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*'Surgery and Slavery on the High Seas  
:the journal of  
Richard C McClement MD RN'*

*talk by  
Dr Karly Kehoe*

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It is my pleasure tonight to introduce our lecturer, Dr Karly Kehoe. Karly is not exactly a stranger to us because she has been a lecturer at the UHI History Department for about a year, and she actually has been to some of our lectures. She is from Cape Breton, she went to university at St Mary's University in Halifax, and then came to Glasgow to do her PhD in History and Religion. Since she has come to Dornoch, she has been a lecturer of course, she also has to do research, and her research project is actually 'Surgery and Slavery on the High Seas'. Ladies and gentlemen, can I ask you to give a warm welcome to Dr Karly Kehoe.

Thanks very much everybody. What I'm going to speak to you about tonight is really some of my preliminary findings and observations on a project that I got underway in June and July of this year.

Part of the remit of a lecturer is you have to publish or perish, really. So this is eventually going to become a book, and I anticipate this whole research project will be about four years long. Don't be discouraged if the questions you ask I can't answer immediately. I have a lot of archival work ahead of me, but I do know the journal very well, and it's actually quite an exciting project, so I hope you enjoy it. I'm going to break the lecture up into four main parts. I'm going to give you a brief biography of the gentleman who wrote this journal.

His name was Richard Carr MacLemont, and he came from Northern Ireland. Then I'm going to talk about three main themes that I've identified as being historically important. The first is medicine, the history of medicine, because he was a surgeon in the Royal Navy.

The second theme is slavery and the slave trade. On some of the ships he was on, he was actually involved in the British policing of the slave trade in the late 1850s and 1860s.

The third theme, which is very important, deals with the idea of religion in the Royal Navy. This gentleman was a Roman Catholic, an Irish Roman Catholic, and I think that's quite significant. The journal itself was deposited in the Scottish Catholic Archives in Edinburgh after the closure of Fort Augustus. There was a lot of material deposited from Fort Augustus. Nobody knew what it was. I say we because I research a lot at that archive. The archivist made me aware of it because he knew that I dealt with Irish history.

I tend to do a lot of history of women, but he thought that this would pique my interest, and it certainly did. What we've done so far is we've developed a joint research project with the UHI Centre for History, which is now up on the hill in what was the old Burfield Hotel, the Scottish Catholic Archives in Edinburgh, and St. Mary's University in Halifax, which is part of my own academic tradition. The main purpose of a project like this is it's important to write books in all of that stuff for scholars and academics, but it's also important to make sure that that research reaches a wider audience, which is part of you guys.

It's also part of the workshops that I do with higher history students in schools in the north, in Highlands and in Perthshire. So that's basically my aims for the project. I'd like to go now and talk a bit about McClellan's background. Any historian, when you start a research project and there's a figure involved, you have to kind of give yourself an idea of who he was or who she was, the background of that person, to try to get an idea of what was going on. His background, I mentioned before, he was an Irish Roman Catholic in the Royal Navy, and this is what I think makes him particularly intriguing and important.

He was born at Whitehead in County Antrim on the 19th of March, 1839. In 1844, at the age of five, he went to school, attended a local establishment run by a local gentleman, a man called Bull Hills. Three years later, at the height of the Irish famine in 1847, his family moved closer to Belfast, where it appears as though he was homeschooled for a time. This wasn't unusual. I've not been able to determine yet how long he'd been at homeschool, probably by a tutor, but the next four years he was

kind of in and out of different private or what we would call adventure schools. He was doing this until 1853, when he started taking the exams he needed in order to enter medical school in Belfast, and this would have been part of the Queen's College, a non-denominational university that was being established that had a medical school. He failed, of course, like most of us, on their first attempt at math, but passed very well the second time around, so the studying paid off.

In addition to the subjects that he took while he was a medical student, 1853 was a very interesting year, a devastating year as well, because cholera hit for the third time. There were four massive cholera epidemics in the 19th century. The first one was in 1832, the second one was in 1848-49, the third one was in 1853-54. Cholera presented medical students with a tremendous opportunity for training and learning, and McClement actually shadowed a Belfast surgeon with cholera victims. So he learned quite a lot with that. Cholera would strike again in 1866, but by this time McClement would be far off the coast of the United States.



When he joined the Royal Navy, he really got a tremendous opportunity to see the world, an opportunity that wasn't available to most people in the 19th century. This is a picture of the Hasler Royal Navy Hospital at Portsmouth.

