Wenzhou Central Hospital

Hospital History in Qing Dynasty and Republican China (1897-1950)

You Rongkai

Founded in 1897 (23rd year after the reign of Emperor Guangxu in Qing Dynasty), Wenzhou Central Hospital is the earliest hospital in southern Zhejiang as well as a western medicine hospital of the 3rd longest history in Zhejiang. It was originally the Dingley Hospital by United Methodist Free Church (hereinafter referred as UMFC), a branch of British Christianity, and then the Blyth Hospital. In the autumn of 1949, T. A. Stedeford, the hospital president, resigned and returned to Britain after the transfer of government in Wenzhou, and hence the local Chinese physicians took over the hospital. In 1951, Wenzhou Municipal Government claimed the hospital as the public institution for health care services.

1. Early hospital (AD1881-1897)

In 1881, William Edward Soothill (1861-1935) was sent to Wenzhou, China to go on a mission under instruction of UMFC, the Wesleyans. Before coming to China, Soothill received short-term training on medical know-how and prepared quinine, aspirin, iodine and other common medicine against cold, malaria, trauma and other common diseases.

Upon arrival in Wenzhou, Soothill met great difficulty in carrying out missionary work due to language barrier and people’s superstition towards Bodhisattva in Wenzhou. At that time, the public got nowhere for medical advice when diseases stroke them; Even the rich had nothing but a few herb medicines to turn to. It suddenly dawned on him that why not drawing people into believing in Christianity by claiming western medicine’s effect as the god’s power.

With a few regular drugs and minor medical knowledge, Soothill began seeing patients with malaria, dysentery, enteritis, typhia, influenza and other common diseases. Despite insufficient medical resources, Soothill brought back patients’ lives who suffered critical illnesses and had been renounced by traditional Chinese medicine
physicians. Upon patients' intense requests, Soothill also cured diseases by performing small surgeries including teeth extraction, trichiasis and entropion fixation, incision and drainage of abscess and others. Words on Soothill’s miracle-making capacity swept across Wenzhou.

William Edward Soothill，1861～1935

Missionizing by medicine service delivery succeeded and turned many recovered patients into Christians who lavished praise on Christianity. Soothill helped a Xiucai, who passed the imperial examination at the county level, out of opium addiction. Overwhelmed by gratitude toward William, the Xiucai volunteered to become a Christian and devoted his life to preaching Christian doctrines.

Delighted at the good of healthcare service provision on missionary work, Soothill applied to the headquarters for expanding the clinic and got approved. In 1891,
missionary James W. Heywood was sent to Wenzhou to help with the clinic.

Sample as Soothill, Heywood was an “instant” physician without medicine education background. After Heywood’s arrival, they worked together to move the clinic inside the West City Church.

Behind the West City Church, the new clinic replaced a former smoking addiction treatment centre, which was connected to the yards of the West City Church. There were 8 tile-roofed rooms made of mud and wood, lining in a south-facing row with cement flooring and without ceiling. The middle house was used as a kitchen for physicians and patients with a Chinese cooking range in it. The two southern rooms were merged into one, serving as consultation room and dispensary with a row of medicine cabins, a sink, consultation desk, chairs for patients and drug storage equipment. The other five northern rooms were wards for patients of critical diseases or coming from far away. This small hospital was the earliest form of Dingley Hospital, Blyth Hospital and Wenzhou Central Hospital in sequence.
James W. Heywood (Third from right: shot in July of 1915)

Heywood brought with him quite a few drugs. “My small drug containers were dwarfed by the rows of bottles just like the Thumb Tom beside Russian giant. I was more than delighted to transfer my work to him. However, much benefit others got, however much pressure I have suffered…He did a great job”, said Soothill.

Healthcare level in Wenzhou was rather low and amateur physicians were only able to deal with ailments. Satisfactory as the environment was in sunny days, when rain pooled, it would turn to rampant sewage in rivers and deadly smelly air due to poor urban infrastructure. People in Wenzhou had no health literacy and would spat anywhere so that pulmonary, cholera, pestis, typhia, smallpox spot raged every year. Medical resources scarcity led to low recovery rate and high mortality rate. Li Huaqing and Caoya Zhijun, the early foreign missionary ahead of Soothill, died of pneumonia in Wenzhou without proper treatment.

West City Clinic by Heywood was designed to convert the public, so patients shall listen to priest’s preaching before seeing doctor. Priest would inform the patients that only the god has the capacity to save their bodies and souls. The god is busy day and night that he must send physicians to help with the public. The powerful god could cure people without medicine. Physicians, however, possess no same power as the god, but
they can achieve the same with medicine.

Western medicine would receive instant effect. “Though having no medical qualification, he worked out numerous diseases”, said Soothill. When the busy season came, L. H. Lowry, a British doctor working at the customs, would come to help.

In 1893, when reporting to the headquarters, Heywood mentioned that, “In the past 12 months, I received 5624 cases, among which there were 3736 new cases, 1888 further consultants. The visits of new outpatients in a single day hit 106.”

