

Bridge Doctors

The earliest record we have of a doctor in Bridge is that of **Amelius Sicard**, born in Blackheath on June 12th 1809, the son of John Jacob Sicard, who was probably a refugee from revolutionary France ('Jean-Jacques') and his wife Mary. John Jacob it appears was 'Major-Domo' to Princess Caroline of Brunswick (wife of the Prince Regent) at Montague House in Blackheath. It was he who brought news to her in 1820 in Florence that George III was dead and that she was now queen. He died in Kensington (?Palace) after this date, but before 1841. Amelius entered into practice in Bridge in 1832, aged 23, MRCS and Lic. Apoth. Co. London, and clearly able to afford the 18th century property on the corner of Union Road and the High Street, which remained 'the doctor's house' until ?1970. Sicard was the village doctor for 48 years, dying on November 29th 1880.

Wall plaque in the church: "Sacred / to the memory / of / Amelius Sicard / M.R.C.S. / who departed this / life Novr. 29th 1880 / aged 71 years / This tablet and the West window / were placed in this / Church by a numerous / circle of friends. /"

Tombstone in the churchyard: "In memory of / Amelius Sicard / only son of John Jacob / and Mary Sicard. / born at Blackheath / June 12th 1809, died at Bridge / November 29th 1880. / Here he had resided forty-eight years and / had been to rich and poor / the beloved physician. / " Headstone, Bodystone and Footstone: A.B. 1880

Also: "Sacred / to the memory of / Mary Sicard / widow of the late J.J. Sicard Esq. / of Kensington, who departed this life / on the 30th day of July 1843, / in her 79th year /" Headstone, Bodystone & Footstone: M.S. 1843 (buried on August 5th 1943)

The family of Sicard appears also to be related to the Counts Lautrec – several 13th century members being called Amelius-Sicard.

1841 census

| ID | Surname | Christian Name | Sex | Age | Occupation | Street | House sequence | Where born |
|-----|---------|----------------|-----|-----|------------|---------------|----------------|------------|
| 229 | Sicard | Mary | F | 75 | | Bridge street | 53 | Kent |
| 230 | Sicard | Amelius | M | 30 | Surgeon | Bridge Street | 53 | Kent |
| 231 | Hatton | Eliza | F | 15 | FS | Bridge Street | 53 | Kent |

1851 census

| ID | Surname | Christian name | Relation | Condition | Sex | Age | Occupation | Street | House | Where Born County | Where Born Parish |
|-----|---------|----------------|----------|-----------|-----|-----|--|----------------|-------|-------------------|-------------------|
| 529 | Sicard | Amelius | Head | U | M | 42 | MRCS, Lic.Apoth.Co.Lond General Practitioner | Bridge Village | 116 | Kent | Lee |
| 530 | Drum | James | Serv | U | M | 21 | | Bridge Village | 116 | Kent | Hothfield |
| 531 | Noble | Catherine | Serv | U | F | 38 | House Servant | Bridge Village | 116 | Kent | Canterbury |

1861 census

| ID | Surname | Christian Name | Relation | Condition | Sex | Age | Occupation | Street | House | County | Parish |
|-----|----------|----------------|----------|-----------|-----|-----|---------------------------------------|----------------|-------|--------|------------|
| 504 | Sicard | Amelius | Head | U | M | 52 | Member RCS England LAC & gen prac. | Bridge Village | 101 | Kent | Blackheath |
| 505 | Freeman | Emma | Servant | U | F | 43 | Housekeeper | Bridge Village | 101 | Kent | Canterbury |
| 506 | Harrison | John | Servant | U | M | 23 | Groom | Bridge Village | 101 | Kent | Canterbury |

1871 census

| ID | Surname | Xian Name | Relation | Condition | Sex | Age | Occupation | Street | House | Born Co | Born Parish |
|-----|-----------|-----------|----------|-----------|-----|-----|-------------|---------------|-------|---------|-------------|
| 251 | Sicard | Amelius | Head | U | M | 62 | Surgeon | Bridge Street | 59 | Kent | Blackheath |
| 252 | Jeffreys | Frances | Servant | W | F | 47 | Housekeeper | Bridge Street | 59 | Kent | Canterbury |
| 253 | Churchill | William | Servant | U | M | 28 | Groom | Bridge Street | 59 | Kent | Canterbury |

From 1835 until after 1841 the Union Workhouse had its own doctor, **William Nix**.