In 1857, when he completed his studies in Belfast, he went to London, and he enrolled in a diploma at the College of Surgeons of England. He would complete this in 1864 whilst he was in the Royal Navy. In

December of 1857, he bought himself a commission in the Royal Navy, and the first place he was put was at this hospital. It seems that a lot of the young surgeons, the assistant surgeons, as they were until they became full-fledged surgeons, started out here before they were given an official placement on any type of ship.

He stayed there for a little over a month, and then received an appointment to the HMS Buffalo, which is this ship right here. Unfortunately, McClement wasn't a great sketch artist or watercolourist, and often in some of these journals that you find, they're littered with beautiful illustrations. Unfortunately, this journal is just text, except for the odd drawing. I think maybe he was practising or just maybe didn't think he was good enough. This assignment on the Buffalo was a dramatic eye-opener for him, because he was joining a ship that was bound for the west coast of Africa to capture slave ships. I'm not sure if you're aware, most of you will be aware, that even though slavery was outlawed by Britain, countries like Portugal and Spain, France and the United States were still actively trading slaves. So Britain was policing the Atlantic to try to capture these slaves, although I wonder how diligent they were when you read some of his accounts.



He would also serve on ships, the HMS Hawk, the Duncan, which is that ship right there, a beautiful ship. I found that picture in the Halifax Public Archives when I was there in the summertime. They had random images of ships, and they just happened to have that one, so I snapped it up straight away. He was also on the HMS Terror, the HMS Gality, and the Wellesley. Six ships in total between 1857 and 1869.

He did, during his stint in the Royal Navy, get married and have a family. On November 19th, 1862, on a misty Dublin morning, McClement, fortified by a pint of champagne, was married to a young woman by the name of Annie. I still don't know her last name. I've been trying to track it down. That's one of the reasons why I think the journal was only really produced for family members or for himself, because he refers to everybody in the first person, or just the first name, as though anybody who was reading it would automatically know who they are. So I don't actually know the last name of his wife. They were married at St. Mary's Church, Haddington Road, Dublin. And it's quite interesting because he was actually engaged before, and he mentions this in the journal, to another woman who happened to be a Protestant. The engagement was broken off. I think it had something to do with the fact that they were both from different religions. What's interesting and perhaps telling, and I'm smiling because I think it's funny, but it's maybe not funny, but in the margin, when he was talking about the engagement that broke off, he actually had drawn a little hangman, a man hanging from a noose. I'll keep you posted on that one.

He was very attached to Annie, though. This is something that comes out. He gets very depressed whenever big mail ships come in and there's nothing on the ships for him from Annie. Now, every once in a while, you go into an archive and you stumble upon something that you're just grateful that you happen to be in the right place at the right time. I don't have any photographs of McClement yet, but I have found this photo of his family. When McClement died at sea in 1869, I'm not sure how long after that, his wife, who is seated here, was remarried to a man from Argyle, there.

McClement and Annie had five children, and the entire family moved to Scotland after McClement himself died. So this is a picture of his family minus him, effectively. That's what I've been able to discover about him so far. This is, again, an ongoing research project. When I get into other archives, I'll hope to find out more detail, and then maybe in a few years I can come back and fill you in.

I'd like to move now, though, to the first theme, the first academic theme that I think is really important about a project like this. It's fine to read these journals, but you have to put them into some type of context and kind of figure out why they're significant. So the first theme is medicine.

The journal is fascinating for the kind of medical detail it contains, the insight it offers about preventions, treatments, and different diseases that plague particular regions. I'll speak more about this in a minute, but right now I'd like to provide you with a bit of context in terms of why medicine is important in terms of Britain and its empire. The period 1850 to 1870 represents a critical juncture in the professionalization of medicine in Britain. For the purposes of this project, I'm looking at medicine as a pathway, the means through which fringe groups like Irish Catholics acquired legitimacy as citizens and as empire builders in Britain.

In the context of this research, therefore, I'm interested in finding out how medicine is linked with citizenship, ethnicity, and religiosity as a better way of understanding how and why Ireland's Catholics, a population often relegated to the social fringe, participated in Britain's imperial programme. Ireland has a legacy of nationalism, and whilst many Irish men and women were sympathetic to this, not all of them wanted to end the union with Britain. I think this is a point that often gets overshadowed in the scholarship on TV, the things you read.

