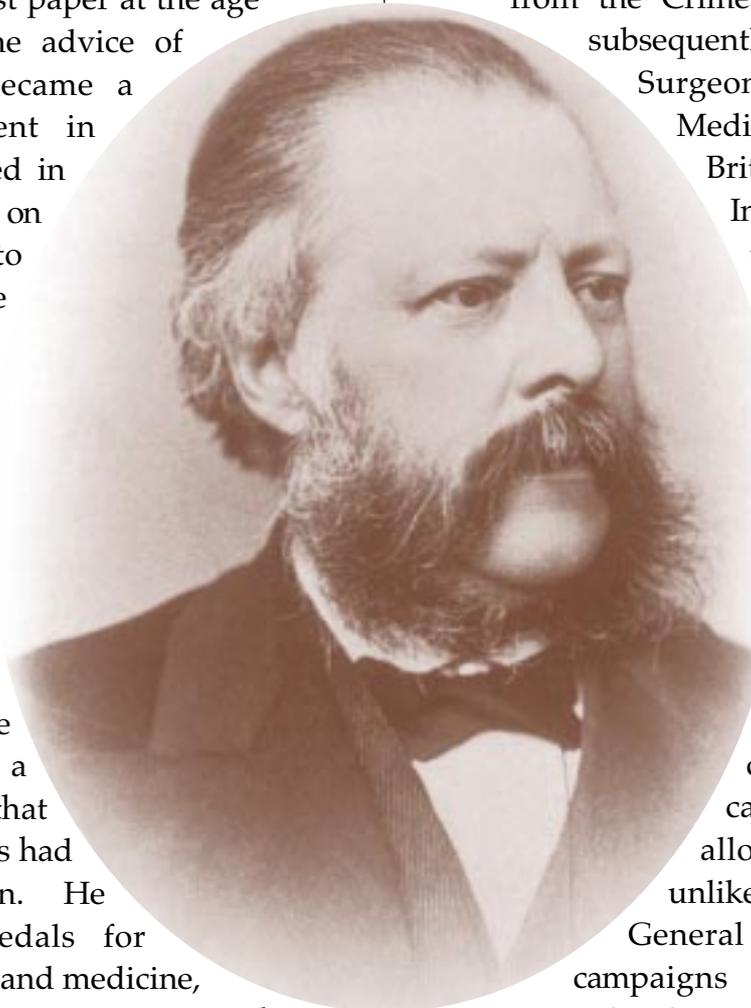


JOSEPH SAMPSON GAMGEE

Gamgee was born in 1828 at Leghorn in Italy, the son of a prominent English vet who was practising there. Following education on the continent, he showed an inclination for veterinary surgery, publishing his first paper at the age of 16 and on the advice of his father he became a veterinary student in 1846 and qualified in 1849. He went on straight away to University College Hospital to study medicine and for quite a while shared lodgings with Joseph Lister, the founder of antiseptic surgery. While Gamgee was studying medicine he practiced as a vet, believing that the two disciplines had much in common. He gained gold medals for anatomy, surgery and medicine, and was elected a Member of the Royal College of Surgeons, London, in 1854 and subsequently a Fellow of the College of Surgeons in Edinburgh. Being multi-lingual, he travelled widely throughout Europe and for a while, as a

