the haw into the water and as he said the charm prayer the animal swallowed the offending turnip.²⁶⁹ As a child Jack Garrihy, a Clare farmer, was sent to a charmer's house to seek aid for a cow that was choking. The man withdrew to the bedroom with a rosary bead, some butter and a box of matches and was heard to pray for a few minutes. When Garrihy returned home the animal had recovered.²⁷⁰

In all charm cures the most common feature was the chanting of secret prayers and incantations.²⁷¹ For example, the most common charm prayer for stopping blood, in both animals and humans, was *Flum Jordan*, found in different cultures and time periods over the past millennium.²⁷² The prayer was often used to stop post sculling (dehorning) blood in cattle. Paddy Ryan 'Luke' was given such a prayer by a Roscommon cattle-dealer, who had seen it successfully used on freshly sculled cattle.²⁷³ Some charm prayers, such as this prayer, collected by Seán Ó Súilleabháin in the 1970s to cure a sick cow of an unspecified condition, were composed specifically for animals:

We set this charm for you, in the name of the
 Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
 Amen. This charm for you, O cow, from the
 Manger of the Virgin in which Christ was born.
 'Look Mother! The cow is dying!' 'Look yourself,
 Son; You have the power.' 'Shake yourself,
 O cow, at my Mother's request, and give her thanks!'

²⁶⁷ Interview with Michael Joe McMahon; Interview with Ned Breen; Interview with Francie Kennelly; Interview with Michael Shannon; See also P. A. McCorry, 'Choking in cattle' in *Ir. Veterinary Jn.*, vol. 4, no. 3 (March, 1950), pp 70-1.

²⁶⁸ Interview with Micheál Shannon.

²⁶⁹ Interview with Francie Kennelly; Interview with Michael Joe McMahon.

²⁷⁰ *Irish life and lore collection*, county Clare, first series, CD 32, Michael Shannon and Jack Garrihy recorded by Maurice O'Keefe.

²⁷¹ Amica Lykiardopoulos, 'The evil eye: Towards an exhaustive study' in *Folklore*, vol. 92, no. 2 (1981), p. 229; Richard Kieckhefer, *Magic in the middle ages* (Cambridge, 1990), p. 69.

²⁷² Jonathan Roper, 'Typologising English charms' in Jonathan Roper (ed.), *Charms and charming in Europe* (Basingstoke, 2004), pp 131-3; T. M. Smallwood, 'The transmission of charms in English, medieval and modern' in Jonathan Roper (ed.), *Charms and charming in Europe* (Basingstoke, 2004), pp 18-19; Olsan, 'Charms in medieval memory', p. 75.

²⁷³ Interview with Paddy Ryan 'Luke', Pa Smyth and Mai Smyth.

In the name of the Father and of the Son
And of the Holy Spirit. Amen.²⁷⁴

The charming act was usually governed by preconditions or post-conditions, including secrecy, silence and fasting, which added a magical concept to the charm. If these conditions were not met, the charm could fail.²⁷⁵ Charmers usually worked in the morning, while fasting, and the charm was often required to be repeated for up to nine consecutive days.²⁷⁶ For example, horses were brought to Johnny Landers, from three to nine consecutive mornings, before sunrise, to be charmed for farcy.²⁷⁷ Fasting was an important element of the charming tradition. It had religious undertones and was the primary reason why charmers operated in the early morning, before the consumption of any food.²⁷⁸ Fasting spittle was often applied, its Christian legitimacy coming from its curative use in the Bible.²⁷⁹ In the 1930s, John Cooke charmed for farcy by cutting a ring around a lump in the horse's leg, three times, with a fasting spit.²⁸⁰ Secrecy and silence were frequently either a precondition or post-condition of charming. The charm prayer was delivered in a mumbling style, for fear others might use it mockingly or irreverently. The charmer usually charmed in isolation, if the charm was disclosed it would immediately lose its effect.²⁸¹ Furthermore, if a charmer were to share his knowledge, he would lose his unique status and importance within his community.²⁸² As a rule of thumb charms were normally passed on contra-sexually.²⁸³ Tom Devitt, Milltown Malbay, had a charm for ringworm which he received from his mother who had acquired it from her father-in-law. Apparently, this was necessary as this man had no daughter of his own.²⁸⁴ This rule was not always adhered to. For example, John Silk

²⁷⁴ Seán Ó Súilleabháin, *The folklore of Ireland* (London, 1974), p. 145.

²⁷⁵ Jonathan Roper, *English verbal charms* (Helsinki, 2005), p. 189; Owen Davies, 'Healing charms in use in England and Wales, 1700-1950' in *Folklore*, vol. 107 (1996), p. 20.

²⁷⁶ SFC 408:142.

²⁷⁷ NFC 813:265.

²⁷⁸ See Michael MacDonald, 'Religion, social change and psychological healing in England, 1600-1800' in W.J. Sheils (ed.), *The church and healing* (Oxford, 1982), pp 101-25; H. D. Rack, 'Doctors, demons and early Methodist healing' in W.J. Sheils (ed.), *The church and healing* (Oxford, 1982), pp 137-52.

²⁷⁹ W.C. Hazlitt, *Dictionary of faiths and folklore* (London, 1995), pp 561-2.

²⁸⁰ SFC 412:193.

²⁸¹ Interview with Donal Griffin and Pat Griffin; Interview with Francie Kennelly; SFC 412:191-2, 458:76.

²⁸² I Pérez, 'Encountering the irrational', pp 180, 185.

²⁸³ Anthony D. Buckley, 'Unofficial healing in Ulster' in *Ulster Folklife*, vol. 26 (1980), p. 22; Davies, 'Charmers and charming', p. 43; Theo Brown, 'Charming in Devon' in *Folklore*, vol. 81, no. 1 (Spring, 1970), p. 38.