You don't necessarily hear about the loyal Irish to Britain so much. What I've discovered from the research that I've done, and I'm talking not just about this project but my past research, is that many in Ireland, particularly the middle classes, were looking for ways in which to access social and political legitimacy in Britain. One of the ways they did this was by entering the professions, and medicine was a rising star in the professions at this time, mid-19th century Britain.

At a time when medicine was moving forward as a profession with legislation such as the 1858 Medical Act and the establishment of associated societies and organisations to give the whole profession that air of legitimacy, middle-class Irish Catholics like McClement were endorsing the establishment of non-denominational medical schools, studying and practising medicine afforded the middle classes the unique opportunity to acquire professional status and respectability in Victorian Britain, and I'm sure you all know that respectability was sort of the buzzword of the Victorian era.

Not only did McClement acquire professional qualifications in the British medical system, but he, by joining the Royal Navy, became a practical and symbolic figure in Britain's imperial programme. During the time he spent in the Navy, he was exposed to a variety of regions and people stretching from West Africa and the eastern seaboard of North America to the Caribbean and to eventually China where he would die at sea.

These pictures were also found in Halifax at the Maritime Command Museum. The Royal Navy was active in Halifax I think until 1912, well after Canada became a country. After that time, Canada seemed to get its act together and actually get a Royal Navy. Remnants of this building are still existent, but all of this area is completely built up. It's now Halifax Harbour. I don't know if any of you have ever heard of the Halifax explosion. Most of it was levelled during the first, I think it was the First World War, when two ships actually collided accidentally in the harbour. One of those ships happened to be full of munitions. I think it was the largest explosion in the First World War in terms of the devastation all in one go because it was an entire ship full. So that's why a lot of those things aren't there anymore. Luckily the Royal Navy Hospitals survived. It's I think now a residence for Navy seamen.



I'd like to take a couple of minutes to highlight the significance of naval hospitals and to reflect on some of the work that McClement did in these hospitals. Navy hospitals are particularly interesting in the context of imperialism since they doubled as care

institutions and as physical symbols of empire. McClement for short periods of time was placed in charge of these facilities in Halifax and at Hasler in Portsmouth. And I think this kind of responsibility did much to anchor his and others' legitimacy as partners in the empire. Tropical diseases were a risk to all 19th century colonists and in his day-to-day work McClement was often engaged in treating victims of these diseases. Quite often he was dealing with fever victims.

Yellow fever or yellow jack, as it was often called, was a particularly devastating form of fever. In 1859 when he stopped in Sierra Leone in Africa, McClement observed that the disease had wiped out most of the European colonists who had been there when he was there on a previous visit. And he wrote that, Out of over a hundred, scarce a dozen remain. It gives you just a bit of an idea of how much trouble colonists had when they were exposed to diseases they had no immunity to. You could make the other argument. Most of the indigenous peoples in North America and South America were wiped out for the exact same reason. I think 80%. Yellow fever often presented in patients that were coming up from the Caribbean. It wasn't an indigenous fever to the north, to Halifax or to Nova Scotia. It was brought up on ships coming, say, from Bermuda or the south. So often when they arrived in Halifax, the ship was already contaminated and most of the people were infected and the people were moved into fever hospitals. Now right here, that was the fever ward for the Royal Navy at Halifax. This is a page of the journal. Don't worry, there's a transcription coming up so you can actually read it. It represents a journal extract from the 12th of July in 1865.

One of the things McClement is really good at doing, which is tremendous for historians, is he made tons of tables. He did weather patterns for every month of the year he was in the Royal Navy. He had the coordinates and the temperatures and everything where he was. So in a way, if you wanted to, you could chart climate change through that. What he also did, though, was in the hospitals that he worked in, he wrote the names down of every patient he treated and he wrote what their ailments were. I tried to fit all of it into one page.

I hope the font is large enough. It gives an idea of the people he was treating, what their position was, when they were admitted, and also what they were suffering from. You'll see this was actually at the tail end of a fever outbreak in Halifax. But what I've highlighted in green is what tended to infect sailors more than anything else, which were sexually transmitted diseases. You get a lot of that through his work. He writes a lot of information about that. He doesn't have any sympathy for them, though. He always criticizes people that come to him with illness like this because they should know better. That's the tone of the journal, not my tone.