There was a patient suffering from leprosy crawling to Soothill from Fangshan Town, Qingtian for help. After Heywood’s treatment, he could walk with walking stick. This invoked Soothill’s sympathy. His wife said, “We wouldn’t have built a hospital if we hadn’t met him (the patient of leprosy).”

Around the Middle Autumn Festival in 1893, Soothill returned to Britain to report on his work for the first time after 11 years in Wenzhou. By then, the western medicine clinic in West City Church had been in service for several years and it was time to expand the clinic for the thousands of patients. Soothill invited the headquarters to send more expert doctors to Wenzhou and to establish a church hospital, which would facilitate better missionary work since people in Wenzhou were in urgent need of physicians and hospitals. After years’ exploration, foreign church had reached consensus that healthcare delivery did benefit missionary work. So, church hospitals were gradually founded across China.

Given the funding inefficiency, headquarters couldn’t make it to found church hospitals and dispatched instead Alfred Hogg, a western medicine physician, to Wenzhou. Alfred Hogg, also known as Huo Houfu in Chinese, graduated from University of Aberdeen. After graduation, he was sent to get trained on eye and throat treatment in St. Pancras Medical Mission in London and served as clinical assistant in Royal Eye Hospital.

Being elected, 25-year-old Alfred Hogg set off from London in October of 1893. After three-month suffering on sea, he arrived in Wenzhou on January 20 of 1894. He is the first medical missionary in Wenzhou and the second western medicine physician with medicine education background with Arthur William Douthwaite (1848-1899).
from China Inland Mission being the first.

February 6\textsuperscript{th} of 1894 was the second day of the week and the first of that year in lunar calendar, on which day Chinese normally do not see doctors. Nevertheless, the clinic was filled with patients since Tuesday and Friday were the days for routine outpatient service.

Normally, patients from the city and surrounding rural areas would wait to see doctors in the early morning. Among the patients, the majority were poor and a few of financial capacity, the latter of whom shall pay certain amount of money as registration fee and then got a bamboo stick with consultation No. on it.

Why to use bamboo stick as certificate for registration? Soothill found that when people in Wenzhou got sick, they used to pray to god and consult fortune with bamboo stick. It could be drawn that people in Wenzhou worship bamboo stick. The saying goes that when in Rome, do as the Romans do. So, bamboo was applied and remained a symbol for western medicine clinic by Soothill, then Dingley Hospital and Blyth Hospital.

![Pictures of Four Missionary Families of UMFC](image)

(Pictures of Four Missionary Families of UMFC)

(Arthur H. Sharman, Alfred Hogg, William Edward Soothill, W. R. Stobie, from
Every day, Hogg would begin with Wenzhou dialect study, then arrive at the clinic around 1:00 pm to prepare medicine as well as sterilized medical equipment and start seeing patients at 2:00 pm.

Hogg, Heywood and Lowry offered consultation service in the clinic. Patients entered in turns and seated themselves in front of physicians. A young literate Christian, who was the translator and apprentice, would sit beside them recording patients’ name and address. When consultation began, physicians would identify the symptoms from patients’ vague and discrete description, conduct physical examination together with chemical examination on urine, faeces and blood, and finally detail the patients on the method of and tips for medication. Daily outpatient visits remained around 80 to 100 per day.

Patients of critical illnesses, who required intense observation, shall be hospitalized, while surgery was arranged by appointment, which would be performed in the clinic or at physicians’ home when outpatient service was not arranged.

From 1893 to 1898, Hogg received over 30,000 patients and gained respect for being medically skilled and personally amiable. When running into him in the street, people in Wenzhou would address him as master, an honourable title for teachers and physicians, rather than “Fanren”, an address showing disrespect.

Heywood, the priest, referred to a story describing the locals’ esteem towards Hogg: Walking in the street, passers-by often asked the medical equipment carrier about Hogg’s medical specialty and he would exclaim with pride that Mr. Hogg was able to cure whatever disease it was.

Mr. Hogg recorded medical conditions of people in Wenzhou 100 years ago:

“Patients were unable to clarify their illnesses with different languages. Strange ideas from patients also added to the difficulty in diseases identification. For example, rheumatism was described as “disease of wind”, “disease of air” or “disease by wind and air”. A patient explained that part of his stomach had got cold, which was a result
of indigestion rather than the presumed fall from staircases 7 years ago. Another patient asserted that he required quinine to recover though he couldn’t tell what was going wrong with him.

People in Wenzhou believed that quinine was a medicine for all, which was right in a way given the rampant malaria. They also believed that western medicine would cure any diseases. So, one would ask for some for cataract or for a relative living faraway regardless of specific symptoms.

Usually, they were against surgery out of suspect rather than being afraid of pain. They were easily caught in panic toward surgery prospect.

It is more annoying that patients usually ignored advice on medication and were impatient with continuous treatment. For example, when we instructed a patient with chronic disease to strictly follow doctor’s advice on medication, he replied we were asking too much. He may conclude that the medicine was inappropriate after taking 7-day pills in one day. A patient, who was at the final stage of chronic disease, might think medication did not work after taking pills for 3 days.