²⁸⁴ Interview with Michael Joe McMahon.

got the cure from a fellow traveller named ‘Jackeen Cure Me.’²⁸⁵ Flan Neylon, Kilmaley, received his choking charm from his father.²⁸⁶

Michael Doherty’s 2001 survey on cattle folklore found that charms to stop blood in cattle were still employed by ‘progressive’ farmers in thirteen counties, and had survived in others up to the recent past.²⁸⁷ Catherine Talty believed that charmers practiced in her district of county Clare until at least the 1960s but noted that her family never entertained belief in such superstitious practices.²⁸⁸ Why did such practices continue into the era when the services of the official veterinary surgeon, who possessed effective, lifesaving drugs, were easily availed of? Evidently, stockowners had a strong faith in the abilities of the charmer, especially in the treatment of certain conditions. Choking, bleeding or burns were conditions that required immediate attention. Therefore, if a traditional charm was available locally it was usually availed of. Clients knew that neither the charmer nor the charm was expected to take long to act. In addition, charmers expected no payment, were easily accessed locally, and, as with the handy man, generally shared the same social background as his clients.²⁸⁹ Unlike the handyman, traditionally it was wrong to say please or thank you or give any direct cash payment to a charmer. This presumably came from the belief that the ability to charm was a divine gift and as such should be given freely to those who required it.²⁹⁰ As an expression of gratitude, it was customary to give the charmer alcohol. Johnny Landers was given half pint of whiskey. He donated a piece of silver, given for luck, to the poor, as ‘there wasn’t any luck in that money.’²⁹¹ Evidence suggests that the consumption of alcohol was a pre-condition for some charmers. John Kennedy was given a ‘gallon of porter’ and only set his charm for farcy when ‘boozed and when he was feeling good.’²⁹²

A number of accounts suggested that some farmers were reluctant to call the charmer, unsure what divine power was at work. It appears, where a veterinary surgeon

²⁸⁵ NFC 415:170.

²⁸⁶ SFC 608:262.

²⁸⁷ Doherty, ‘Folklore of cattle diseases’, pp 52-4.

²⁸⁸ Interview with Catherine Talty.

²⁸⁹ Owen Davies, ‘Charmers and charming’, pp 49-50; John Clague, *Manx reminiscences* (London, 1911), p. 135.

²⁹⁰ Keith Thomas, *Religion and the decline of magic: Studies in popular beliefs in sixteenth and seventeenth century England* (London, 1971), p. 298.

²⁹¹ NFC 813:265.

²⁹² NFC 814:128-9.

was available, the charmer, unlike the cow-doctor, was often seen as a last resort. When a Tipperary vet failed to find any apparent reason for a horse's illness the animal's owner remarked that a local man 'could rise the horse in five minutes if I asked him.' When he arrived, the charmer applied a 'crystal clear' liquid along the animal's backbone, with his fingertips and on delivering the words 'horse stand up', the animal rose. The charmer merely acknowledged the fact and quietly walked away. The animal's owner admitted that he was fearful in initially acquiring the charmer's services. The vet acknowledged that whatever force was at work was greater than his scientific methods.²⁹³ In the early 1950s, it was only when Jack Powell gave a terminal diagnosis for a horse, that its owner, unknown to Jack, called in the services of Jack Deane, the local charmer. When Powell returned to administer pain relief he was told that the horse had recovered. On interrogation, the client admitted that he had reluctantly called Deane. Evidently this charm was unsuccessful, as Powell claimed the animal died within days.²⁹⁴ The vets were generally less than complimentary towards the charmer. For example, a Listowel vet attributed the recovery of a horse in Mickey Hussey's care, to the walk to the charmer's house. The veterinary profession knew him as 'Hussey the quack.' A local chemist similarly mocked Hussey, branding him 'Doctor.'²⁹⁵

Charmers also received criticism from within the church, especially from senior clergy. Monsignor Padraig Ó Fiannachta, the renowned Irish scholar, described charms as 'really old prayers, you know, a bit of ancient memories in it as well.' The Monsignor argued that a lot of the traditional old prayers were hard to understand and if the clergy realised their content and understood the gift of the practitioner they would have empathised more with them.²⁹⁶ However, those with moral and spiritual authority did not always look upon these practices in such a benign light since they held vestiges of paganism which led to conflict between the organised churches and the practitioners. To some the belief that holy words had an inherent efficacy was an outright rejection of the second commandment.²⁹⁷ From the seventeenth century Tridentine directives

²⁹³ Interview with James Lane.

²⁹⁴ Interview with Jack Powell.

²⁹⁵ NFC 1177:21.

²⁹⁶ Interview with Monsignor Padraig Ó Fiannachta and T. P. O'Concubhair.

²⁹⁷ Stuart Clark, 'Protestant demonology: Sin, superstition and society' in Bengt Ankarloo and Gustav Henningsen (ed.), *Early modern European witchcraft: centres and peripheries* (Oxford, 1993), pp 66-8.

attempted to impose certain standards on religious practices including the elimination of ‘magical and quasi-religious’ traditions, including superstitious healing practices.²⁹⁸ But this was not easy to effect since many of the rank and file of the Catholic clergy adopted a less than critical approach to the customary observances of their flocks. This is hardly surprising as many priests, especially those from a rural background, found it difficult to abandon the traditions they grew up with. In 1758, Nicholas Madgett, Bishop of Kerry, complained that ‘certain priests do not exert themselves in instructing the people against these vices.’ Madgett had no doubt that his flock were being defiled by various manifestations of popular culture, branded as superstition.²⁹⁹ Nicholas Sweetman, Bishop of Ferns, threatened his clergy with penalty or suspension if they carried out exorcisms or acted as ‘Fairy Doctor...to the already too ignorant’ without his written approval.³⁰⁰ While the blessing of water to sprinkle on sick persons, cattle or crops was permitted, hostility from the church towards folk observances intensified in the nineteenth century. In the 1860s, even Paul Cardinal Cullen had difficulty in exercising control over the clergy in both Cork and Kerry whom he claimed aligned themselves ‘with local prejudices and passions.’³⁰¹