As a surgeon in the Royal Navy engaged in hunting down slavers, McClement was often called upon to inspect the human cargo of the captured vessels. He had to physically go on board, and give a description of what he saw. He would often note that people were suffering from smallpox, fever, diarrhoea, different types of illnesses. On one stop in Sierra Leone again, he observed that on board a captured slaver with 500 slaves, smallpox prevailed amongst them. Some, he said, were put into the military hospital. Others were put into a hospital about four miles outside of Freetown. There wasn't room for everybody in one place. There were times, though, in his journal where his observations are quite intense and revealing of the heart. It's almost unimaginable. You read what he's writing and you kind of blank for a minute just

thinking how horrible this actually was. I'll quote a description of what he saw on board the captured ship the Clara Windsor when they captured it off the coast of Sierra Leone in 1859. *"When I went on board, the majority of the slaves were on the upper deck, mostly squatting in rows, each row sitting between the legs of the one behind it. On the sloppy and sickening slave deck were seen to be the remainder, consisting of men, women, and children huddled together, some emaciated to skeletons, some lying and heedless of all around, and some on the point of passing on to another world, where it would be hard to imagine that they could suffer more than they had done in this. Some lying on their faces, some on their back, and the more enfeebled sat with their heads resting on their knees. All were naked and had their skins besmeared with the filth in which they had laid"*. That's the kind of things he's writing about in the journal often. It's really page-turning, but it's also very difficult. This gives me an interesting segue into the next theme, slavery and the slave trade.

At the beginning of the 19th century, the Catholic question loomed large in parliamentary circles. Emancipation, Catholic emancipation, had been promised as a condition of Ireland's parliamentary union with Britain in 1801, but the king's opposition and that of a number of powerful MPs made the fulfilment of this impossible until the late 1820s. The reason why I'm highlighting this is to provide a bit of background and connection. The emancipation for slaves and Catholics were important reform issues in the early 19th century, well, really, pretty much right up until the late 1830s. Ninny Rogers is a scholar, an Irish scholar, and she recently published an excellent study on Ireland's slavery and the slave trade.

She explains that Catholic emancipation effectively opened the door to the emancipation of slaves. Despite a newfound enthusiasm, particularly among Protestant evangelical circles for the emancipation movement, for freeing slaves, Irish and other British MPs only came to terms with the idea slowly. This might surprise you, considering Ireland's experience with the Catholic question and the frustration that many MPs felt when Catholic emancipation was not delivered in the immediate aftermath of the union, but it was all down to economics, as so much is. They only really started to convince people that slavery was useful when they made it economically viable in terms of the war with France, the Napoleonic Wars up to 1815.

They made an economic argument for the eradication of slavery, that it was becoming too expensive. Britain wasn't getting enough money out of it. I'm one of those historians who doesn't necessarily see the actual emancipation of slavery as a humanitarian move. I see it more as political manoeuvring based on economics, which is a big shame. What might be even more surprising, at least immediately and on the surface, was the reaction of Irish Americans to the proposed abolition of slavery.

America was, as I mentioned at the beginning, one of the countries that was still participating in the slave trade. It was making a lot of money. It didn't want to let it go. There was a substantial current of opposition among Irish Catholic immigrants to measures designed to bring an end to slavery in America. Part of the reason for this was the low position that the Irish tended to occupy in British society, and for many, the subsequent elevation of their status in the United States. They were no longer the lowest of the low. There was somebody below them.

In 1995, Noel Agnati, if he's an American scholar, he published a very influential book with a really excellent title called 'How the Irish Became White'. This considers race as a social construction and goes some way towards explaining just how complex Irish identity, both at home and abroad, actually was. The Irish were finding security and a level of acceptance in the United States that had not been available to them in Britain. I'm fully aware of the fact that there was this whole movement, No Irish Need Apply, and there was still a lot of resentment, but I think there was the feeling that there were more possibilities for them in the United States than there were at home. I'd like to quote Ninny Rogers, who I mentioned earlier, to explain the situation.

*"As a large, noticeable body of new-fledged Americans, the Irish Catholic community did not wish to be associated with the abolitionists, a group criticizing the constitution and institutions of the country in which they were seeking to become citizens. The Irish, taking over jobs which had once been dominated by urban blacks, were eager to claim the advantage conferred by the colour of their skin. Britain's role as an abolitionist and philanthropic power, so admired by American anti-slavery activists, seemed to many of the Irish gross hypocrisy".*

I would suggest, from the research that I've done for other projects, it was the same situation for the Catholics in Scotland. They did everything they could, the indigenous Catholics in Scotland, to prove their loyalty to the crown, because they wanted to be accepted as equals in society. This helps me move into my next theme, which is religion, religion in the Navy.