1841 census

| ID | Surname | Christian Name | Sex | Age | Occupation | Street | House sequence | Where born |
|-----|---------|----------------|-----|-----|------------|---------------|----------------|------------|
| 214 | Nix | William | M | 50 | Surgeon | Bridge Street | 47 | Not Kent |
| 215 | Andrews | Rachel | F | 15 | FS | Bridge Street | 47 | Kent |

Sicard was succeeded by **Charles Henry Schön**, born in Chatham in 1855, the son of James F(rederick) Schön, chaplain to the Melville Hospital. He was born in the Grand Duchy of Baden, but a British subject (presumably naturalized). Charles served also as medical officer to the workhouse. He died in 1899 aged 44, and was buried on January 25th of that year. A brother, Frederick Schon was a sub Editor for the Press Association and had spent some time in Canada, where two of his children were born.

1881 census

| ID | Surname | Othernames | Status | Age | Sex | Birthplace | Relation | Occupation | Address | H seq | Present seq |
|-----|----------|---------------|--------|-----|-----|-------------------|----------|-------------------|---------------|-------|-------------|
| 338 | Schon | Charles Henry | U | 26 | M | Chatham Kent | Head | Surgeon | Bridge Street | 83 | 24 |
| 339 | Schon | Emily Cooke | U | 31 | F | Old Brompton Kent | Sister | | Bridge Street | 83 | |
| 340 | Cornwell | Ashenden | U | 19 | F | Chatham Kent | Servant | Servant Domestic) | Bridge Street | 83 | |

1891 census

| ID | surname | first name | relation | condition | sex | age | occupation | location | <5r | house seq | county | parish |
|-----|---------|------------|----------|-----------|-----|-----|----------------------|-------------|-----|-----------|--------|---------|
| 349 | Schon | Charles H | Head | M | M | 36 | General Practitioner | High Street | | 84 | Kent | Chatham |
| 350 | Schon | Kate | Wife | M | F | 31 | | High Street | | 84 | Herts | Bushey |
| 351 | Schon | Ursula K | Daur | U | F | 2 | | High Street | | 84 | Kent | Bridge |

Schön was succeeded by **Robert Leishman Moorhead**, MB CM (Edin) between 1899 and 1906, but who quickly moved on. Moorhead was born in 1872 in London, possibly the son of Richard B Moorhead of Paddington, born in Newcastle, Co. Down in 1850, and in 1881 a 'buyer in Mousther House Ireland' (?), but also possibly of Isabella (b. 1839 in London) or more likely of Phoebe (b. 1845), both of whom were widows by 1881. In that year Robert was living with an aunt, Elizabeth Leishman in Edinburgh, who was herself almost certainly the daughter of the Minister of Linton Parish in Roxburgh and Glasgow Doctor of Divinity Thomas Leishman, born in Govan, Lanark in 1801.

Dr. Hunter's House, 24 High Street, Bridge.

Dr. Roger Hunter, my father, came to Bridge with my mother in about 1937 when he bought the house and the practice from Dr. Wilson. Dr. Wilson had been the village doctor for many years and lived in the house with his brother, known as Mr. Jack, and their valet. I assume they kept their horses out in the carriage house which is just round the corner up Union Lane. The old stables with two rooms above are still in a more or less original state, with the present garage added on. My mother thinks that the house was still lit by gas when she arrived, but I am not sure about this.

Brewery
The surgery was in the house with patients entering the waiting room through the door in the wall to the left of the house. Private patients were allowed to wait in the dining room and go in through the front door! In the 40s and 50s I can remember needles and syringes were sterilized on the kitchen stove in a saucepan and the drugs were kept in the family 'fridge. My father worked closely with Mr. Stockwell who was the chemist in the village. Mr. Stockwell's shop was down on the corner of Mill Lane and the High Street where I think there is now a kitchen appliance shop. He would make up the pills and potions in the back of the shop.

The interior of 24 High Street is still very much as it was structurally, with all the original doors and fireplaces, etc. The hall ceiling is attractively plastered. In the basement there is an area where wine and spirits could be locked up and there is another large area with cupboard for storing apples and vegetables. The roof was repaired recently and over the bathroom the roofers found a large flat water tank which must have been used for collecting water for the house.

It was a shame that when the roof was renovated back in the 70s (I think) that a copy of the original pediment wasn't replaced and a mean little strip of wood was put back. You can see a trace of the original pediment on the corner of Miss Jones's house next door. The heavy traffic over the years before the by-pass was built caused the mathematical tiles on the front of the house to loosen and they all had to be refixed. I think that is when the pediment was taken down.

Mathematical tiles were renovated on the side of the house early this year and I saw that the lower ones were fixed in plaster and the upper ones hung on timber.