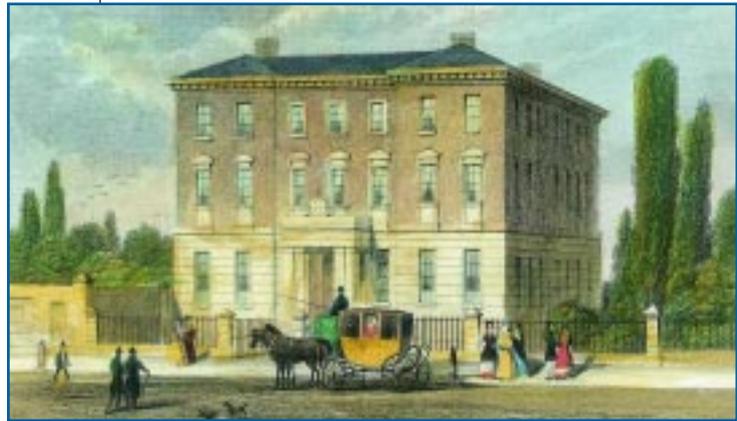


friend of Louis Pasteur, worked at the University of Paris. He served as a surgeon at University College Hospital, and then took charge of the Anglo-Italian Hospital in Malta, tending the wounded from the Crimean War. He was subsequently appointed Staff Surgeon and Principal Medical Officer of the British-Italian Legion. In 1857 Gamgee came to Birmingham, allegedly attracted by the very large percentage of the town's population that came from Italy. His election to the medical staff of the Queen's Hospital in that year was not without some controversy. Election candidates were not allowed to canvass, unlike the position at the General Hospital where campaigns were long, well organised and expensive. Despite that, views were expressed in the press and even from the pulpit of St Martin's Church. Nonetheless his appointment at the Queen's gave him a real opportunity to make his mark in medicine and on society.

BIRMINGHAM HOSPITALS

The Queen's Hospital was founded in 1841. In 1941 it became the Birmingham Accident Hospital until 1993 when it closed and its responsibilities were taken over by Selly Oak Hospital.

When Gamgee went to the Queen's Hospital, the number of operations performed in a year was well under 100 and before any major surgery took place the whole of the senior staff would consult as to whether or not it was avoidable in view of the post-operative mortality rate. Gamgee's first outstanding operation was on a former coal miner when he successfully amputated the man's leg at the hip joint because of an enormous growth on the femur which was 48 inches in circumference and with a total weight of more than two thirds the weight of the man himself.



The Queen's Hospital

Birmingham's other principal hospital of the time, the General Hospital, had been founded in 1779 in Summer Lane, when the population of Birmingham was 30,000, and it stayed there until it moved to Steelhouse Lane in 1897. It eventually

closed towards the end of the 20th century, and the buildings were refurbished in order to house the Birmingham Children's Hospital which moved from Five Ways.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

In those days there was no State or Civic money for hospitals whatsoever.

The General Hospital had unique assistance towards its funding. In its early days one-off musical events had been held whenever the hospital's finances had been in particular need of help. However, in 1784 the Birmingham Triennial Music Festivals began specifically to supplement the income of the hospital, and in that year £703 was contributed. The Festivals were held at either the Theatre Royal in New Street or St Philip's Church, now Birmingham Cathedral. However, the Festival scheduled for 1832 was delayed

by two years to allow all the musical events to take place in the new purpose-built Birmingham Town Hall. The 1834 Festival was a considerable success and the Town Hall became the venue for all subsequent Triennial Festivals. Such was the fame of the Festivals that the world's best musicians and composers queued to take part and there is an impressive list of musical works which were given their first performances at one of them. The amounts raised were substantial until the early part of the 20th century when, in decline, the last of the four-day Festivals was held in 1912, with Sir Henry Wood as principal conductor.

At the Queen's Hospital, there had been various fund-raising activities. In 1847 there was a "subscription of artisans". In 1856 and 1857 the first fetes at Aston Hall were held to benefit the Queen's – this involved a trip out to the country, for Aston Hall was then on the very edge of the town. In 1859, Dr Miller, Rector of St Martin's Church, started the Hospital Sunday Fund and this grew to involve other churches with all the collections being donated to the Queen's and other hospitals. Many people made a special effort to attend the services on those days, even when they were not normally churchgoers. However, the income of the Queen's Hospital was still very meagre, and largely derived from voluntary donations by wealthy and public-spirited citizens, the in-patient maintenance charges, and registration fees. These registration fees were paid by out-patients and varied between 6d and 2s 6d – in return the hospital secretary issued a ticket entitling the patient to hospital treatment for a stated period.