The inclusion of Irish Catholics as surgeons and officers in one of the most important imperial symbols was a significant development in the decades following the Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829. Part of the project, the one that I'm working on, part of its remit, is to build upon and expand the recent work that is tackling the inherently complex issue of Irish Catholic participation in British society. One of the things that intrigued me about McClement, as I've mentioned, was the fact that he was an Irish Roman Catholic in the Royal Navy.

It might not sound like a big deal, but in the 1850s and 1860s, it was an extremely big deal, particularly if that Roman Catholic also happened to be an officer. There was significant anti-Catholic tension in Britain at this time, mid-19th century. The restoration of the English Catholic hierarchy in 1850 didn't win the Church very many friends. There was almost a flurry of anti-Catholic propaganda. Punch is one of my favourite magazines for finding really excellent cartoons. This was a cartoon it published in 1850, and you've got the Pope wedging into the door of England, trying to get in there, and you've got Cardinal Wiseman keeping watch to make sure that he can do that. There really was this fear of what I call the Catholic creep, that somehow if the Church was given any authority at all, it would somehow undermine the stability of Britain and undermine the stability of the Church of England. If you're ever interested in political cartoons, I would really point you in the direction of Punch. It's fantastic.

The journal itself isn't littered with descriptions of what life in the Navy was like for a Catholic officer, but there are references dotted here and there that offer a glimpse of the alienation that Catholic seamen often or sometimes felt. Writing on the 7th of March, 1858, which was his very first Sunday at sea, McClement recorded that prayers were said by the master commanding, and that just he and one other were the only



ones on board who didn't attend the service because they were Catholic. By the mid-1860s, a Catholic community of officers and seamen had emerged, necessitating more regular religious provision. And we start to see this changing. You see it through the journal. There's more happening.

There's more opportunities to attend service or speak with people who are the same religion as you, talk about the church, all that jazz. In the 1960s, as the number of Catholics were rising, you start to see the opportunity for people to take Mass together. They weren't just one person on a ship anymore. There were often a number. They would take Mass together on the docks or in a local chapel if one happened to exist in places like Halifax and Nova Scotia, St. John's, Newfoundland, Bridgeton, Barbados, San Sebastian, and what's now the U.S. Virgin Islands. Chapels and even cathedrals existed in these places. But in Bermuda and Jamaica, for example, Mass had to be celebrated in a makeshift accommodation such as a dockyard loft sale. He often talks about having to set stuff up in a dockyard loft sale so that they could have their Sunday service.

The provision of Catholic chaplains was an issue at this time for the Army and the Navy. There are pamphlets that are being published calling for the government to pay attention to this. As the number of Catholics in the services rose, there was more pressure and obviously more success in acquiring chaplains and places for worship. Added to this, however, not just in the Royal Navy, the number of Catholics in the Empire was increasing because you're getting emigration out of Britain, particularly out of Ireland. St John's, Newfoundland is a very good example of that because Catholicism really claimed a place in that city. I don't know if any of you have ever been to Newfoundland.

Have any of you ever been to Newfoundland? Good place to go. What he wrote gives you an indication of how that city had developed, and I'll quote.

*"As we steamed through the entrance, the smell of fish at once declared the nature of the place we were approaching. Went to Mass at the cathedral with the Roman Catholic Party. This was a very fine and substantial building, quite a contrast to the public and private buildings of St John's. I dare say it is capable of holding 7,000 or 8,000 people. It, as well as the adjoining buildings, convent, monastic schools, bishop's residence, etc., etc., is built of granite. The people, almost without exception, are Irish and Catholics. I believe they number 20,000. The sole dependency of the people is upon fishing. Until recently, it was also still upon fishing, but there is now a moratorium. Of course, the many offshoots are not wanting. Public houses, rope and sail stores, timber establishments, etc., etc."* So what you're also seeing with entries in this journal is you're able to trace the development of colonial towns, which I think is quite interesting, particularly for me, because he spends two years in the Canadian Maritimes, Nova Scotia, and he goes to Newfoundland. Unfortunately, he's not a big fan of Halifax, and I just don't understand that.

