

Duncan of Liverpool: Britain's first Medical Officer

Stephen Halliday

Summary: William Henry Duncan (1805–1863) was born in Liverpool, qualified in Edinburgh, then moved back to Liverpool to work in general practice. He became physician to the Liverpool Infirmary and began to campaign for improvements to the appalling living conditions of his patients. He was appointed Liverpool's Medical Officer of Health on 1 January 1847 – Britain's first.

William Henry Duncan was born in Seel Street, Liverpool, in 1805, of Scottish parents who came originally from Dumfriesshire. His father was a merchant and it was possibly this calling that drew him to the thriving port city of Liverpool¹. William Henry Duncan was appointed Liverpool's (and Britain's) first Medical Officer of Health in 1847; he died in 1863. One writer has described his life as "an unpretentious one; there were no highlights in it and no important or spectacular events"². A closer examination of Duncan's work, and especially of his correspondence and reports in the Liverpool city archives, suggests that this verdict was mistaken. The inhabitants of Liverpool in the nineteenth century might have taken issue with the reference to "no important . . . events", especially those who lived in the poorer parts of the city and owed their lives to him.

Duncan's birthplace in Seel Street bears a blue plaque commemorating the event. It has for many years been a nightclub called the Blue Angel (Figure 1). In the 1960s it was much favoured by groups such as the Beatles, who would meet up there after their concerts, but it is now, more appropriately, a haunt of doctors and nurses from the nearby hospital where Duncan served as physician³.

Britain's second metropolis

In the early nineteenth century Liverpool was one of the fastest-growing cities in Britain. In 1700 it had been little more than a village, with an estimated population of 4240⁴. In 1717 Liverpool built the first wet dock in England and by 1740 the population had grown to about 18,000. Using

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Figure 1. The Blue Angel nightclub, Seel Street, site of Duncan's birthplace. Inset shows the plaque above the entrance. (Photographs by Faye Halliday.)

census records the growth after 1801 can be estimated with some confidence⁵ (Table 1).

By 1811 Liverpool was second only to London among British cities in its number of inhabitants, a position it held until it was surpassed by Glasgow in the 1860s. However, this human tide was not accompanied by any corresponding investment in sewers or other services conducive to public hygiene. As early as 1784, in his *Medical Survey of Liverpool*⁶, William Moss had written that human remains were disinterred and "dragged forth to public view and disclosed to the prying eye of a

Table 1.	century
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Table 1. The growth of Liverpool's population in the nineteenth century

Year	Population
1801	82,000
1811	104,000
1821	138,000
1831	202,000
1841	286,000
1851	376,000
1861	444,000

wanton curiosity". The first population census, in 1801, commented that "a large proportion of the population were living in cellars and typhus fever and other diseases carry off many each year in the lower, crowded parts of the town"⁷.

The "courts"

An early advocate of reform was Dr James Currie, also from Dumfries⁸, who, in 1786, aged 30, had been appointed physician to the Liverpool Infirmary. According to James Newlands, Liverpool's borough engineer, Currie observed in 1804 that:

in the new streets on the south side of the town, a pernicious practice has been introduced of building houses to be let to labourers in small confined courts, which have a communication with the street by a narrow aperture, but no passage for air through them.⁹

This is the first recorded reference to the notorious "courts" (Figure 2), against which Duncan later battled with some success. In 1802 Currie had supported an Improvements Bill to combat the worst of the housing problems but, in the words of James Newlands, the Bill was opposed by "the old cry of rights of property" so, instead of preventing diseases from arising, "a fever hospital was built to mitigate the scourge and a new cemetery was bought to hide its victims"¹⁰.



Figure 2. Above: Liverpool court with narrow covered entrance. Right: Small court with high buildings at end. (Reproduced with the permission of Liverpool city archives.)