In Irish folklore the conflict between the church and the healer is demonstrated in a narrative that Pádraig Ó Héalaí called ‘The Priest’s Stricken Horse.’ Although various versions of the narrative can be interpreted in different ways, Ó Héalaí summarised the plot as ‘a priest, previously antagonistic to a healer, is forced to have recourse to the healer to obtain relief for his incapacitated horse, having failed to cure the animal himself.’ Ó Héalaí collected more than fifty variants of the story.³⁰² Other accounts, collected during the present study, told a similar story. For example, the aforementioned Mickey Hussey successfully cured the horse of Fr Matthew, the parish priest of Listowel, ‘when all the others failed.’ The church had previously considered excommunicating Hussey for curing a woman who was bleeding to death. Hussey had claimed that the church should not interfere with his work and that the priest’s job was

²⁹⁸ See Timothy Corrigan Correll, ‘Believers, sceptics, and charlatans: evidential rhetoric, the fairies, and fairy healers in Irish oral narrative and belief’ in *Folklore*, vol. 116, no. 1 (April, 2005), pp 1-18.

²⁹⁹ S. J. Connolly, *Priests and people in pre-famine Ireland: 1780-1845* (New York, 1982), pp 107-12.

³⁰⁰ William H. Grattan Flood, ‘The diocesan manuscripts of Ferns during the rule of Bishop Sweetman (1745-1786)’ in *Archivium Hibernicum*, vol. 3 (1914), p. 117.

³⁰¹ Desmond Bowen, *Paul Cardinal Cullen and the shaping of modern Irish Catholicism* (Dublin, 1983), pp 220-1.

³⁰² See Pádraig Ó Héalaí, ‘Priest versus healer. The legend of the priest’s stricken horse’ in *Béaloidéas*, vol. 62/3 (1994-95), pp 172-5.

to cure the soul.³⁰³ Joe Dineen noted that he personally knew a charmer, Tim ‘Doctoreen’ Dineen who lived in the Clydagh Valley, Glenflesk, and who had a cure for farcy. Doctoreen’s ability to cure farcy was credited to the fact that he was born on Good Friday and baptised on Easter Sunday. He acquired the diminutive ‘Doctoreen’ because, as a child in the 1920s, he was brought to cure horses. He entered the stable alone to secretly administer the cure, his parents receiving a suitable fee. The parish priest of Glenflesk criticised this practice from the altar and advocated that his parishioners should depend on prayer instead of sending for this young boy. The people were not convinced by his protestations as it was rumoured he sought the boy’s cure when his own horse became ill.³⁰⁴ As previously noted, the priest was seen as a man of power so the narrative, therefore, constitutes an emphatic declaration of the power of his opponents. Ó Héalaí saw the narrative as a reflection of the emerging hostility of the ordinary clergy towards superstitious aspects of popular culture, driven by the criticism of higher ecclesiastical authorities. The narrative validated belief in the healer’s power with the priest recognising that power. It served as a powerful antidote to any attacks by the clergy on the activities of the healers and accurately reflected the attitude of the community who wished to avail equally of the supernatural expertise of both the priest and healer.³⁰⁵ It appeared to be an amalgamation of two sets of seemingly opposing beliefs in an interdependent and mutually supportive system, which the ordinary people understood to work for them.³⁰⁶

Improvements in veterinary healthcare since the middle of the twentieth-century have undoubtedly contributed to the decline in charming for animal disease. Environmental and agricultural changes have also led to the disappearance of many of the problems that charmers charmed for.³⁰⁷ For example, from the 1960s silage and meals replaced turnips, potatoes, and other root crops, so often the agents for choking, as the primary winter animal feeds.³⁰⁸ Furthermore, there is evidence that the charm was seen as a burden by the practitioners themselves. Michael Doherty suggested that

³⁰³ Information collected from Mike Joe Thornton; NFC 1177:21-2; SFC 408:58. For similar accounts from Kerry see NFC 658:427-8, 813:268-70, 274-5.

³⁰⁴ Interview with Joe Dineen.

³⁰⁵ Ó Héalaí, ‘Priest versus healer’, pp 181, 186-8.

³⁰⁶ Nora Naughton, ‘God and the good people: Folk belief in a traditional community’ in *Béaloides*, vol. 71 (2003), p. 18.

³⁰⁷ Davies, ‘Charmers and charming’, p. 50

³⁰⁸ Kerry County Committee of Agriculture, *County Kerry agricultural resource survey* (Tralee, 1972), pp 133-5.

the ‘fear’ of the charm by its possessor might have contributed to its demise. An informant to his study on cattle disease folklore stated that ‘nobody likes to perform those [charms] as often someone dies.’³⁰⁹ This analysis is corroborated by other accounts that suggested that many charmers dispensed with practice as they were frequently visited with ‘retributive vengeance’ because of their activities.³¹⁰ This punishment usually manifested itself in incidents of sickness, disability or death involving the practitioner, his family or livestock. For example, Pat Lahiff, a Scariff blacksmith, suffered violent pain as a punishment for setting a charm for farcy.³¹¹ Mickey Sheehy, Darragh, discontinued charming for afternoon fever in humans ‘as his cattle were dying.’³¹² In 1950 Míceál O Loineacaín, Dingle, reported to the Folklore Commission that his grandfather had a charm for farcy and attributed bad legs (liable to break) in the family over the following generations to the possession of that charm.³¹³ A north Kerry practitioner was reluctant to charm because his cattle were dying. He subsequently suffered paralysis because of his activities.³¹⁴ It was particularly hazardous to set a charm for one’s own stock or for the sick animals of another family with charms. A west Kerry charmer abandoned charming his horse for farcy to prevent the death of his sick heifer. The same individual, despite warnings, set charms for the animals of another charmer family and had the disease transferred to his own stock by ‘the power of their *pishogues*.’³¹⁵

Summary

An indigenous veterinary system, based on folk beliefs and traditional practices, was in existence long before the establishment of formal veterinary schools, and continued until the middle of the twentieth-century in parallel to official veterinary medicine. The farmer and his family were the prime providers of animal health care, using traditional knowledge systems of both preventative and remedial animal medicine, handed down from generation to generation. Stockowners were aware of any environmental factors that might impact on an animal’s health and, therefore, kept animals from diseased pastures, or simply provided stock with the appropriate feed, housing, and simple

³⁰⁹ Doherty, ‘Folklore of cattle diseases’, p. 71.