It was maybe different back then I think, for the Navy, for Britain as a colonial power. Just keep in mind as well, this was written in 1865, just months or weeks after Canada became a country. No, no, no, two years before Canada became a country. So it really was still part of the British Empire. It would remain part of the British Empire, really, for a lot longer. But it was important for Britain to make these connections or to

have some type of affinity with these colonies and to be aware that the people that were now populating these places were former citizens of Britain and new British colonists. Newfoundland didn't join Canada, I think, until the 1950s. I don't know if you knew that. There you go.

Many of these immigrants developed new identities. They took on identities based on where they were living. They also retained a strong connection to where they had come from. It was important, particularly in the 19th century with the United States, which was hostile at certain times, to keep the British colonists in Canada sweet.

I want to sum up with a few concluding remarks, mainly on the themes that I've highlighted already. On one level, I see this research as being able to shed light on the role that British naval medicine played in the expansion of medical networks and hospital care in the Empire.

On another level, I wanted to throw more light on the connections that existed between medicine and Britain's Irish Catholic community. The Atlantic world offered unprecedented opportunities for intellectual exposure and cultural exchange. Medicine, I think, helped to pave the way for globalization, but more specifically, medicine in the Navy became the means through which imperial authority was extended, both at home and abroad.

At home, I'm thinking in terms of the Irish in Britain, and abroad, we can look to the naval hospitals, for example, as having played a central role. Again, I'll mention they doubled as care institutions and as physical symbols of the Empire. The project's focus on how medicine helped to shift 19th century perceptions of citizenship in Britain and how it broke an important path for the social inclusion and participation of what I like to call the religious and ethnic periphery within the imperial context adds what I think is an important dimension to the history of medicine in Britain and in the Empire.

That's where I've got to so far with this project. Probably not the normal talk you're used to, but I think that it's important for us up at the Center for History to make a connection with people in the community so you actually know what we're doing, what we're working on. And if you happen to have any words of wisdom for us, maybe you've done some research yourself on the Royal Navy or whatever, I'd be happy to hear and take questions.

Thanks very much.

*Thank you, Karly, for that very interesting lecture. Are there any questions?*

Dr. McClellan, he must have been around for a long while when he died. When was he born?

*1834. He died when he was in England. I haven't been able to find his cause of death. We've got his death certificate and all it says is that he died at sea and was buried at sea, so we don't know. But I am in the process of applying for research funding to go down to London to the National Archives and they have ship logs and I'm hoping that on the last ship he was on I can find a reference to him. This is very much a piece of work in progress.*

Have you found out whether they were policing on the Canadian-American side?

*I think they were there too. Interestingly, they were there during the Civil War and Britain, of course, wasn't necessarily involved, officially involved in the Civil War. It certainly wasn't meant to be taking the side of the South because as a power that was opposed to the slave trade. It was in a difficult position and sort of had to be seen as siding with the North. There are comments that he makes about them being aware of slaves being brought in to the South or to the Eastern side of the Atlantic, but he doesn't talk about them policing or actually apprehending vessels like he does off of Africa. I think what they're trying to do is just stop them from leaving Africa. It may sound very cynical but what are you going to do with a boat full of slaves when you get it? All of a sudden, you're responsible with the slaves when they were captured in Africa. They were often brought to Sierra Leone. They were deposited there. They weren't returned to where they came from or where they were brought or sold from. They were sort of deposited there. That was supposed to be this colony of freed slaves, of course, from what I'm reading, a bit of a failure. What do they say? The road to hell is paved with good intentions.*

When does the journal go up to?

*1869. It actually goes up quite close to his death. It's really sad actually because when you're reading this, it's 400 pages. It's a huge thing, and you get quite attached to him, and you know that it ends soon. We got his death certificate so we knew he died at sea at China. The last entry is, Just received word I'm going to be sent on this ship to China. He says something along the lines where he just doesn't want to leave. He doesn't want to go. It's heart-wrenching because you know he's never coming back. He's never going to see his children again or his brother or his wife. That is going to be the end, and that's the last entry.*

How come it ended up in Fort Augustus?

*This is an interesting thing. When his wife remarried and the family came to Scotland, his son became a priest. He entered with the Benedictines in Fort Augustus. We think that his son brought that with him, and it was just left with his son's personal belongings. That's the only conclusion we can come to. That's the only connection between his family and Fort Augustus, but I think it's quite a strong connection. I'm not sure if it was his eldest son, but it was his son. It sort of seems natural that if your father had left something, you might take it with you just so that you've got that connection.*

This is a purely professional journal rather than partly professional?