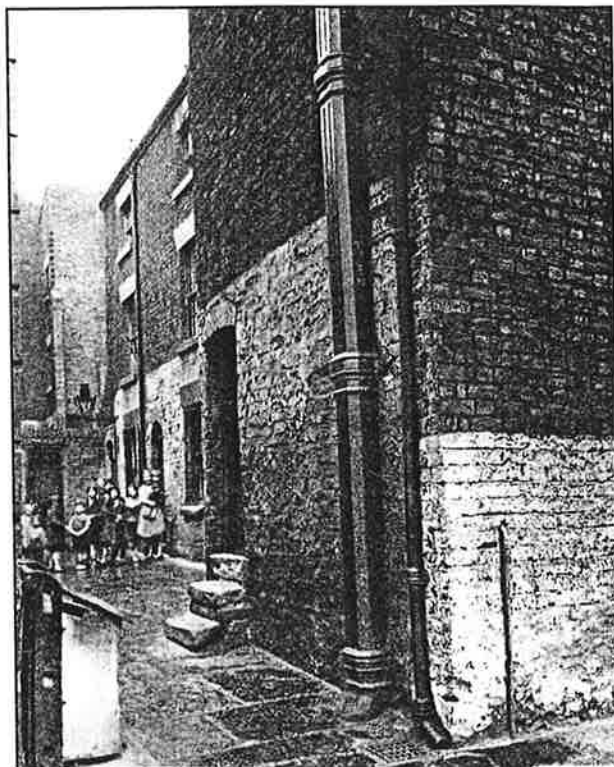
Liverpool's proximity to the sea should have made it fairly easy to dispose of its waste, as the distinguished engineer John Rennie observed in 1816. His report, *The Sewers or Soughs of Liverpool*¹¹, recorded that:

no town in the British dominions is better situated than the town of Liverpool for a complete system of sewers but there are few sewers in the town, and these not only very deficient in capacity, but ill calculated to perform the purposes for which they are designed.

After much procrastination a commission of sewers was established in 1822 and over the next 20 years it succeeded in building just over 30 miles of sewers. However, these were designed for surface water drainage. Until 1846 houses were not allowed to connect their drains or cesspools to these street sewers – instead nightsoilmen emptied them by hand, in return for payment, and disposed of the contents to farmers as fertilizer¹².

A Liverpool physician

William Henry Duncan qualified as a doctor in Edinburgh in 1829. Edinburgh University was at this time the only institution with a chair of medical jurisprudence (health management), a fact which may have influenced Duncan's later career. Upon qualifying, Duncan moved back to Liverpool, where he entered general practice in the heart of the medical quarter, Rodney Street. His father, George Duncan, had married Dr James Currie's sister, Christian, so he was Currie's nephew¹³. The family tree is shown in Figure 3.



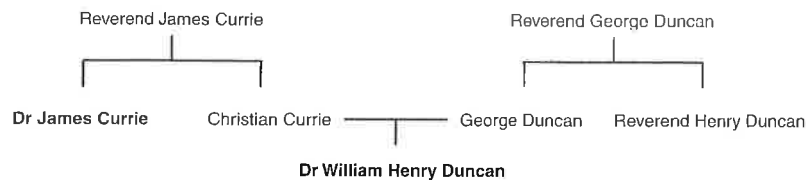


Figure 3. Dr W H Duncan's family tree, showing the relationship with Dr James Currie. (Constructed from details in ref. 13.)

Duncan became physician to the Liverpool Infirmary and began to campaign for measures which would improve the appalling living conditions of his patients, arguing particularly that houses should not be built without privies¹⁴. On 31 August 1840 he delivered a *Report on the Sanitary State of the Labouring Classes in Liverpool* to Edwin Chadwick's Poor Law Commission, whose enquiry into the matter eventually resulted in Chadwick's seminal 1842 *Report on the Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population of Great Britain*¹⁵. In the same year the Liverpool Building Act was passed, which outlawed the future building of "narrow courts" of the kind earlier criticized by Dr Currie, although those already built remained a hazard.

In 1843 Duncan delivered two lectures to the Liverpool Literary and Philosophical Society entitled "On the physical causes of the high rate of mortality in Liverpool"¹⁶. He used figures compiled by the statistician William Farr for the recently appointed Office of the Registrar-General (1838)¹⁷ to demonstrate that the average age of death in the rural communities of Rutland and Wiltshire was 36.5 years, while in Liverpool it was 19.5. Duncan observed: that less than half the street mileage of Liverpool had any sewers at all; that it was common practice to dispose of the contents of privies by spreading them over the courts; and that 20% of the working population lived in cellars, which were often deep in sewage¹⁸.