This is nothing to do with my parents' house, but I can remember Fagg's Farm as we used to ride with Captain Maslin, the local riding instructor, who sometimes kept his horses there, and we used to keep our ponies in the three fields where the Western Avenue estate now is.

I hope this is useful information - do get in touch if you would like more help.

Diana Cairns (01227 752836)

Dr Hunter's house

Death of Dr. A. T. Wilson
Well-known Bridge Practitioner

We regret to record the death of Dr. Arthur Thomas Wilson, at his home in Bridge, on Friday. Dr. Wilson, who was 67 years of age, was born in Dublin, was Irish, and came to Bridge to practice medicine in 1906. He was educated at Trinity College, Dublin University, and held the following degrees, M.B., B.Ch., B.A.O., B.A. Dr. Wilson, who was devoted to his work, had lived with his brother, Mr. J.B.E. Wilson, for 33 years. His father, Mr. James Wilson, was a well-known Irish Barrister.

The doctor had been M.O. at Bridge Institution since he first came to the village, and held the same position at the old isolation hospital, Bishopsbourne. Dr. Wilson was extremely well-liked and respected in the village and the surrounding district. He leaves two brothers, Mr. J.B.E. Wilson and Brig.-Gen. Sir Samuel Wilson, late Permanent Under Secretary for State for the Colonies.

The funeral took place in Ireland on Tuesday, Dr. Wilson's ashes being buried in the family vault.

A personal appreciation

For years he resided in bridge, near Canterbury. A small man with a big heart, an Irishman's sense of humour and a characteristic laugh. A doctor, no, more than a doctor, a friend in need. How many, for miles around, will mourn him in silence. In the large mansion and in the small cottage, aye, even the tramp on the road will, if he pass through Bridge again, learn of this death with a tightness in his throat. Nothing was too small for this man to see and understand, no one was too poor for him to sympathise with and comfort. For years he knew the trials and troubles of multitudes, yet never have I heard him say one word to the detriment of any. Unconscious of self, he gave his whole time to his people, and would often spend hours in sympathising rather than take the rest he sorely needed. Described in my hearing once by a Bishop as "A Christian" no man could deserve that appellation more than he. Yet his Christianity was not artificial, it was lived. Rarely have I discussed religion with him, but what he thought could be known by how he lived. So passes from sight a doctor, a man and an example, for if only one person can say "that man was a comfort and strength to me," then surely he has not lived in vain.

(No source, no date: Williamson 463)

Record of Bridge doctors:

...1835-40 Mr Nix (medical officer, Bridge Union, from its establishment)

Nov 29 1880 Amelius Sicard died: 'beloved physician to rich and poor' b 17.6.1809. 48 yrs in Bridge

..1890, 1897 Charles Henry Schön, surgeon, medical officer, Bridge Union

..1904 Robert L Moorhead, MB CM

1906-?1939: AT Wilson (graduate of TCD) Public Vaccinator. His mother was living in Bridge Place in 1907. Bought his house from Dr Schön.

1939-?1970: Roger Bennett Hunter, MB (graduated from TCD in 1930)

?1970-?1983: William GS Russell Died December 25th

?1983- present (1999): D Mark Jones (was Russell's junior); also now Mary Rafla & PH Sykes.

Health Centre opened 2002.

The house in the High Street was therefore the Doctor's for at least 80 years, possibly longer.

Mathematical Tiles: designed to give the appearance of brick, when hung on a timber-framed structure.

Additional Notes

Dr Wilson

Death of Dr Wilson. Gloom was cast over the village when Dr Wilson passed away on Friday evening, after a few days illness. He had not been in good health for some time, but was able to carry on his practice, which covered a large area, including Bekesbourne, Barham, Bishopsbourne, Upper and Lower Hardres. He succeeded about 30 years ago, Dr Moorhead who left the district. A bachelor, Dr Wilson resided with his brother, Mr J Wilson, on the death of his mother, the late Mrs Wilson, at Bridge Place, Bridge. He was a member of a well-known Irish family. His two surviving brothers are Sir Samuel Wilson and Mr Jack Wilson. Another brother, General Wilson, passed away a few years ago. (Williamson 83 - undated)

Fire Brigade

At a Fire Brigade meeting on Friday a letter was read from Captain S Gilbert tendering his resignation. He had been a member of the Brigade for a number of years, but now finds the duties too much for him. Lieut. F Hogben is elected Captain and Mr F Down Snr., becomes lieutenant. (Williamson 83 - undated)

Dental Surgery

Opened in 1987 (Williamson 84)