*I get the impression that it was because he's a bit critical of the Navy at times, and I don't know that it would have been very good in terms of career progression to be critical of it officially. There were obviously ship's logs. He does mention that there were logs he had to make entries into about patients he was treating and all of that. I think some of those might be in London. When I went to Halifax, it was interesting. This was a very big learning curve for me. Because it was the Royal Navy in Halifax. None of the material is in Canada. It's all in London. So I suspect most of the ship logs*

*that he would be either mentioned in or participated in producing are down in the National Archives in London.*

*But the sense of the journal itself, it is personal, and part of me wonders if he was writing it to keep himself company almost. You can imagine it must have been tremendously lonely at times. And you miss your family, and when you've got children, you miss your children, and he writes about this. He writes a lot, though, about missing his wife. And I mentioned at the very beginning when he is expecting letters from her and they don't arrive, he writes furiously. Why haven't they come? What's going on? Is she angry with me? Did she not get my letters? Blah, blah, blah. So there are things like that that makes me think it was personal. And the fact that it wasn't officially deposited in any collection, I'm sure I was never supposed to ever stumble upon it. I'm sure it would never have ended up in the Archives had Fort Augustus closed.*

*I'm sure if his family had known it was there, they would have taken it back? It just occurs to me that given the age of his family, he probably had grandchildren. Is there any point of view for following that through and maybe getting some family details from that angle?*

*Yes, I would love to do that. It becomes difficult because it's difficult to trace people. It's easier to trace backwards rather than forwards. The people that went, he also had a daughter, well, obviously you've seen the picture. One daughter, who we've been able to find anything out about, entered the Ursuline Convent. She didn't have children, so the buck stops there. And obviously the son who entered Fort Augustus didn't have children. So those are the two that we have any information about. And we've not been able to find anything further. But circles can be quite small, and you never know. When people hear you're doing a project like this often, somebody has heard or knows something. And it's amazing what comes out of the woodwork. I've got four years, we'll see what happens.*

*In the years 1850-61, did this ship actually intervene on any American vessels? And if so, was the slave trade legal in the US in those years?*

*He talks about apprehending vessels. And he'll say this person had an American captain, or they had a British captain, or it was Portuguese. He doesn't talk about actively anything where they boarded an American vessel that was identified as an American vessel, but often they weren't identified as American vessels because it looked bad. It was all done, I think, through middlemen. So from that point of view, the journal's a bit sketchy. But what he does write about, makes you wonder sometimes. He talks about going into places in Sierra Leone, in the Congo, the Congo especially, where he sees slaves chained up. The ships that he's on are aware of the slaves chained up, but they don't do anything about it.*

*There was also another incident where all of the officers were invited to dine on board this beautiful sailing yacht that they thought was a beautiful sailing yacht. The day after, it's filled with slaves, and they take off. And you just wonder, were these things allowed to slip? Of course they were, because it was very expensive, and it was political. But he does write about that. There are times when he writes about one of the really fast police boats, I'll call them, really going after a ship that they know is full*

*of slaves. But then he also writes about things that just happen to pass by that aren't stopped.*

So you wonder how many blind eyes they were turning to things. Do you think people were bribed?

*I don't know if bribed would be the right word. I'd have to do more research on that. I wouldn't be surprised if economics were involved, either at a very big parliamentary level, political level. The business community has pull. Cotton was a really important textile for Glasgow, for Manchester. A lot of jobs depend on that. So what are you going to do?*

Do you get a sense from the diary that he felt passionate about the abolition of slavery?

*No, not at all. I get a sense that he was compassionate for the people that he saw. He is an interesting character though, because there are things that strike me. This is one of the things I'm quite interested in. He's an Irish Roman Catholic. His emancipation was in 1829. But he speaks about the blacks as an inferior race and that is a bit abrasive. He's also very critical of women, any woman who steps outside of the conformed norms. He will often comment on African women who don't have clothing or proper clothing. He thinks that's just, gosh, they should know better. All of this, it's terrible. He's quite conservative, that's one thing. Yes. But I think that middle class Catholics were, generally. I don't think there's any way around that one.*

What made you pick this subject? I'm just curious to know how you stumbled on to this?.