At this time the "miasmatic" theory of disease propagation was predominant; this maintained that epidemics like typhoid and cholera were caused by foul air rather than polluted water, a view to which Duncan subscribed. He informed his audience that:

By the mere action of the lungs of the inhabitants of Liverpool, for instance, a stratum of air sufficient to cover the entire surface of the town, to a depth of three feet, is daily rendered unfit for the purposes of respiration.¹⁹

His aetiological analysis may have been mistaken but he was absolutely right in identifying poor sanitary conditions as the underlying cause²⁰. Duncan was assisted in his campaigning by a builder called Samuel Holme, who told the Royal Commission on the State of Large Towns and Populous Districts that there were courts that he could not bear to enter because of their foul smell²¹. Holme joined Duncan and others in forming a

Liverpool branch of the Health of Towns Association on 23 April 1845²². Duncan was especially concerned about the conditions of the large number of people living in cellars. In a further lecture to the Liverpool Literary and Philosophical Society, in 1844, Duncan gave a horrifying account of the unfortunate families living in windowless cellars, 10 feet square, 6 feet high, with no water, sanitation or fresh air.

The first Medical Officer

As a result of tireless campaigning by Duncan, Holme and others, in 1846 the Liverpool Town Council promoted its own Act for the Improvement of the Sewerage and Drainage of the Borough of Liverpool and for making further Provisions for the Sanatory (*sic*) Regulation of the said Borough. It passed into law in 1847. It laid down some minimum standards for the construction of dwellings, prohibited the building of houses without drains or privies, and outlawed the practice of living in cellars. It also used the title "Medical Officer of Health" for the first time in an Act of Parliament and specified that:

it shall be lawful for the said Council to appoint, subject to the approval of one of Her Majesty's Principal Secretaries of State, a legally qualified Medical Practitioner of Skill and Experience to inspect and report periodically on the sanatory [*sic*] condition of the said Borough, to ascertain the existence of Diseases, more especially Epidemics increasing the Rates of Mortality.

The Act also lifted the restriction on connecting house drains to public sewers.

Duncan was appointed to the post on 1 January 1847. His appointment was initially on a part-time basis, at a salary of £300 a year. *Punch* disapproved of the appointment, regarding it as unnecessary and further arguing that Duncan's new responsibilities would conflict with the interests of his private clients, notably butchers and fellmongers, whose offal contributed much to the pollution of the community²³. A year later, in January 1848, his position was made full time, at an annual salary of £750. By comparison the town clerk was paid £2000 and the Inspector of Nuisances £170. The latter, the appropriately named Thomas Fresh, worked closely with Duncan in identifying insanitary dwellings so that Duncan could take court action to have them cleansed.

In May 1847 James Newlands was appointed borough engineer at a salary of £700 and was instructed to prepare a comprehensive sewerage plan for the town²⁴. An examination of the records in Liverpool city archives leaves an impression of the overwhelming volume of work which Duncan was called upon to do. The first volume of his letter books, covering the years 1849 to 1853, alone comprises 569 pages of handwritten letters on all aspects of Liverpool's health problems²⁵. A contemporary picture of Dr Duncan is reproduced in Figure 4.

In Duncan's first year in office over 21,000 people died in Liverpool as he embarked upon his programme of cellar clearances. He had described the scale of the problem in his 1843 lectures to the Literary and Philosophical Society²⁶. He quoted statistics from the Registrar-General which showed that "Liverpool is the most unhealthy town in England". In London in 1841 one inhabitant in 37 had died; in Liverpool it was almost one in 29. An inspection of 1982 "courts" had revealed 10,692 separate houses containing 55,534 people, about a fifth of the population. A further 629 courts were closed at both ends, access to them being via the houses. Ironically, these particularly unhealthy dwellings were exempt from the provisions of the 1842 Liverpool Building Act. In total, 6294 cellars provided homes for 20,168 people. Twenty miles of working-class streets were served by only four

miles of sewers. As a result, a well of sewage "four feet deep, filled with this stinking fluid, was found in one cellar under the bed where the family slept". He compared the conditions with those of the Black Hole of Calcutta, not to the disadvantage of the latter.

The Irish problem

Duncan's reports demonstrate that, for many years, Irish families had been arriving in Liverpool seeking food, shelter and work, and filling the cellars that Duncan was trying to empty. This problem was greatly exacerbated by the renewed wave of Irish immigration which had occurred as a result of the Irish potato famine, which had begun in 1845²⁷. In one cellar 40 people were found and it was commonplace to find 50 or 60 people sharing a four-room dwelling.