³¹⁰ NFC 1243:92-3.

³¹¹ SFC 591:419; NFC 878:203.

³¹² SFC 608:260.

³¹³ NFC 1178:396.

³¹⁴ NFC 1157:33.

³¹⁵ NFC 814:131-5.

preventative medicines. The interventions and trappings of the church, god and the saints were also called upon to keep stock fertile and in health. Evidence suggests that many elaborate rituals were carried out, especially on significant days on the calendar. When an animal did become unwell, farming family members were also the first to intervene with some form of veterinary aid. The most common and effective treatments were based in the natural world. Traditional herb and plant remedies were used side-by-side with common household items, such as alcohol, tea and bluestone. At the very least these remedies stimulated the animal and aided natural healing. Some interventions, both preventative and remedial, were harder to comprehend, but closer study can give a better understanding as to why they might have been employed. For example, placing a copper wire in the dewlap of an animal was fundamentally an effective way of producing resistance against blackleg. The main power of other practices, such as cutting the worm's knot or the transference of disease, lay in their psychological effect. At a time of crisis, these practices were used to restore a sense of control, the operator having a firm belief in their efficiency.

In more complicated cases the stockowner availed of the services of 'specialists', be they herbalists, those adept at bovine obstetrics, or the purveyor of magical charm cures. The cow-doctor or handy-man was 'handy' about cattle, particularly proficient at calving cases, replacing prolapsed uteruses, or castrations. The blacksmith was seen as the horse-doctor, who was known to cure the common equine diseases. Often coming from generations of animal healers, both were popular with animal owners as they were easy to pay, being part of the *comharing* system, well known to the client, and generally proficient at the job. Folklore afforded the cow-doctor and blacksmith a mysterious, superstitious past. However, early twentieth-century accounts suggested that both were solid, reliable individuals with a special interest in doctoring animals. It is easier to place the charmer, who relied on magic and religion to enact a cure, in the realms of the superstitious. However, the majority were ordinary individuals who possessed a special gift, often using legitimate Christian prayers in their ministrations to stop blood or relieve choking. Nevertheless, the Catholic Church was averse to the practices of the charmers, but found little support from its congregation, who wished to avail of both the powers of the church and the charmer. As a result of this popular confidence in folk cures and those who

administered them, traditional veterinary practices continued in common use during the first half of the twentieth-century.

Conclusion

The beginnings

The veterinary profession of the twenty-first century traces its origins to the later eighteenth-century European Enlightenment, which accelerated advances in agriculture and industry, and led to a general development in scientific awareness. From then onwards there emerged a more scientific approach to animal health care, with a desire to relegate to the past many colourful, and imaginative traditional practices, now perceived as superstitious and ignorant. It was to this end that veterinary schools, offering structured instruction in animal health care, were established in a number of European countries. Largely due to the view that it was the only species worthy of attention, and because of its worth to the military, industry and recreation, the focus of animal health care had hitherto been on the maintenance and disorders of the horse. Systematic and specialised equine care was delivered by professional farriers, self-styled farriers and blacksmiths. Cattle and other animals were doctored by cow-doctors and laymen using traditional folk cures. Claude Bourgelat established the first veterinary school in Lyon, in the belief that a more scientific approach to equine health could only be provided through structured, institutionalised education. However, because of the economic losses inflicted by recurring outbreaks of cattle epizootics, his Lyon School was soon required by government to also produce veterinarians capable of tackling cattle disease in rural settings. Veterinary schools, fashioned on similar principles, were subsequently established in other European countries.

Spreading veterinary education

During the nineteenth-century several attempts were made to introduce formal veterinary education to Ireland. Although a veterinary college was not established until the 1890s the move towards formal veterinary education was evident in the public veterinary lectures delivered periodically by prominent veterinary surgeons, such as Thomas Peall and Hugh Ferguson, who endeavoured to outline the benefits of scientific veterinary practice. Many of the lectures were delivered under the auspices of learned and agricultural societies, and attended by noblemen, country gentlemen and members of the medical profession, whose patronage and influence were seen as indispensable in furthering the development of scientific veterinary practices. Particularly important

was the contribution of the RDS, from which the primary stimulus for an Irish institution devoted to veterinary education came. Although the Society's ambitious early nineteenth-century plan to train veterinary surgeons was not realised, it subsequently made a significant contribution to promoting veterinary science through its popular lectures. However, on the downside, the Society appeared to interfere with later independent attempts to introduce formal veterinary instruction, which contemporary commentators attributed to a belief within the Society that it had a right to establish a school, because of its previous endeavours.

For the elite horse owner or landed gentleman the particulars of the most up-to-date veterinary treatments were acquired not only from public lectures but also from published works. From the seventeenth-century, there was a greater tendency to self-doctor one's animals, as almanacs, newspapers, farming manual and veterinary or farriery treatises carried easily-understood information on interpreting symptoms, and on the compounding and administration of medicines. The requisite ingredients were usually a mixture of vegetable simples, food items, and common pharmaceuticals, available from the chemist. However, treating one's animals in this way was often dangerous, as an incorrect diagnosis or misuse of pharmaceuticals could prove fatal. It was to prevent such problems that specialised books on animal medicine were written, the authors being predominately farriers, human physicians or surgeons, and cow-doctors. Several of the popular British veterinary texts saw editions published in Dublin. A small number of original, little-known books on the diseases of cattle and sheep were written by Irish cow-doctors during the nineteenth-century, evidently at the request of gentry and larger farmers, who subscribed towards their publication. However, they found little success in the Irish market that was dominated by popular British veterinary writers, such as Francis Clater and William Youatt. Although such works were normally found only in the libraries of estate houses, the content often found its way into the wider community through those that worked on estate farms, many of whom doctored animals in their own locality with this mixture of 'book-learning' and practical experience.