I have a working assistant and young “teacher”, he is receiving training as medical students and dispensing medicines under my supervision. Being smart, he was turned into a Christian two years ago and has received baptism. My servant was converted to Christianity at the age of 75 and is watching the door and looking after patients together with his young boy.”

Traditional Chinese medicine has spanned over thousands of years, which made it hard for Chinese to accept modern medicine. Western medicine was thought to be neither fish nor fowl or even something evil. Physicians from abroad not only provided healthcare services but also helped to enlighten Chinese on modern medical technology and accept modern medicine and treatment mode.

Soothill’s daughter recorded a story by then: When auscultating the chest, the physicians ask the patients to expirate. Patients were confused at the instruction that some snored, some made nasal voice and some even stopped breathe. It was said that a woman blew air toward physician’s neck and collar upon the advice on expiration; Getting complained, she simply sent all the air to physician’s face.
Increasing patients made the clinic more crowded and less sanitary, which demanded a new hospital to meet the growing demand. Soothill then wrote again to UMFC pleading for funding church hospital.

2. **Dingley Hospital (1897-1905)**

An annual UMFC report in 1895 revealed the planned construction of hospital in Wenzhou:

“Healthcare service delivery by Hogg has become the main part of missionary work. It’s time to build a proper hospital. 100-150 pounds is expected to finance the hospital construction and the hospital will be named after donator.”

Introduced by A. J. Walkden, UMFC missionary committee for foreign affairs, and Frederick Galpin, who was familiar with Wenzhou church, John Dingley from Great Yarmouth came forward and donated 200 pounds.

The remittance from John Dingley soon arrived in Wenzhou, with which Soothill bought the property and built a new hospital on No. 10 Pillow Lane, Mochi Street, the same address of present Wenzhou Mochi Primary School. Mr. Bardsley, Hogg’s father in law from Manchester, also donated for the building of women wards.

With Soothill’s heroic effort, Dingley Hospital, the first brand-new western medicine hospital, was founded and came into service on February 17th, 1897. Hogg was employed as the president in charge of overall affairs.

After operation, Dingley Hospital could take in 12 male patients and 10 female patients, equipped with toilet, kitchen, gatekeeper’s house and other auxiliary rooms. Since outpatient service was the main service provided, there was a large outpatient room and a small chapel also serving as waiting room.
In the library of London University, Mr. Shen Jia found a picture of Dingley Hospital. According to Duanmu Minjing’s theory from Wenzhou University, it is taken by Soothill in 1898. In the picture, the hospital building presents a strong taste of stylish overseas building from either the eaves or roof, which stands as a distinctive and exquisite building till today.

On the door imbedded a cyan marble with “定理医院”, four Chinese characters indicating hospital’s name “Dingley Hospital”. On each side of hospital’s name engraved the date, with “1897 since the birth of Jesus Christ” on the right and “23rd year under Emperor Guangxu’s reign” on the left. First deserted in the architecture waste in Mochi Primary School during the Cultural Revolution Period, it was found by Dr. Ma Minghu, the vice president of the hospital, and then placed beside the pool between the Internal Medicine Building and the Surgery Building. Later, it was relocated in front of the 21-floor wards since then. It remains the only antique of Dingley Hospital and Blyth Hospital.

The four years, when Hogg presided over the hospital, saw his skilfulness, discipline, inclusiveness, amiableness, and preparedness to serve patients whenever he was needed. Hence both management and medical services developed smoothly.
The report of Methodist Mission shows that in 1990 the outpatient visits in Dingley Hospital hit 11000, inpatient visits 256. It is not easy to picture the hardship Hogg and his assistant had endured.

Li Xiaobo and the other medical assistant were chosen from Wenzhou Christians to study medicine and had achieved progress. Hogg was convinced that the two assistants have been qualified to provide medical advice. He also planned a medical class in Wenzhou to cultivate talents for western medicine, which was set aside because of his departure.

When Hogg oversaw the hospital, Dingley Hospital received over 10,000 outpatients and 300 inpatient cases. When cholera, diphtheria, malaria prevailed, the hospital was overwhelmed by patients and had to rent room for use.

Hogg also served as physicians for the customs of Ouhai district for four years, responsible for medical reports in Medical Reports from March of 1895 to September of 1899.

Medical Reports, an English semi-yearly, initiated periodical publishing for western medicine in China. Alexander Jamieson, an official in Shanghai customs, was the first chief editor. It was part of Customs Gazette in the end of Qing Dynasty.
dedicated to recording categories and quantity of diseases found in China customs and analysing it based on the local climate and life habits.

Medical officials not only provided healthcare services to customs officials’ family, but also oversaw investigation into local medical conditions and then reported to Statistical Office of the Inspectorate General of Customs in March and September. There are totally 24 reports on Wenzhou healthcare from March of 1878 to September of 1910.