*It is obscure, yes. I started out looking at Irish migration to Scotland. Women, Irish women in Scotland. And I realised very quickly that it's very difficult to find material evidence on them. The people who kept evidence, who wrote things down, were actually nuns, believe it or not. A lot of them were Irish. A lot of them ran schools. A lot of their students were Irish Catholics. So I started to pick out information about that. Then I got really interested in Irish identity in Britain because when you come from abroad, you think that the Irish and the Scots have this wonderful affinity. When you actually arrive, you realise they're very, very different people. And I also realised that the Irish Catholics and the Scottish Catholics didn't actually like each other at all. The Scots were very conservative, very subdued. The Irish were a bit more radical, just loud, for want of a better word. And they didn't get on. So I started getting interested in this whole idea of what is religious identity, how does that fit in with Britain? And then this project comes up. So I was focused mainly on women. And then this project came up and I thought, oh, it would be a good opportunity.*

You just stumbled across this?

*Yeah, tripped, tripped, fell face first. It's so interesting. I'm completely excited about this project. It's fantastic. You know, it's a once in a lifetime research opportunity for an archivist, to hand you this journal and say, so what do you want to do? Most of the time they say you have 10 minutes. Look at it. You can't take it anywhere. You can't blah, blah, blah. We have a web page about this journal and we've got digitised extracts. We got funding. Well, UHL gave me research funding and we digitised the*

*entire thing and we also had it transcribed. I had this poor grad student typing his fingers to the bone to transcribe the entire journal. So it's all been typed up. So it's great. And I use it, I use extracts, particularly when he starts describing medical procedures and things. I use that with a history skills workshop with higher history students, S5 and S6. It's completely fascinating. I think it's the coolest thing.*

*Because one of the things he does, he goes into the dead house in Norfolk, Virginia, and goes through all of the bodies literally to find out why they died and what injuries they had. Where bullets went in, what organs had hit. Students love that kind of thing. In the medical part of it, can you express any anxieties of catching cholera, for example. Were there any ways of protecting themselves from the nursing staff as well as the doctors? He doesn't talk about cholera, but he does talk about fever. And he comes down with fever a couple of times. And there are, I think, three times when he's seriously sick and he's out for a few weeks. And he is in hospitals, in Halifax especially. He's in the fever hospital, I think, for about two months, and he was only supposed to be there for a week, and he gets really edgy and antsy, and he really wants to leave. You can understand. You're surrounded by really sick people the whole time you're there. There's a certain risk, particularly at that time. Most of the crews were given quinine, which was meant to act as a protective agent. And he'll write he's taking a little more than normal to boost his immunity. So, yeah, there was a fear. That's another good thing about the journal. It was very human. It wasn't this man going out into empire. He was sad, he was happy, he was scared. And he was describing just what most people would describe.*

What links have you had with the Royal Navy at this point?

*Well, I'm developing those because I'm asking them for help. I'm not a Navy historian. I really had to hit the ground running with this and try and get myself up to speed with certain terminology that I just didn't have. But I plan to go down to the Maritime Museum at Greenwich and ask them for help. They also have archival collections there. So I think that they'll be keen. Now, the Royal Command Museum in Halifax knows about the project, and they're very keen to help in any way that they can. They don't have a lot of material because everything's in London, but they're very curious and they're very interested. Because he produced all this, the Navy historian would be quite interested. All those people in Halifax are. And medical historians as well, environmental historians in terms of the climate tables that he keeps. The journal wasn't really in the public domain until May when I got the official go-ahead for the research project. So that's part of the process of the webpage to raise awareness so that people who might be down in London and can't get up to the archives can at least see some of the material that it contains.*

So are there many other journals with any sort of similar thing to this that research has been published before by other people?

*It's not unusual for journals to have been kept. There have been a couple of published, sort of published. I don't want to say that they're necessarily scholarly, though. I would say that they're more for general consumption. And actually, a colleague and I in Canada are going to edit this and bring it out as an edited collection before I actually do the monograph on the themes that I was talking about. So they do exist. The Wellcome Trust funds a lot of medical history and research. They, I think two years*

*ago, funded the cataloguing of the National Archives series of surgeon journals, but those were official ones. Private ones, they're a bit more difficult to get your hands on. The official ones always had to be deposited, but the ones like this one that were kept more privately, a lot of them are still in the family. Sometimes they come up at auction. You know, someone finds them. They go for a wonderful price. I think they belong in archives so people can access them. But yes, so there has been stuff done.*

Any more questions?

Okay, if not, all that remains is for me to thank you for coming along and speaking to us, Karly, and for giving us all your time.

I'm sure you'll agree with me, ladies and gentlemen, that to be a successful lecturer you need two things, enthusiasm for your subject and a sense of humour.

Thank you very much.