The ticket system was introduced in an effort to provide an improved service when free treatment caused complete blockage of the out-patient department. On the other hand it often resulted in hardship and neglect of illness because of poverty.

Gamgee was interested not only in surgery but in all hospital matters and medical politics. Ten years after he went to the Queen's Hospital, he published a

pamphlet on hospital reform in which he deplored the system of the out-patient department where people queued up to be seen at the rate of one a minute, or were left waiting for hour after hour in the cold. He complained that the waiting rooms allowed a minimum amount of air space per patient, there were no toilet facilities accessible from those rooms and no possibility at all of isolating contagious cases. Dressing rooms were small, dark and badly ventilated and the dispensary was merely a passageway.

Gamgee decided to involve the working men of Birmingham in the building of a new out-patient department at the Queen's by means of voluntary contributions. He called a meeting in his house at 22 Broad Street and brought together 14 working men and several manufacturers. He persuaded them that



The Triennial Music Festival in 1846 held at Birmingham Town Hall when Mendelssohn's Elijah received its first performance. (From the Illustrated London News.)

with regular small donations a new hospital wing could be built and they would therefore have a say in the running and management of the hospital. Gamgee's enthusiasm was infectious and

the idea was taken up wholeheartedly. At a meeting in the Town Hall on 16 January 1869, chaired by George Dawson, the idea was translated into "A Working Men's Fund for the Extension of the Queen's Hospital". The Mayor, Alderman Thomas Avery and Mr George Dixon became Trustees. Councillor William Radford and Mr Henry Hadley became cashiers. Charles Hobbs became Vice-Chairman and Robert McRae, Honorary Secretary to the Birmingham Trades Council, became Secretary. The Committee consisted of 800 workers' representatives. £4,000 was raised by those employed in factories and street collections plus some more substantial donations including £100 from Queen Victoria in appreciation of the workers' efforts.

The foundation stone was laid on 4 December 1871 by the Lord Lieutenant of the County, Lord Leigh, and by all accounts this was a big day for the town. There was a huge procession consisting of the trade, friendly and other societies and bodies of work people, the local Masonic Lodge, divisions of the police, post office letter carriers, firemen in uniform and many others. There was even a printing press on a carriage drawn by two horses to enable views of the new building to be distributed along the line of the march. There were several brass bands, one of which, Messrs Synyer and Gilmer's military band, accompanied a choir of 1,000 voices in the singing of a hymn specially composed by the Reverend Canon Kingsley. There was a luncheon at the Great Western Hotel at 4 pm, tickets for which were quaintly described as "gentlemen's tickets 5s; ladies' tickets 3s 6d (exclusive of wine)". In the evening there was a soirée for contributors to the

Working Men's Fund in the Town Hall followed by dancing until midnight.

Hence there is no doubt of the importance of this project to the people of the area.

The funding having been completed, the Committee advised the Board of the Queen's Hospital and referred to the effort which had been made in the following terms:

"The Working Men's Committee has endeavoured to do a useful work in a manner which may stimulate their fellows to similar and greater exertions, of which the fruits may not be immediate, but are nonetheless anticipated with hopeful reliance."

The Board replied by recording their *"appreciation of the good sense and good feeling which the working men on the Extension Committee had ever manifested in their dealings."*

From all the money subscribed there remained a small balance and at the final meeting of the Working Men's Committee it was resolved that this sum, £25, should be used for the benefit of the medical charities of Birmingham generally. An Artizans' General Medical Charities Fund was then organised with John Skirrow Wright as Chairman, Robert McRae as Secretary and a very influential committee. However, in spite of its excellent intentions, this fund was not successful and soon ceased to operate.

The extension cost £10,000 of which £4,000 was contributed by the working men of Birmingham. It was formally opened by Ambrose Biggs, the Mayor, on 7 November 1873.

*The hymn composed by Reverend Canon Kingsley for the occasion of the foundation stone laying at
The Queen's Hospital extension, to music composed by Mr G J Rankilor.*

Accept this building, gracious Lord,
No temple though it be;
We raise it for our suffering kin,
And so, good Lord, for Thee.