Medical records of Ouhai customs in Medical Reports were considered as the most comprehensive English literature on diseases in modern Wenzhou. The records vary in length from half a page to dozens of pages, covering geographical environment, climate, precipitation and statistics and illustration of local medical affairs. Medical officials believed that diseases in Wenzhou were closely related to local natural surroundings, living habits and climate change.

Back row: William Edward Soothill (third from left), Wille R. Stobie (first from left), Alfred Hogg (second from right), Arthur H. Sharman (first from right)
Front row: Xia Zhengbang (second from right), Mr. Jin (third from left)
Source: P139 of Find: William Edward Soothill by Shen Jia
Hogg kept track of diseases at that time:

“In the summer of 1895, foreign residents felt stuffy and low in spirit despite moderate temperature. Wells ran dry. People had no way but to fetch dirty water in rivers, which availed disease transmission. Many people died of rampant cholera. In the residence area for foreigners, two went dead. A woman, who had lived in Wenzhou for almost 4 years, was consumed by sunstroke on the boat to Shanghai; A newly born son of a missionary died of diarrhoea and stomach-ache within 20 hours who had seen recovery once from initial indigestion.

In the autumn of 1897, there was a sudden and abnormal change of temperature with a gap reaching 10 Celsius degrees. Facing such weather, children were most vulnerable to dysentery. In September, two people died, one being a 14-month old girl baby. The baby suffered slight diarrhoea for the first two days and was taken to the hospital on the third day. Two hours after refusing to take supper, she was stricken with acute stomach-ache, with temperature rising to 108°F, and dropped dead in the next morning.”

In 1990, Boxer campaign reached its peak and brought nationwide threat to church hospitals and foreign physicians. Soothill’s family had to return to Britain. Despite the difficulty, W. E. Plummer, a Britain physician, was moved by Soothill that he came to Wenzhou to help.

In 1901, W. E. Plummer replaced Hogg as president of Dingley Hospital after his departure and had since then serving patients for 13 years until 1914.

When Plummer assumed office, Dingley Hospital had been of certain scale and gained reputation, which attracted increasing outpatient and inpatient visits. Since there was critical shortage of medical personnel, Plummer was rather busy but delighted.

“Each year, the hospital received 12,000 outpatient visits and 700 inpatients, performing 400 surgeries with half needs anaesthesia. There were another 450 European patient visits. Meanwhile, Plummer gave daily lectures to 10 local students and assistants in 9 months out of a year and went to church or night lecture for 550 times. We won’t allow anyone condemn Plummer as an idler.” said Soothill.

Besides outpatient consultation, Plummer also performed surgery covering breast
cancer, removal of tonsils, caesarean delivery, iridectomy, incision of abscess and so on. The locals had never heard of any recovery by taking out the lesion through opened belly, which made surgery seem like myths or anecdotes.

Zhang Zhenxuan, the teacher of famous poet Xia Chengtao (1900 ~ 1986), happened to be teaching in Rui’an, Wenzhou. In his diary of February 16, 1909 recorded the anecdote of treatment by opening belly:

“Mr. Li came and chatted about the story of four opium takers whom Dr. Plummer was invited to examine. Dr. Plummer said that three of them could abstain from opium with help of drug, while the fourth one had to be dissected due to the harm incurred. With Dr. Plummer’s assurance of safety, the patient agreed to accept the surgery. In the theatre room, ointment was placed on patient’s forehead that he fell into sound sleep immediately. Dr. Plummer then undressed the patient, wet the belly with potion, opened it with knife and took out the organs out to clean. It was found that patient’s lung and liver were stained black and that there was a tumour in the liver. Taking the tumour out, Dr. Plummer put the organs back in place, sewed the belly with thread and then placed plaster on it. When the physician removed the plaster outside the theatre room, the patient was awake. When people asked him whether he had suffered a lot, the patient replied that he had just got a sound sleep feeling no pain at all. Hearing of this story, I got to realize that the marvellous effect of western medicine had matched Hua Tuo’s expertise, the miracle-making ancient doctor in China. The Chinese medicine has no way to compare with western medicine.”

Coming from hearsay, this piece of diary remains basically right but contradiction exist in describing “…took out the organs out to clean. It was found that patient’s lung and liver were stained black…” Zhan Zhenxuan’s presented the common acclamation toward western medicine’s marvelousness by saying that “The Chinese medicine has no way to compare with western medicine”

There was once a Christian believer nearly going blind. After examination, they found that loss of sight was a result of local physician’s inappropriate treatment, which was iritis from common infectious ophthalmitis. Following Soothill’s recommendation, the patient accepted the treatment of Plummer, who made an artificial pupil, and could
see things again.

A young patient in Rui’an, Wenzhou got infected after stepping on a rusty nail. He suffered a lot when seeing a TCM physician. His joint of knee turned into total numbness for the doctor asked him to bend his leg beside bed. To relieve sharp pain, he became addicted to opium. At the critical time, he was advised to see urban doctors. Seeing the black, swollen leg, Plummer offered amputation without other choices. Terrified, the patient would rather die than get amputated. Face with patient’s stubbornness, Plummer tried to cut an opening to release the pressure inside and applied antibiotics to control infection. After a month, the swelling and decaying got away. The patient could return home with a walking stick. In a year, the young man recovered and got rid of the stick. Before getting out of the hospital, he succeeded in getting rid of drug addiction.