Monetary and curricular limitations

Despite the diffusion of this knowledge through publications, the institutional provision of veterinary education in Britain was slow to develop and had many

limitations. No formal entry requirement was needed to enter the veterinary schools at London or Edinburgh. Furthermore, fees were low, teaching facilities limited, and students required to attend for only a few months, before taking an oral examination. Therefore, it was difficult for either college to attract a high quality student, or to adequately instruct those that attended. While the majority of veterinary schools on the Continent were established with state support, those in London and Edinburgh were private institutions, reliant on subscriptions, patronage and student fees for survival, and therefore not accountable to any outside body. This absence of state support for veterinary education in Britain accounts, to some extent, for the slow development of the British veterinary profession.

Moreover, in the Irish context, financial support for an Irish veterinary college planned by the Dublin Society were halted when the Irish Parliament, which had promised financial support, was dissolved under the Act of Union of 1800. From the 1840s to the 1880s further calls to fund veterinary education in Ireland, predominantly from public health reformers and prominent landowners, were ignored. The United Kingdom's treasury, ultimately refused to provide funding for such a project, generally as a result of more pressing political matters. Finally, and ironically, any initiatives to introduce formal veterinary training to Ireland were hampered, not alone by a lack of government funding, but by objections from veterinary surgeons already practicing in the country. The Dublin vets ultimately opposed a veterinary college in the city since its survival would realistically depend on an income from a forge or infirmary, which would function in direct competition to the existing city vets. The provincial practitioners objected on the grounds that there were already enough vets in practice, with little call on the services of those that were.

Even if the Dublin Society or an independent promoter had succeeded in establishing a veterinary college, this would not in itself have guaranteed the speedy development of the Irish veterinary profession. While the new colleges of the late eighteenth century promised the prospective student a more rounded and scientific education, they turned out less progressive than first intended. The establishment of veterinary schools in London, in particular, and Edinburgh did not lead to any revolution in the practice or control of animal health care in Britain. Because of the dominance of the horse, they merely created more equine physicians, most of whom were ignorant of other aspects of animal health. This left the veterinary surgeon of the

English-speaking world compromised in treating non-equine diseases. What was true of the later eighteenth and nineteenth-century colleges continued into much later times. According to veterinary surgeons interviewed for this study, the bias towards instruction on the equine subject continued, especially in Ireland where horse practice, because of a slower rate of mechanisation and a special affinity with the animal, declined more slowly than in Britain. As a result, the emphasis of the curriculum at the Dublin College until the 1950s was on the horse, so much so that a lack of training in the care of cattle meant that veterinary surgeons of that period, such as Pat Daly, struggled to convince cattle farmers of their usefulness, just as Richard Dyer and his contemporaries had done a century earlier.

In contrast with the limitations of the college-educated veterinary practitioner regarding cattle practice, many of the traditional practitioners displayed a high degree of skill in cattle doctoring. The more audacious practitioners were capable of undertaking difficult surgeries, such as embryotomy. The majority were skilful at assisting with difficult births, castrations and de-horning. Most importantly, they were aware of the location of vital minerals, medicinal plants and herbs and recognised the factors within the local environment that impacted on the health of their patients. Nevertheless, the traditional practitioner was regularly dismissed by his contemporaries as being illiterate, a charlatan and an empiric, and his practices as cruel and obsolete. Such condemnations, however, often came from those who were merely trying to focus attention on their own interests, be that the sale of animal medicine, the promotion of veterinary literature or the general advancement of what was on offer from college-educated veterinary practitioners. In fact, many traditional practices, such as early attempts at blackleg vaccination, were in use for centuries and had a genuine scientific basis. Furthermore, scientifically minded animal health practitioners had practiced in Ireland since at least the seventeenth-century, with skilled cattle surgeons, such as Michael Harward, capable of performing intricate surgical procedures. Certainly, from the later nineteenth to the mid-twentieth-century the vast majority of traditional practitioners were actually competent, responsible individuals.

These cow-doctors or handy-men, who took a special interest in some aspect of animal doctoring, most often acquired their knowledge through an inter-generational transmission of skills, occasionally complimented by some degree of book learning, typically some time-honoured veterinary treatise. With experience, they honed their

skills in some manipulative veterinary technique, the preparation of locally found botanicals, or the administration of chemical drugs and pharmaceutical preparations. The local practitioners were known to their clients and their work demonstrated the importance of community, where everyone generally worked in tandem. They made every effort, often in difficult circumstances, to save their neighbours' animals, where that neighbour could either not afford the fees of a veterinary surgeon, or the latter was simply unavailable. Payment was usually some favour in return. It was this closeness to the local community, highlighted by a reciprocity of duty, that was the strength of the local practitioner. In contrast, his college education created an increased division between the qualified practitioner and rural clients. Although he might originally have come from the same social milieu, the veterinary graduate was looked upon with suspicion on his return from college, perceived by potential clients as attempting to impose his new, alien, and therefore, questionable veterinary practices.