Duncan urged upon the councillors measures which would stem the flow of Irish immigrants. In his 1844 lecture to the Literary and Philosophical Society, Duncan had described how the worst living conditions were endured by the Irish, and added:

It may be said that this is merely the result of their greater poverty which compels them to select the most unhealthy (because the cheapest) localities as their places of residence.²⁸

In March 1847 he wrote to the Liverpool Health Committee, urging them that "some measure to put a stop to the immigration, if at all practicable, should be immediately adopted"²⁹. In June he reminded the Committee that:

Since Christmas the arrivals have amounted to nearly 300,000 and of these the number I believe now located among us is very moderately estimated at from sixty thousand to eighty thousand occupying every nook and corner of the already overcrowded lodging-houses and forcing their way into the cellars (about three thousand in number) which had been closed under the provisions of the Health [i.e. Liverpool Building] Act, 1842.³⁰

The councillors, alarmed by Duncan's memorandum, resolved that:

A Deputation to proceed forthwith to London to represent to the Government the state of the town as detailed in Dr Duncan's letter, to urge on them the necessity of passing the Irish Poor Removal Bill.

The immediate reaction of the government to this proposal is not recorded but, given the government's preoccupation with the mounting toll of deaths from starvation in Ireland, it is not surprising that no such Bill was passed. The year 1848 was the one that Duncan, in his annual report, characterized as the year of "IRISH FEVER" but the following year was worse and was called by Duncan in his report "*The Year of Epidemic Cholera*". In December 1848 an Irish family arriving by boat from Dumfries had brought with them cholera, which spread rapidly through Liverpool's courts and contributed 4173 deaths to the mortality of 17,047 in the dreadful year of 1849³¹. These cholera



Figure 4. Portrait of Dr W H Duncan. (Reproduced with the permission of Cains Brewery, Liverpool.)

deaths amounted to 10% of the national total. London, with a population more than 10 times that of Liverpool, suffered less than three times as many deaths per capita³².

Twenty medical practitioners assisted Duncan in making daily house visits to cholera districts, and directing the cleansing and whitewashing of over 3000 houses. This process was outlined by Duncan in his report to the Health Committee and was applauded by a professor of hygiene a century later in unambiguous terms: "this statement of fundamental principles could hardly be bettered"³³.

Cellars and sewers

Nevertheless, a note of despair is clearly heard in Duncan's report for 1849. He requests a clerk to help him with his office duties³⁴ so that he can concentrate on visiting the stricken area: "*in so far as it is practicable to do so* [Duncan's italics] I should visit every house in the worst-conditioned districts". The Inspector of Nuisances had referred to Duncan 187 cases of dwellings so insanitary that they were hazardous to health, of which five had



Figure 5. Duncan Building, Faculty of Medicine, University of Liverpool, a permanent and fitting memorial to Dr W H Duncan. (Photograph by Faye Halliday.)



Figure 6. The Doctor Duncan, St John's Lane, Liverpool, one of Liverpool's most popular city centre pubs. (Photograph by Faye Halliday.)

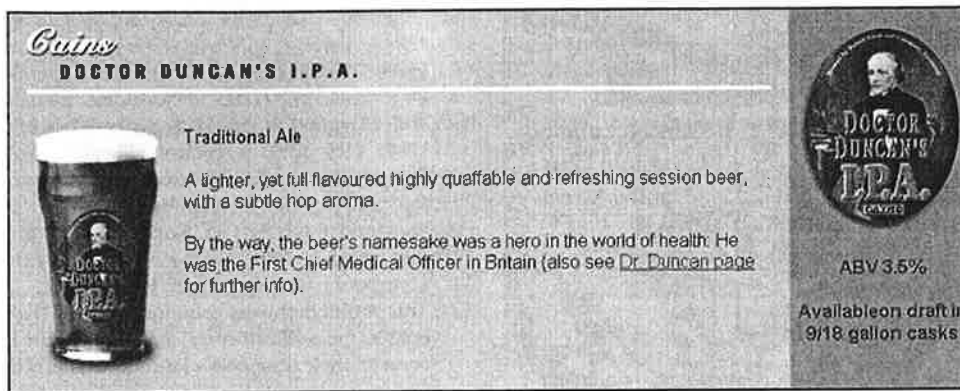
had to be taken in front of magistrates before the owners could be persuaded to take corrective action.