Considering the heavy medical burden and lack of medical personnel, Soothill selected graduates from Wenzhou Yiwen College to help with medical service delivery. Within 9 years, number of employees doubled to over 20, while number of outpatients reached over 70,000 and inpatients over 4,000.

With increasing recognition, current medical condition was unable to satisfy the growing demand. Soothill deeply understood that it was time to establish a new hospital to work out the problem of crowdedness.

3. **Blyth Hospital (1906-1949)**

   In 1903, Soothill proposed to the headquarters for building a larger hospital when returning to Britain to look after his wife.

   Due to financial burden of headquarters, Soothill turned to British media for help. In the next day, his perseverance was answered by 70-year-old Harry Blyth, who replied that he was willing to provide 2500 Mexico coins. To show gratitude, Soothill dropped at Mr. Blyth’s. His devotion was again rewarded with 1650 pounds.

   With such fortune, Soothill signed on property purchase contract on behalf of UMFC on February 18, 1905. The new hospital was located at Dajian Lane in downtown area, covering 49,600 square foot or 4609 square meters.

   G. W. Bolshaw, a Britain Christian, offered to design the new hospital for free and
kept the layout and style in line with Guy’s Hospital in London. Being 184 feet in foundation length and 60 in width, the hospital consists of a three-floor main building with ground floor serving as church and waiting room, an east two-flooring wing building as women wards and a similar west one for male inpatient wards. Since there were not so many female patients, the first floor of east wing also served as physicians’ office, dispensary and storage room. Some other supporting rooms are also available.

Overlook of Blyth Hospital (shot by Soothill in 1906)
Gate to Blyth Hospital

“Jesus Church Hospital” on head casing, shot by Soothill on January 30, 1906;

Blyth Hospital declared open on January 30\textsuperscript{th} in 1906. At 10 o’clock, members of UMFC and Inland Mission got together in celebration. Soothill made a report as UMFC rector in Wenzhou.

In the afternoon, many local officials and gentries attended. Plummer briefed the attendees on the construction of hospital while Soothill addressed a speech explaining the hospital was built for providing healthcare services, keeping healthy mental conditions and relieving pain for the suffering.

Former Dingley Hospital was integrated into Blyth Hospital with Plummer as the president of a faculty of 250. Blyth Hospital was qualified as a modern hospital with vast and tidy environment and advanced facilities, which played a leading demonstrative role in southern Zhejiang in late Qing Dynasty. The foundation is no doubt a bliss for people in Wenzhou and 12285 patients came up for help within one year, including 923 inpatients and 321 surgeries.

When Plummer acted as president of Dingley Hospital and the later Blyth Hospital, the hospital was a charity organization and operated with 100 pounds funded by the Church. Nevertheless, when poor patients came for help, the hospital not only supplied medicine but also provided subsidy for dining.

Plummer resorted to measures to gain funds, such as opening a drug store which facilitated the public to purchase drug.

Plummer’s income from the part-time job, physician in Ouhai Customs from 1901-1903, also served as operational expenses for hospital.
Women’s wards in Blyth Hospital

Mrs. Plummer also assisted in praying for female patients. The female patients would then join her in praying not because they were forced but that they had known the good of being a Christian after the sermon. If praying should pace up recovery, none
would refuse to give it a shot. Some patients took medicine after praying each time.

Morning sermon in hospital by Mrs. Plummer
(Source: Find: William Edward Soothill)

According to Mr. Soothill, the hospital was constructed for both physical and mental health. It is worthy of admiration and beyond doubt that missionaries have contributed to medical work in Wenzhou by providing healthcare services, founding hospital and cultivating physicians.

In 1907, Soothill left Wenzhou for Shanxi to take over a position in Shanxi University. Before his departure, Blyth Hospital had been capable of smooth development.

In 1909, Mr. Zheng Shuming sent a letter to Plummer, in which many details of Blyth Hospital were presented:

“There were 1416 outpatients two months ago, 1096 cases this month and 1409 inpatients this year. Many surgeries are performed and two were completed within the past two or three days, an increase of 150 compared to that of last year. So, Dr. Smother has done a great job. He performs surgeries in three afternoons each week and give
lectures in other three days.”

Zheng Shuming, Chinese student of W.E.Plummer

The first western physicians in Wenzhou

From 1917 to 1949, T.A. Stedeford, a Britain physician, took the role of president after Plummer’s return to China out of diseases in 1914.