Vets and veterinary reformers

The British veterinary profession can trace its origins to the elite members of the Odiham Agricultural Society, who were instrumental in establishing the LVC in 1791. In Ireland, the Dublin Society, with a similar class of membership, also promoted an enlightened approach to animal health care, especially through its series of popular lectures, delivered by Thomas Peall. Similar early efforts were made by the Farming Society of Ireland and the Royal Cork Institution. The early college-trained veterinary surgeons were predominantly employed or patronised by members of the aristocracy, such as the Earl of Kingston or the Marquis of Sligo. Throughout the nineteenth-century patronage of veterinary reform generally came from members of the aristocracy or wealthy landed gentlemen. In the 1880s, the Duke of Leinster, the Marquis of Drogheda and Viscount Powerscourt, were amongst those to publicly support an initiative, spearheaded by Dr Robert Lyons, to establish an Irish veterinary school. However, these gentlemen appeared less generous in terms of financial support, seen as a matter for Government, which delayed the establishment of an Irish-based college. Perhaps these patrons, although willing to publicly support such a scientific initiative, privately believed that college trained veterinary surgeons had not yet sufficiently proved their worth to warrant a further expansion of the profession in the country. Furthermore, there may have been a reluctance to support private initiatives to introduce formal veterinary training, as this was generally seen as the right of the RDS. Nor was there any desire,

as highlighted in an RDS report, to create competition for the Dublin vets, many of whom looked after the horses of the elite.

In the colleges themselves the earliest teachers were often human physicians or farriers, who either experimented or consulted existing literature to become familiar with animal anatomy, pathology and physiology. William Dick, founder of the Edinburgh college, was the son of a farrier, who left medical school to attend the LVC. The LVC itself was founded on an ambitious plan of its first Principal, Sainbel, a French veterinarian, which offered a three year course and a wide-ranging curriculum. As a private institution its survival was largely dependent on subscriptions, many of whom were not forthcoming. Subscribers who did contribute tended to be medical men and horse owners. Sainbel's untimely death led to the appointment of Edward Coleman, a human surgeon, as Principal and a subsequent dominance of the College by members of the medical profession. Their presence as the sole examiners of the students initially gave the veterinary diploma an aspect of respectability. However, many of their rank believed that animal medicine was far inferior to its human counterpart. This prevailing attitude and financial necessity quickly resulted in a college that offered a short course, inadequate instruction, and consequently produced a low standard of graduate. Despite calls for reform, Coleman and his medical colleagues were reluctant to relinquish their authority and status.

The first college-trained vets to practice in Ireland were graduates of the London College. Its Principal, Edward Coleman, recommended his former students Thomas Peall and George Watts to the Dublin Society, to oversee its Veterinary Institute. Neither displayed any deficiencies in ability despite the poor instruction they received in London, and it is unlikely that Coleman would have sent any but the best to Ireland's foremost scientific society. Despite the failure of the Institute, Peall, with previous teaching experience in Britain, remained with the Society and proved himself a brilliant teacher and pathologist. Although little is known of the background of George Watts, his prior marriage to a member of a distinguished family suggested that he himself came from a prominent landed background. At any rate, his acumen as a veterinarian, businessman, and horse breeder, enabled him to fraternise with the elite, the class that employed veterinary surgeons. Peall and Watts had other ambitious and able contemporaries who came to Ireland to practice, several of whom were merely farriers, assuming the veterinary surgeon title. Few in number, the majority focused on lucrative

equine practice in the cities of Dublin and Belfast. Therefore, it appears that they were unconcerned by the low esteem in which the veterinary surgeon was generally held at that time.

Despite status-related concerns by veterinary practitioners, veterinary surgery was predominately seen as a trade during the early decades of nineteenth-century. As college instruction was deficient, the resulting graduate remained proportionately incompetent. The practical ability of the trained vet was not demonstrably better than that of the unqualified individual, nor did he possess the requisite knowledge that would have justified a market monopoly. Therefore, many veterinarians struggled to survive. Furthermore, limited income resulted in a lower status. Therefore, nineteenth-century veterinary reform was largely driven by a desire to enhance this poor financial and social status of the profession. For the majority of college-educated vets that simply meant procuring gainful employment. Others were more concerned by their lower status, especially their proportionately lower income, as compared to that of the doctor, giving them less chance to socialise with the elite.

The early calls for reform, especially at the London college, came from a number of prominent individuals, many of them veterinary surgeons themselves. In the 1820s, Joseph Goodwin, the medically trained Veterinary Surgeon to the King, and Frederick Cherry, a distinguished army vet, were chiefly concerned with the shortcomings of training at the College and, particularly, the continued exclusion of veterinary surgeons from the examining committee. As the century progressed it was predominantly provincial vets who took up the mantle of veterinary reformers. While veterinary practitioners in large cities like London and Dublin, enjoying relative prosperity, provincial veterinarians, who faced greater competition from unqualified individuals or traditional methods, struggled for income and status. In Britain the Mayer family, from Staffordshire, lobbied hard during the 1830s for improvement in the standard and scope of veterinary education. Their long-term ambition was to curtail unregistered veterinary practice and gain the same privileges and exemptions enjoyed by other professions.

In Ireland, too, the mid-nineteenth century's foremost proponents of veterinary reform were veterinarians: William M'Kenna and Richard Dyer. M'Kenna was a Belfast practitioner who had practiced as a farrier before investing the time and money

to obtain his veterinary diploma in London. He subsequently became involved in veterinary politics and regularly travelled to Britain to attend at both RCVS and veterinary society meetings. He campaigned that vets, as professional men, should have the same exemptions as doctors and dentists from jury duty, having personally failed in his application for same in a Belfast court. He was also an ardent campaigner against unqualified practice, questioning why those who had never attended a veterinary school could practice as veterinary surgeons, without penalty. Richard Dyer was an English born veterinarian who spent two periods of practice in Ireland. The first of those was spent in Waterford city between 1849 and 1864. During this time his personal campaign to prove that the college vet was proficient at cattle practice was a dismal failure. He also found no interest amongst fellow practitioners in forming an Irish veterinary society that might advance the interests of the profession locally. However, he enjoyed a prominent position in Waterford city, involved in church, scientific and agricultural societies, where he fraternised with the elite of the city, religious, professionals, gentry and medical doctors. However, when he returned to England his correspondence to the medical press suggested that he found a different situation, where the veterinary surgeon was of lower status, required to visit the stables and conduct business with the groom, whilst the doctor attended the house and mingled with the family.

Interestingly, throughout the nineteenth-century there was a significant contrast in terms of status between the veterinary surgeon who practiced in Ireland and his British counterpart. The social mobility of men such as George Watts, well known to the elite horse owning fraternity, exalted the status of the veterinary surgeon in Ireland. It can also be credited with subsequently attracting this class into the profession. The eloquence and knowledge of Professor Thomas Peall also endeared the profession to prominent horse owners. As the century progressed, the status of the Irish vet remained high, influenced by this first generation of practitioners. The Irish veterinary students of the period generally came from a more privileged background, as exemplified by James McKenny and Edward Wallis Hoare, able to afford veterinary college fees, extra tuition, boarding and living expenses in London or Edinburgh. Democratisation of the veterinary profession in Ireland was, however, already in train as the century ended. The early twentieth-century vets, remembered by interviewees to this study, came largely from farming backgrounds. Some worked their way through veterinary college, as exemplified by John H. Pierce, who picked potatoes to pay for his fees at Edinburgh

during the early 1890s. The early decades of the twentieth century also saw the eventual admission of women into the profession. Although the RCVS stringently denied women membership, it was forced to do so after the passing of the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act of 1919. Aleen Cust, who became the first female member of the RCVS in 1922, had successfully completed the four-year curriculum at the New Edinburgh College in 1900. She was accepted as a student by its Principal, William Williams, four years earlier. Cust was born into an aristocratic landed family, with royal connections, a factor which undoubtedly influenced her acceptance to veterinary education.

Slowing the process of reform

Certain divisions within the veterinary profession slowed the process of reform and development. In Britain, this was highlighted by a division within veterinary ranks, especially the lack of co-operation between the schools and the RCVS. The 1844 Charter established the RCVS as the veterinary governing body, and saw the creation of a one portal examination, controlled by the RCVS. Although both schools had petitioned for a formal recognition of the profession, neither had anticipated its ultimate success. Therefore, when the charter was granted, the London governors and William Dick in Edinburgh suddenly realised that their monopoly powers were effectively at an end. Dick was particularly aggrieved, claiming the RCVS had altered certain clauses in the Charter, in the aftermath of his agreeing its terms. He subsequently seceded from the RCVS and returned to granting his college's graduates the Certificate of the Highland and Agricultural Society. Although the RCVS created a mechanism where Edinburgh graduates could sit its exam, many were happy with a sole qualification. However, many RCVS members challenged the validity of the HASC and the right of its holders to use the title veterinary surgeon. In Ireland, the dispute was highlighted in tensions between Limerick practitioners, when Richard Dyer, an MRCVS member, challenged the qualifications of a number of his rivals. It was only the eventual healing of the rift in 1879 that allowed the profession to seek legislation that would finally distinguish its members from unqualified individuals. The regional divisions were especially significant within the Irish context, as there appeared to be a clear division between the Dublin and provincial vets. It was the city vets that were generally involved in veterinary politics, particularly in matters relating to the RCVS. The provincial vets went largely unknown to the veterinary authorities in London. The creation of Irish RCVS Fellowships in the 1870s, overseen by prominent Dublin practitioners, suggested

the existence of cliques, favouritism and the suppression of those with differing views. The early Irish veterinary societies also had a predominately urban membership, with country members given little voice. This was highlighted when provincial vets left the VMAI to form the ICVA in 1897.

These divisions within the veterinary profession in Ireland did not rest on a city-provincial divide alone. Competition for societal position or work inevitably led to rivalries and jealousies between individual practitioners. In the 1850s, Hugh Ferguson and James Farrall, prominent Dublin practitioners with state positions, began an intense rivalry as they vied for the position of Veterinary Surgeon to the RAISI. An intensification of that rivalry, widely reported in the press, came to involve prominent veterinarians in both Britain and Ireland and did little to endear the veterinary profession to the public. The preliminary meeting of the Irish Central Veterinary Medical Association in 1869 again suggested that relationships between individual Irish veterinarians were far from cordial, portraying the veterinarian as generally unfriendly and unrefined. Even in the 1920s jealousies and competition between private practitioners continued to hamper the development of the profession in Ireland, still portraying the vet in a poor light and often threatening the economic viability of practice.

The greater number of Irish veterinary surgeons of the nineteenth-century generally did little to improve the profession, happy with their lot, whatever that might be. Any furtherance of veterinary science, especially if it interfered with the *status quo*, was avoided and left to others. As a result, divisions often appeared between the veterinarians and those who promoted change. This was especially highlighted in relation to the question of establishing a veterinary school in Dublin in the 1860s, and again in the 1880s, and in the attitudes of its promoters, mainly members of the medical profession. Those involved promised wide-ranging and innovative formal veterinary instruction, a school to produce a more proficient and rounded veterinary graduate than hitherto seen. This suggested that these reformers had little faith in the ability of existing practitioners. Not surprising, then, that existing vets were not even consulted on the foundation of a college and, therefore, averse to the idea.

Even in the early decades of the twentieth century the gulf between the veterinary surgeon and the farming community remained wide. The veterinary

surgeon's college education distanced him from the farmer who, slow to change, took a short-term view on animal health, and was generally reluctant to embrace treatments that were alien, unproven to him, and costly. Furthermore, there was still a perceived, indeed very real, limitation to the veterinary surgeon's training. Until the mid-twentieth century, the vet found it difficult to attain cattle practice because of the perception that he was merely a horse doctor, stockowners appearing to prefer traditional veterinary practices and practitioners. In any event, the trained vets' cures were hardly more effective than those of the local practitioners. Both were predominately administering purgatives and laxatives which relieved the system and allowed the animal a natural recovery. Nevertheless, despite this undoubted gap, there was a relatively harmonious working relationship between the farmer and vet who was only consulted by the majority of farmers on rare occasion. The vet was actually well regarded within the community, the majority being shown deference when referred to by the title 'Doctor.'

