

BOOK REVIEW

The Life and Legacy of Doctor James Lind *by Ken Shaw*

Paperback, 63 pages
St Mary's Parish Church, Portchester
May 2019

This booklet provides a delightfully engaging biography, and more. The cover and frontispiece reproduce the iconic portrait of James Lind holding his famous publication, commonly known as *A Treatise on the Scurvy*, with the Royal Naval Hospital, Haslar, near Portsmouth in the background.

St Mary's Parish Church, which lies within the confines of Portchester Castle, has strong associations with the Royal Navy, plus a memorial plaque to Lind. The author, Emeritus Professor of Medicine at the University of Portsmouth and a long-standing resident of Portchester, "was fully involved with the application and practice of evidence-based medicine, gaining inspiration from the legacy of Lind's ground-breaking research studies". Ken Shaw was invited to write the booklet following the tercentenary commemoration of Lind's birth held at St Mary's in October 2016.

Beautifully illustrated in colour, the work sets out to describe Lind's life and his outstanding contributions. Born in Edinburgh, he was evidently well educated, becoming fluent in the classics, before being apprenticed at the age of 15 to a local surgeon. But Lind aspired to be a physician and came "down south" to serve his country, enrolling in the Royal Navy, initially as a Surgeon's Mate, when Britain was heavily engaged in what became known as the War of Austrian Succession, 1740-1748. In 1746, Lind was promoted to full Ship's Surgeon on HMS *Salisbury*, and saw action.

Significantly, Lind also observed two severe outbreaks of scurvy in the Channel. This would have stimulated him to undertake in 1747 what is now seen as a seminal study of the various remedies then recommended by the Admiralty to seamen suffering from the disease. It was not until six years later that he produced his first major publication and the one for which he is primarily remembered today. That was after Lind had returned to Edinburgh in 1748 for a period of prodigious writing and a career in private medical practice, followed by his appointment in 1758 as Chief Physician to Haslar.

Shaw's aim is to move from a narrative of Lind's life to explain his contribution to the success of the Royal Navy during the 18th century, and how his practical recommendations for preserving the health of seamen fit within the "Age of Enlightenment". This aim is cleverly achieved. For example, taking *A Treatise on the Scurvy*, Shaw describes for the general reader the modern understanding of the cause of scurvy: a specific deficiency of vitamin C.

Shaw sees in all of Lind's publications "erudition combined with exceptional common sense". A strength of this booklet is the "written gems" – quotations from Lind's works – throughout. Lind's legacy is still relevant today and this booklet will benefit both professional and general readers.

Jane E Bowden-Dan
February 2020