In 1917, T.A. Stedeford took over presidency in Blyth Hospital. Graduated from University of Edinburg with a doctorate on tropical medicine, Stedeford devoted himself to healthcare in Wenzhou for 32 years, performing all types of surgeries. When plague prevailed, he made rounds of visits day or night and even made the saline on his own. Moreover, he undertook inspection and quarantine in Wenzhou customs and donated the compensation to the hospital.
Inpatient Building in Blyth Hospital

Mr. and Mrs. T.A. Stedeford

There was no department division in Blyth Hospital. Similar to present general practitioners, physicians saw all types of diseases including internal medicine, surgery, gynaecology, paediatrics or other diseases. Full-time physicians saw patients in the mornings and performed surgeries in the afternoons. Stedeford not only viewed patients in person, but also administered all the hospital affairs,
including medical affairs, financial issues, personnel arrangement. He complied with strict management while centring the benefit of patients and the interests of hospital.

Camphor tree with bronze bell

To ensure timely treatment, the hospital adopted triage system. Registration started at 7 a.m. every morning, 30 bronze coins for a consultation No. on a bamboo stick. There were five colours of bamboo sticks, with red for initial visit, green for further consultation, blue for inpatients with critical illness, yellow for Stedeford’s patients with higher consultation fee, and black for the poor who were exempt from
registration fee as well as drug charges.

Having no communication equipment, Stedeford tied a bronze bell on the well-grown old camphor tree in the west of emergency building to inform and gather physicians in emergent cases: one beat calls upon internist to attend the consultation, two for surgeon, three for gynaecology & obstetrics physicians and four for paediatrics physicians while repeated beats call upon physicians from all departments in cases of patients of critical illness.

![Bamboo stick and bronze bell](image)

Hospital put forward regulations on standardized medical records keeping, which shall include present illnesses and change of diseases. A large-size notebook was used as medical note recording medical history, prescription, the former of which was kept in Wenzhou dialect with Roman alphabet. Stedeford not only set an example in complying with the regulation in meticulous medical records keeping and detailed consultation, but also launched routine examination on medical records.
Nurses in Blyth Hospital

The hospital also provided specialized nurses with standardized nursing regulation. At the beginning, there was no full-time nurse and over 30 female and male workers helped with ward nursing. Pan Qingru (1907-1987), one of the assistant nurses, opened a clinic in Dongtou, Wenzhou after 9 years nursing in Blyth Hospital and then served as the first president of People’s Hospital in Dongtou county.

In 1922, a British nurse named Fei Wu came to Blyth hospital. The next year came another two British nurses, namely Xue Meide and Ren Ruolan. Later, the hospital cultivated Yang Meide, Chen Shunhua, Shi Zizhe and other nurses and formed a full-time nursing team.

Stedeford has a keen sense of moral standard and abhors evils as deadly foes. At the sight of a fellow worker taking two nails to fix the door at home, Stedeford commented that they (the two nails) belonged to hospital and that the worker shall buy if in need. Small as it was, Dr. Stedeford proved to be a president of self-discipline and meticulousness. “He is also a man of principle. There was a male physician attempted but failed to rape a 17-year-old girl when conducting exam on her belly. Hearing this, Stedeford burst immediately, “Fuck off, you’re fired” This story happened 60 years ago and was recalled by Liu Xiulan and Li
Xiuzhu, 1945 graduates from Blyth Advanced Nursing College.

From the head to the feet, inside or outside the body, hospital performed all types of surgeries, covering cataract, tonsil removal, breast cancer, gastrointestinal anastomosis, fracture reduction, gynaecological oncology, caesarean section and so on. Blyth Hospital remained the only hospital capable of surgery performing in Wenzhou. With prudence, skill and strict compliance with sterilized operation, Stedeford’s recovery rate remained high that many patients from Lishui, Taizhou would come for help.

According to the stipulations of Chinese church, 1-year vacation would be granted to Britain personnel who have worked in China for 5 years. Every time vacation ends, Stedeford would bring back a batch of medical equipment, like X-ray machine, operation table, cystoscope, esophagoscope, microscope and so on. It helped update the equipment in Blyth Hospital and keep it in line with international level.

With surging reputation, hospital was crowded with patients, which exerted too much burden for foreign physicians. Before Stedeford’s succession, Plummer selected 8 outstanding graduates from Yiwen College to work as apprentices in Blyth Hospital. Under his administration, he also chose several lots of students and young men in Wenzhou to study medicine.

Stedeford was never bored to go on details on medicine and answer students’ inquiries. In class of human anatomy, he detailed each tissue structure, nerve, blood vessel distribution, and body functions with monkeys as the sample until all the students have got the point. Coming to experiments, he was more than meticulous. His devotion was rewarded with a bunch of local physicians as Zheng Qiushi, Chen Meihao, Qi Wenliang, Zhang Mengsan, Zheng Shuming, Wang Zifen, Zhang Xueqin, Zheng Jishi, Pan Guanzhou, Zhang Dehui, Ni Zhiping, He Qimei and so on, who became famous physicians and backbone of medicine in southern Zhejiang. In doing this, Stedeford not only has satisfied the demand of hospital development, but also laid foundation for western medicine development in Wenzhou.
On April 19th, 1941, the Japanese army invaded and took over Yongjia (a county in Wenzhou). Unable to escape in time, physicians hid to prevent from being used by the Japanese. Upon enemy’s retreat, the hospital resumed service immediately. Nevertheless, financial shortage became more intense because of increase of poor patients and delayed fund from Britain church for a long time. To ease financial burden, hospital on one hand set up a special clinic for proper consultation fee with Stedeford’s participation and on the other hand published an article on Southern Zhejiang Daily asking for help. Quite a few locals showed sympathy with donation.