The progress of change

Despite a long-lasting dismissal of the veterinary profession's usefulness to society and agriculture, in particular, there was a clear rise in its status from the late nineteenth-century onwards. By then the profession had achieved recognition through the Royal Charter of 1844, which allowed for the formation the RCVS. The 1870s saw an end to a long running feud between the RCVS and the Edinburgh College, which united the profession, and a degree of state employment with the Contagious Diseases (Animals) Act. The Veterinary Surgeons Act, 1881, allowed potential clients to distinguish between qualified and unqualified practitioners, making it an offence for non-members of the College to use any title implying membership. Furthermore, higher entry requirements to the colleges, combined with a longer course and an improvement in the standard and scope of instruction led to a more proficient graduate. Although the veterinary profession had done much to enhance its own reputation and role during the nineteenth century, it was through developments beyond its control that the profession eventually gained acceptance

From an Irish perspective, an early step in this direction was a widening out of government policy into agricultural education. On the threshold of the twentieth century there was an increased recognition of the need to promote a scientific approach to farming. From its inception in 1901, the Irish Department of Agriculture and Technical

Instruction attempted to convey the notion of scientific agriculture to the farmer, especially in the areas of hygiene and disease prevention. This was done through the lectures of Professor Mason and the dissemination of veterinary content through leaflets, government publications and newspaper columns. Although such initiatives produced some success, the failure of the Veterinary Dispensary Scheme, rolled out in the second decade of the twentieth-century, highlighted that the Irish farmer was not yet ready to embrace scientific ideas. But other extensions of government control, especially into the area of public health, also played their part.

The development of public health legislation, regarding the quality of food and its means of production, from the 1870s onwards created new opportunities for the veterinary surgeon. The present study had identified two major public health initiatives, placed seventy years apart, which were instrumental in advancing the veterinary profession in Ireland, the 1878 Contagious Diseases (Animals) Act and, most especially, the Bovine TB Eradication Scheme of the 1950s. From the middle of the nineteenth-century veterinary reformers had seen opportunities for the profession in the inspection of meat and milk production, and in the prevention of contagious animal diseases that threatened public health. The 1878 Public Health Act first pushed the door open for veterinary careers outside the immediate farming context. In fact, it finally granted college-trained vets a monopoly as it required all local authorities to appoint at least one qualified veterinary surgeon as inspector. Although some local authorities, for economic reasons, made every effort to employ unqualified individuals, the majority employed qualified vets. The wage from this part-time position enabled the establishment of veterinary practices in many districts that had previously not seen a resident vet. It also gave the veterinary surgeon an official status, which he did not hitherto hold.

However, it was not until the 1950s with the introduction of Bovine TB eradication schemes that qualified veterinary surgeons were found in every farmyard in the country. Bovine TB was long recognised as a threat to both human and animal health, but plans for its eradication only intensified with threats to the livestock export trade. Eradication efforts culminated with the Diseases of Animals (Bovine Tuberculosis) Act of 1957, which required a veterinary surgeon to conduct the compulsory testing of every herd in the country. The scheme offered unprecedented opportunities to the Irish veterinary surgeon and saw the establishment of new practices

at almost parish level for the first time. The eradication scheme coincided with unprecedented developments in the worlds of science, transport and communications. Improved road infrastructure and the development of the telephone and electricity networks made for easier accessibility to the services of the qualified veterinary surgeon.

The most momentous change, however, was in the development and availability of life changing drugs. Before the 1940s, in specific medication terms, the vet could do relatively little for his or her patients. The pre Second World War years saw the introduction of sulphonamide drugs, which were effective in treating some hitherto fatal diseases. They were quickly superseded by penicillin, which came into veterinary use in the post war years. Both farmers and vets agreed that penicillin was revolutionary, greatly enhancing the chances of recovery, whatever the condition. Improvements in biological vaccines and serums, first developed in the early part of the century, further revolutionised veterinary practice, especially in the prevention of clostridial and endoparasitic diseases. The explosion in pharmaceuticals and other medicines was accompanied by a similar growth in diagnostic and imaging techniques, predominately derived from human medicine. Although, the period also saw surgical advances in all species, the veterinary surgeons interviewed for this study, who graduated prior to the 1960s, received little instruction, even on common surgeries, such as caesarean section. Therefore, an audacious approach was needed in cases necessitating such interventions. Ultimately, it was the introduction of revolutionary medicines – and their availability to the veterinary surgeon – that cemented the relationship between the qualified practitioner and the farmer. A century-and-a-half after the arrival of the first qualified veterinary surgeon in Ireland, the professional man had eventually achieved a dominant position over the traditional veterinary practitioner. Modern treatments resulted in a more favourable outcome for the patient and the old traditional practices and practitioners gradually went out of use, often mistakenly perceived as wholly connected with superstition and ignorance, and therefore best forgotten.

Conclusion

From its inception in the later eighteenth century, the veterinary profession in Ireland, and beyond, was marked by both continuity and change. While the profession made great strides during the nineteenth century to improve its effectiveness and status, it was

only slowly accepted by Irish farmers, who continued to use the services of traditional practitioners. The main impediments to the progression of the profession were internal divisions within the evolving profession, a lack of financial support by the state, suspicion of those coming from outside the community, the limitations of the trained veterinary surgeon in treating animals other than the horse, and the actual effectiveness of the methods of the traditional practitioner, who was easily accessible and did not expect monetary payment. On the other hand, certain forces, even if their impact was often slow, eventually brought the profession to a high level of professionalism and acceptance in the community. The veterinary surgeon ultimately achieved a prominent position in Irish agriculture because of the determination of early reformers, the adaptability of vets to the needs of society in more recent decades, an increased awareness by farmers of the benefits of scientific methods, a greater involvement in state public health initiatives, and a conjunction of new scientific advances, in infrastructure and, most importantly, in the development of effective drugs, vaccines, and diagnostic methods.

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