In 1851 Duncan renewed his attack on the cellar dwellings, corresponding with the redoubtable campaigner Edwin Chadwick³⁵ on the subject and in his report for that year he described the lengths to which some desperate residents would go in order to remain in their cellars:

To bring a cellar within the provisions of the [1842 Liverpool Building] Act the Magistrates require proof of its being occupied during the night and, in order to withhold this proof, the parties are in the habit of removing or concealing in the daytime the beds.³⁶

Despite these difficulties, by 1851 Duncan had made such good use of the 1846 Act that 10,000 cellars had been cleared of their inhabitants³⁷. At the same time Newlands (the borough engineer) was building sewers at an unprecedented rate and connecting them to the dwellings. Between 1847 and 1858 Newlands built 146 miles of sewers, compared with the 30 miles built in 20 years in the 1820s and 1830s for surface water drainage (see above).

Other necessary improvements accompanied these measures. In 1848 the borough council bought out two private companies that brought water from Bootle and Toxteth Park and in 1857 these were augmented by an additional supply from Rivington, helping to ensure a readier supply for cooking and washing, and for flushing sewers. In 1892, three decades after Duncan's death, Liverpool gained the water supply it needed



Cains
DOCTOR DUNCAN'S I.P.A.

Traditional Ale

A lighter, yet full flavoured highly quaffable and refreshing session beer, with a subtle hop aroma.

By the way, the beer's namesake was a hero in the world of health: He was the First Chief Medical Officer in Britain (also see [Dr. Duncan page](#) for further info).

ABV 3.5%

Available on draft in 9/16 gallon casks

Figure 7. Doctor Duncan's IPA, produced in the doctor's memory by Cains Brewery, Liverpool. From the Website www.cainsbeer.com/beers/doctorduncansipa.html, at which there are links to pages for Doctor Duncan's Elixir as well as further information on Dr Duncan. (Reproduced with the permission of Cains Brewery.)

when water was brought from lake Vyrnwy in Wales.

Duncan, like most of his contemporaries, continued to believe that cholera was caused exclusively by a polluted atmosphere. In November 1853, as a new epidemic approached, he wrote:

I believe the disease to be propagated, as a rule, by some atmospheric influence whose nature is as yet undetermined and which requires some predisposing cause as filth, moisture or overcrowding to call it into action.³⁸

Nevertheless, Duncan's cellar clearances, house inspections and whitewashing had the desired effect. When cholera returned in 1854 it was far less virulent than in the 1848–9 epidemic³⁹. In that same year, 1854, a Sanitary Amendment Act gave the borough council stronger powers to charge for constructing house drains in proportion to the houses' linear footage and over the next 12 years 3932 orders were made, affecting 7512 houses and 48,828 inhabitants, mostly from the poorer classes⁴⁰.

As the situation improved in Liverpool, Duncan became a fierce defender of the community. His letter books include correspondence complaining that Liverpool's record in public health was subjected to unfair comparisons with communities like Ely, which had only "One principal street . . . 6176 inhabitants, most of whom are engaged in agricultural pursuits". This foolishness he attributed to "an understanding among the London men to snub Liverpool whenever opportunity offers"⁴¹.

"Untiring zeal and intelligence"

Duncan died at Elgin, in his parents' native Scotland, on 23 May 1863, "worn down by the uneven contest" of struggling with Liverpool's health problems. He was 57 years old. His obituary in the *Liverpool Daily Post* on 26 May referred to Duncan's "untiring zeal and intelligence" and concluded that the health of Liverpool had so improved as a result of his exertions that "there is

therefore no longer any occasion for a medical officer at a salary of £700 a year". The newspaper, ever zealous for the interests of the ratepayers, recommended that the post once again become part-time. Fortunately, the recommendation which followed the compliment was ignored. A year after Duncan's appointment, the City of London appointed its first medical officer, (later Sir) John Simon. Duncan established a pattern which would not be broken.

Not forgotten

In the year 2001, 154 years after Duncan's appointment, the *Liverpool Echo* announced that its forebear, the *Liverpool Daily Post*, was to have its wish granted⁴³. If, as seems likely, proposals to reorganize health services in Merseyside are adopted, the city Medical Officer's post will be abolished and a larger health authority will cover Merseyside and Cheshire, with local services in Liverpool itself provided by three primary care trusts. Duncan's successor, Dr Ruth Hussey, stated that she thought the proposals would bring advantages for Merseyside but added that she was "disappointed her historic post is being abolished".

Duncan's memory will, nonetheless, be perpetuated by some institutions of widely varying character. In 1997 the leading figures in public health in Liverpool set up the Duncan Society. Its purpose is that of "stimulating debate, discussion and understanding on issues and policies which affect people's health and well-being", with particular reference to the people of Merseyside and Cheshire⁴⁴. An annual Duncan memorial lecture is given in the Duncan Building of the University of Liverpool (Figure 5). The Duncan Building is a part of the University Faculty of Medicine and is adjacent to the Royal Liverpool University Hospital, formerly the Liverpool Infirmary, which Duncan served as physician.



Figure 8. Map of Liverpool showing sites associated with Dr Duncan. (Reproduced with the permission of the Ordnance Survey and Streetmap.)

Other, less conventional tributes are no doubt more widely appreciated by the people of Liverpool. The Doctor Duncan is one of the city centre's most popular public houses (Figure 6). Formerly situated opposite Duncan's birthplace in Seel Street it is now in St John's Lane. It serves a special Dr Duncan's India pale ale (Figure 7) and a seasonal bottled beer called Dr Duncan's Elixir, both produced by a local brewery, Cains. With such memorials W H Duncan's reputation is sure to survive in the city he served so tirelessly (Figure 8).

Acknowledgements: I am indebted to Liverpool City Records Office for access to the city archives and for permission to reproduce pictures of the Liverpool "courts"; to my daughter, Faye Halliday, a nurse at the hospital which Dr Duncan served, for taking photographs of places in the city associated with him; to my cousin Robin Currie, a member of the Duncan Society, for information about the Society's activities; to Robin's daughter, Dr Sian Currie, who, with Faye, provided first-hand information about the Blue Angel Club; and to my lifelong friend James Wareing, a Liverpoolian by birth and residence, for identifying sites in Liverpool associated with Dr Duncan.

References and notes

- 1 The account of Duncan's early life is drawn from Frazer WM. *Duncan of Liverpool: Being an Account of the Work of Dr W. H. Duncan, Medical Officer of Liverpool, 1847-63*. London: Hamish Hamilton, 1947. See also note 33, below, on Frazer.
- 2 Ibid.: p. 5.
- 3 The author's authority for this observation is derived from his daughter, a nurse, and his cousin, a doctor at the hospital, who, with their colleagues, are among its regular clientele.
- 4 These figures are taken from "Liverpool past and present in relation to sanitary operations", a paper read to the Public Health Section of the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science by James Newlands, Liverpool borough engineer, in October 1858; Liverpool city archives, ref. H.628.n.NEW.
- 5 Mitchell BR, Deane P. *Abstract of British Historical Statistics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962: p. 24.
- 6 Moss W. *A Familiar Medical Survey of Liverpool*. Liverpool, 1784.
- 7 Frazer WM (op. cit. ref. 1): p. 5.
- 8 Dr James Currie (1756-1805) studied medicine at Edinburgh and Glasgow; practised as a physician in Liverpool from 1780; FRS 1792; a pioneer in the use of the clinical thermometer and in the treatment of fevers; also active in the campaign for the abolition of slavery.
- 9 Newlands J (op. cit. ref. 4): p. 9.
- 10 Ibid.: p. 11.
- 11 Liverpool city archives, ref. Hq.050 KAL.
- 12 This prohibition was common. Only in 1847 did legislation enable the authorities to compel London householders to connect their cesspools, closets and drains to public sewers. For an account of these developments, see Halliday S. *The Great Stink of London*. Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1999: ch. 2.
- 13 For an account of this relationship by Sir Christopher Booth, see (at p. 239) Booth C. *Medical radicals in the age of the Enlightenment*. *Journal of Medical Biography* 2000;8: 228-40.
- 14 White BD. *A History of the Corporation of Liverpool 1835-1914*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1951: pp. 35 et seq. Republished by Edinburgh University Press in 1965.
- 15 Duncan WH. "On the physical causes of the high rate of mortality in Liverpool"; Liverpool city archives, ref. H.614.DUN.
- 16 Halliday S. William Farr: campaigning statistician. *Journal of Medical Biography* 2000;8:220-7.
- 17 Duncan used his lectures as the basis for information he gave to the Royal Commission on the State of Large Towns and Populous Districts; see *Parliamentary Papers*, 1844, volume 17, for his testimony.
- 18 Ibid.: p. 50.
- 19 For a discussion of the persistence of the miasmatic theory and its slow abandonment, see Booth C (op. cit. ref. 13).
- 20 Holme's evidence is reported in *Parliamentary Papers* (op. cit. ref. 18): pp. 185 et seq.
- 21 White BD (op. cit. ref. 14): pp. 40 et seq.
- 22 *Punch* 1847;12:44.
- 23 Newlands' appointment and role are described by White BD (op. cit. ref. 14): pp. 40 et seq.
- 24 Liverpool city archives, ref. 352 HEA 1/1.
- 25 Duncan WH (op. cit. ref. 16): information cited is from pp. 5-21.
- 26 Liverpool city archives, *Report to the Health Committee of the Borough of Liverpool on the Health of the Town, 1847-50*, published 1851; the information quoted is from pp. 5-61.
- 27 Duncan WH (op. cit. ref. 16): pp. 56-7.
- 28 Liverpool city archives, ref. Min/Hea II 1/1, minutes of 13 March 1847, p. 100.
- 29 Ibid.: minutes of 17 June 1847, p. 228.
- 30 The figures of mortality are taken from the *Seventeenth Annual Report of the Registrar-General for the Year 1854*. London, 1856: appendix, table 14, p. 84. Available in the library of the Office for National Statistics, London.
- 31 London in 1851 recorded a population of 2,362,000 and in the 1848-9 epidemic suffered 14,137 deaths. The figures for Liverpool were 222,954 population and 5245 deaths.
- 32 Frazer WM (op. cit. ref. 1). WM Frazer (1888-1958) was Professor of Hygiene, and subsequently of Public Health, at the University of Liverpool (1933-53), and the city's Medical Officer (1931-53) and thus a successor to Duncan.
- 33 See notes 22 and 25 (above) concerning the volume of Duncan's correspondence.
- 34 Liverpool city archives, 352 HEA 1/1, letter books, p. 481, contains the letter to Chadwick.
- 35 Liverpool city archives, *Report to the Health Committee of the Borough of Liverpool on the Health of the Town, 1851*, p. 100.

- 37 The process of cellar clearance and house cleansing which Duncan pursued is recounted by Midwinter E. *Old Liverpool*. Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1971: pp.80 *et seq.*
- 38 Liverpool city archives, ref. 352 HEA 1/1, letter to Dr Head, dated 23 November 1853.
- 39 The report for 1854 is missing from the Liverpool city archives, but the *Seventeenth Annual Report of the Registrar-General for the Year 1854* (op. cit. ref. 31) records cholera deaths in Liverpool during the 1849 epidemic as 4173 compared with 1084 for 1854; the population in the intervening five years had, of course, increased.
- 40 *Annual Report of the Medical Officer of Health*, 1866, pp. 139–43, Liverpool city archives; Dr W S Trench (1810–1877) was Duncan's successor as Medical Officer (1863–1877).
- 41 Frazer WM (op. cit. ref. 1): pp. 101–2.
- 42 *Ibid.*: p. 98.
- 43 *Liverpool Echo*, 10 September 2001: 9.
- 44 Duncan Society literature, August 2001. The Society has its own Website at www.duncansociety.org.uk.

MEDICAL STATUES



Giovanni da Vigo (1450–1525)

In Rapallo, outside a hospital near the railway station is a statue of Giovanni da Vigo (1450–1525), surgeon to Pope Julius II. It stands on a grassy slope behind a floral clock.

Born in Rapallo, da Vigo studied in Saluzzo, and practised in Genoa and Savona before moving to Rome. He wrote many medical texts and was considered an expert in managing venereal disease. His chief work, *Practica copiosa in arte chirurgica*, passed through more than 40 editions and was translated into French, Italian, Spanish, German and English.

His statue, which originally stood over a drinking fountain, was first unveiled on 1 July 1846 in the Piazza Venezia, Rapallo. In 1925, the four hundredth anniversary of his death, the Italian Society for the History of Medicine held a commemorative meeting. To coincide with this the statue, now moved to the seafront, was unveiled again. At this site it was frequently decorated with such additions as chamber pots, bathing caps, umbrella frames and bicycle tyres. In 1946 it was moved to its present site, above road level and surrounded by heavy vegetation.

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