July 11th, 1942 was the 35th day after the downtown area was taken by Japanese army. On early July, Blyth Hospital had been removed to Fenglin Town in the north of Nanxi River. Mr. and Mrs. Stedeford together with other physicians started seeing patients in local memorial temple and carried out routine medical trips for free.

Dingley-Blyth Hospital had never set any non-Britain president or vice-president. In July of 1944, two months before downtown of Wenzhou fell under the reign of Japanese. Stedeford was about to return temporarily to Britain according to stipulations and hence employed Zheng Ji as vice president and acting president. In September, the downtown was taken by the enemy. In June of the next year,
the minute the enemy began to retreat, Zheng Ji brought back the hospital to the downtown and in July restarted consultation. In August, the War of Resistance succeeded. Not until 1944, Stedeford came back to the hospital. From 1944 to 1947, Zhang Ji has been devoted to hospital administration together with other physicians.

After the victory of the Chinese People’s War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression, the hospital reopened and employed a group of local physicians as Wang Qixia, Zhou Demin, Hu Xugen, Fu Dajun, Qi Youwei, Zheng Zhiyu and so on, who had been lectured by Stedeford and were well received for high medical ethics, skilfulness when working in other hospitals later.

After the war of resistance, Blyth Hospital served as the secret medical centre for local guerrilla forces of Communist Party in southern Zhejiang, who were unable to access timely treatment under the attack by former alliance, Kuomintang. Chen Liyu, daughter of Chen Meihaio, was middle school classmate of Zhang Xuemei, member of the 3rd sub-team of guerrilla forces. Commissioned by Zhang Xuemei, Chen Liyu invited her father to help and provide medical care to Zhou Pizhen, the deputy team leader of guerrilla forces, and to other soldiers as Jin Kangshou, Xu Shoukao etc. The hospital kept secrets deep and well. There was a time when Chen Meihaio, Chen Liyu and other medical personnel heard of the upcoming search of the enemy, the soldiers were replaced or discharged ahead of time in no time. Revolutionary Base in Kuocang, a historical documentation published in recent years, kept tract of hospital personnel’s dauntless behaviour in curing the injured.

May 7th, 1949 welcomed the transfer of governments in Wenzhou. After running for 4-5 months, Stedeford called a conference inviting 11 members, including Zheng Jishi, Chen Meihaio, Wang Qixia, Zheng Qiushi, Fu Dajun, Qi Youwei, Ni Zhiping, Wang Zhifen, Zhang Dehui, Chen Shunhua, who was the head of nursing school, and Shi Zizhe, the chief nurse. In the meeting, Stedeford said, “I’m going back to Britain. Today, we are going to elect a president from the present to run the hospital from forward.” After discussion and voting, Wang Qixia was elected as the president and Chen Meihaio together with Zheng Qiushi
as the vice president.

After the meeting, the elected did not fill in the position immediately with concern over fund inefficiency and shortage of managerial experience. It was with encourage and persuasion from other colleagues that they made their mind to carry on with hospital. Wang Qixia was the president and internal physician, and Chen Meihao and Zheng Qiushi acted as vice president and director for the Department of Gynaecology and Obstetrics, and Department for Outpatient Services respectively.

In September of the same year, nursing college and midwifery school by former Blyth Hospital merged with another nursing college by Wenzhou Hospital and Dong Ruowang Hospital. Ge Linzong was named as president, Wang Qixia as academic director and Zhang Zhongbang as director for general affairs. The new school was soon in the charge of Wenzhou Hospital and renamed as “Provincial Advanced Medical College Affiliated to Wenzhou Hospital” with Huang Wengeng being the president. In 1952, it was renamed as Wenzhou Health College. Now, it has been integrated to Wenzhou Medical University.

On October 15, 1949, before Stedeford’s departure, the hospital held a farewell ceremony in the halls of nursing college and midwifery school. Mr. Lin Jingping, the director of Health Commission in Wenzhou, and Mr. Ge Linzong attended the ceremony and delivered speeches. Wenzhou Physician Association also gave one in the church of Inland Mission with the presence of hundreds of medical personnel. Guan Zhongyu, president of the association, presided over the ceremony. Several medical professionals delivered speeches and Jiang Hansheng addressed profound gratitude towards Stedeford’s significant contribution in the past 32 years. In the meeting, Stedeford, 60-year-old, voiced thanks to the public’s friendliness in well versed dialect of Wenzhou. Participants took a group photo in memory after the ceremony and Stedeford then returned to Britain with his wife.