Accept our little gift, and give
To all who here may dwell,
The will and power to do their work,
Or bear their sorrows, well.

From Thee all skill and science flow;
All pity, care, and love;
All calm and courage, faith and hope;
Oh, pour them from above.

And part them, Lord, to each and all,
As each and all shall need,
To rise, like incense, back to Thee,
In noble thought and deed.

And hasten, Lord, that perfect day,
When pain and death shall cease;
And Thy just rule shall fill the earth
With health, and light, and peace.

When ever blue the sky shall gleam,
And ever green the sod;
And man's rude work deface no more
The Paradise of God. Amen

HOSPITAL SATURDAY

Gamgee feared a loss of financial aid for the hospitals and appealed to the Mayor, Ambrose Biggs, "to convene a public meeting to consider the propriety of organising an annual Saturday collection throughout the industrial establishments of the town in support of its medical charities". Hundreds of signatures were obtained in support. Strangely, the largely-defunct Artizans' General Medical Charities Fund at first strongly objected but, after careful reconsideration, they amalgamated with the Hospital Saturday movement.

The first meeting of the Hospital Saturday Fund was held on 6 January 1873. John Skirrow Wright was in the chair, Sampson Gamgee became Honorary Secretary and Robert McRae the paid assistant. Ambrose Biggs, as Mayor, accepted the office of President. Of the Committee that was assembled at that first meeting, two members, Councillor William Cook (later to become Sir William Cook) and Lawley Parker (Gamgee's brother-in-law) were destined to be for many years not only a part of the Hospital Saturday Fund but also extremely active in the public life of Birmingham.

At that first meeting, Gamgee suggested that, in addition to street collections, the workpeople of Birmingham be invited to work overtime on one Saturday afternoon in the year, especially to donate their earnings to the Hospital Saturday Fund for distribution to the

voluntary hospitals. Meetings were held in all the large factories and the campaign was received with great enthusiasm.

Saturday 15 March 1873 became the first Hospital Saturday. The collection amounted to £4,215 2s 5d. Expenses totalled £470 but a prominent Birmingham citizen, G F Muntz, gave a cheque for £500 which more than covered the expenses, doing so "as a mark of esteem for the noble effort and independent spirit shown by the working men". This meant that the whole of the £4,215 could be distributed to the medical charities of Birmingham. In an age when wages ranged from 15s to 20s per week, this result was truly remarkable and surpassed all expectations. The principal donations were made as follows:

	£	s	d
General Hospital	1,811	7	7
Queen's Hospital	1,199	18	3
General Dispensary	466	4	2
Children's Hospital	390	11	5
Eye Hospital	253	6	7
Dental Hospital	4	4	7

The Committee was delighted with the success of the appeal. The invaluable services of Gamgee, the originator of the movement, were rewarded by presenting him with a gold watch, a sum of 400 guineas from the principal residents of Birmingham and an illuminated address, plus a diamond bracelet for his wife in recognition of the great assistance she had given her husband.

The Queen's Hospital,
BIRMINGHAM.

—:—

OPENING

OF THE

NEW OUT-PATIENT BUILDINGS,

BY THE MAYOR,
AMBROSE BIGGS, ESQ.,

FRIDAY, NOV. 7TH, 1873.

PROGRAMME:

PRESENTATION OF ADDRESSES
TO THE MAYOR,

From the Chairman and Committee of the Hospital,
AND ALSO

*From the Working Men Representatives of the Extension
Committee.*

HYMN.—“Accept this building, Gracious Lord.”

PRAYER.

THE MAYOR WILL NOW DECLARE THE NEW
BUILDINGS OPEN.

ANTHEM.—“Let our theme of praise.”—*Mendelssohn.*

VOTES OF THANKS.

NATIONAL ANTHEM.

THE “JOURNAL” PRINTING OFFICES, NEW STREET, BIRMINGHAM.

*Programme for the opening of
the Queen's Hospital extension, 7 November 1873*