To show respect toward Stedeford, the public named the lane beside his residence as Shigongli (a lane named after Stedeford) and built a memorial archway, which was demolished during the Cultural Revolution. Now, it is No. 118 Washi Lane.
On the way back to Britain after liberation, Stedeford stored a dozen carton wooden cases at industrialist Wu Baoheng’s house. In 1984, the authority checked the case and found it filled with medical works besides a piece of bed curtain and two complete pairs of human skeleton, which fully presented Stedeford’s fond of learning.

Mr. and Mrs. Stedeford had a son named Dr. David Stedeford, who lived in Wenzhou until 6 years old. Junior Stedeford followed his fathers’ ambition and majored in medicine. When graduated, he worked in a hospital in Malaysia. From May 25 to June 5, 1995, Junior Stedeford visited the Second People’s Hospital in Wenzhou and demonstrated surgery. During the visit, Junior Stedeford and the hospital reached an agreement in cooperation and donation of medical equipment. However, the chance went away due to delayed contact.

**Appendix:**

1. William· Edward· Soothill

William· Edward· Soothill (1861-1935) is a missionary of United Methodist Free Church coming from Halifax in Britain. In October of 1881, he came to Wenzhou and resided in the house of former missionary Mr. Li Huqing’ home in Jiahuili Lane. After arriving in Wenzhou, he first learned the dialect in Wenzhou, tried to preach with the dialect in half a year, then worked out Latin spelling for Wenzhou dialect and tried to interpret the Bible with the dialect. He adopted many measures to convert people into Christian, including setting up a college beside the residence to attract attention, bringing with him quinine, aspirin and other western medicine to cure malaria and cold, assisting in abstaining from opium as well as performing small surgeries as teeth extraction, trichiasis fixation. With increasing patients, his social influence stood out. At the night of October 4 of 1884, people were at the verge of anti-Christian campaign. When Soothill was delivering sermons with other Christians, the public knocked into the church with stones and set fire to the church, college together with the residence, following by another six fire strikes in churches. When this passed, Soothill dedicated to the founding of hospital and college. He invited James W. Heywood and L· H· Lowry,
the physician of Ouhai Customs, and Mr. Hogg to serve in the clinic he established. In 1897, he set up Dingley Hospital in Pillow Lane, the first modern hospital in Wenzhou. In 1895, he established a college of 20 students, providing courses on Bible reading, English, ancient literature and so on with textbook translated by Jiangnan Manufacturing Authority. In 1898, the West City Church came into service. Soothill clarified the progress of missionary work in 《Tale of Temple Rebuilding》. In 1903, he completed the 《New Testament》 with dialect of Wenzhou. In the autumn of the same year, the Yiwen College was established. In 1906, Dingley Hospital was renamed as Blyth Hospital. In the next year, Soothill left for Shanxi working as president of Shanxi University which was established with the indemnities from Boxer Rebellion. After returning to Britain, he was appointed professor of Chinese at Oxford University and chief member for religious affairs in Young Men’s Christian Association during the European war. In 1925, he was member of Law Council for China indemnity affairs. In 1926, he was a member of Lord Willingdon’s delegation to China on the settlement of the Boxer Rebellion indemnities. In 1928, he became the professor of University of Columbus. In 1935, he died at the age of 75.

2. James W·Heywood (1867-?)

James W·Heywood came from Preston in England. He came to assist Soothill in carrying out medical work from 1891 to 1896 and then from 1907 to 1927. Heywood contributed much to development of western medicine in Wenzhou in the 25 years.

3. Alfred Hogg

Alfred Hogg (April 11, 1868-?) joined St. Pancras Medical Mission and received special training on ophthalmology, pharynx and larynx after graduation from University of Aberdeen. Later, he worked as assistant clinical physician in Royal Eye Hospital. In 1893, he was elected by United Methodist Free Church to work in Wenzhou and married with Bardsley, a missionary of Inland Mission in Wenzhou. From 1897 to 1901, he served as the first president of Dingley Hospital, the first western medicine hospital in Wenzhou, and of Wenzhou Central Hospital. He enjoyed wide and deep respect for high medical skill in 7 years’ service.

4. W. E. Plummer

W. E. Plummer replaced Hogg’s position as president since he went to the church hospital in Yantai in 1901. Serving in Wenzhou for 13 years, Plummer was the 2nd
president of Dingley Hospital, 1st president of Blyth Hospital and the 2nd president of Wenzhou Central Hospital. His devotion was remarked with many anecdotes in healthcare provision and physician cultivation in Wenzhou.

5. T. A. Stedeford (1885-?)

T. A. Stedeford is a British graduating from Edinburgh Medical School. In 1917, he was sent by Methodist church to be president of Blyth Hospital. In 1925, he married Shi Meifu, a British teacher in Ningbo Feidi Middle School. In the summer of 1929, he initiated the 1st nursing college and then midwifery school in 1934. In 1949, he returned to Britain. Stedeford devoted his life to healthcare in Wenzhou by serving as president for 32 years. To memorize his contribution, the locals named the lane beside his residence as Shigongli, an honourable name for him and set up an archway for him, which was destroyed in the Cultural Revolution.

T. A. Stedeford (1885～?)
References:


