

# William Laidlaw Purves

## LRCSEd LRCPEd MD



**Reference and contact details:** GB779 RCSEd GD/55

**Location:** RS P2

**Title:** W L Purves & W B Purves

**Dates of Creation:** 1844-1967

**Held at:** The Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh

**Extent:** 1 archival box

**Name of Creator:** Purves, W. L. and others

**Language of Material:** English.

**Level of Description:** item

### Administrative/Biographical History:

William Laidlaw Purves was born 16<sup>th</sup> April 1842 in 5 Hill Place, Edinburgh, on 16 April 1842, the son of William Brown Purves (1799-1852), who had qualified as a Licentiate of the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh (LRCSEd) in 1835, and subsequently practised as a doctor in Edinburgh. Today, 5 Hill Place is the site of the administrative offices of the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh. After education at the High School of Edinburgh, he was apprenticed to William Forbes Skene WS but was not attracted to a career in law and matriculated at the University of Edinburgh Medical School. In 1864, he qualified LRCSEd, LRCPE and graduated MD from Edinburgh University later that year with a thesis entitled *On bronchocele; a beneficial physiological action*. His 'masters' included Goodsir, Simpson, Syme and Christison. After a period of practice in Australia he returned to Europe, taking a particular interest in aural surgery, with further studies in Berlin, Paris, Vienna and Utrecht. In 1874, he was appointed lecturer and aural surgeon to Guy's Hospital, London and began a private practice in aural and ophthalmic surgery. He died 30<sup>th</sup> December 1917. (See fuller CV and reference articles at end of this document)

### GD 55/ 1 Journals

**18<sup>th</sup> January 1862 – 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1862**

In 1862 William Laidlaw Purves joined the SS Polynia at Dundee, sailing to Newfoundland and back and he kept a journal. **a)** Bound volume **b)** loose pages in an envelope marked "Greenland journal". Journal includes line drawn maps, a letter edged in black, (from Queen Victoria to the Duchess of Sutherland); a 1902 news-cutting about a ship sinking and an advertisement for a bomb lance for killing whales. **c)** a third manuscript account of the journey

### GD 55/2 Honours

**1885**

Freedom of the City of London (pictured here)

### GD 55/3 Medical

**1784-1918**

#### Books & papers

1. Elliot, J. Medical pocket-book. 1784. Adlib catalogued
2. Purves, W. Laidlaw. Collected, nine articles. Adlib catalogued
3. 1881. MacCormac, William. Transactions of the International Medical Congress. Seventh Session. 1881. Diseases of the ear. Adlib catalogued
4. 1846. Purves, W.L. Bronchocele: a beneficial physiological action. 1864 MD Ed Uni. thesis. Typescript.
5. Chiene, J. Looking back. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 1908 Adlib catalogued
6. Testimonials – 1846 – District M.O.; 1864 – 1865- Edinburgh University – printed and manuscript



7. ?1900. Letter appointing him Consulting Aurist to the Guy's hospital
8. n.d. 1 printed sheet re ophthalmological measurement
9. n.d. 3 typescript sheets on eardrums and Meniere's disease
10. 1918. Typescript extract "Royal Normal College for the Blind" regretting the death of W L Purves, their Honorary Aurist
11. 1870 5<sup>th</sup> October. Receipt for General Medical Council registration.

#### **GD 55/4 Golf**

##### **1896-1967**

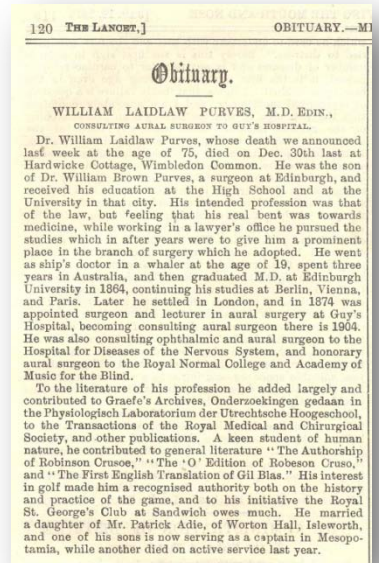
1. 1896 May 15<sup>th</sup>. Letter to Dr Purves from John Collier, who had painted Purves' portrait, expressing disappointment that it is not to be hung in the Royal Academy
2. 1896 November 24<sup>th</sup>. News cutting from the Pall Mall Gazette Sporting Notes and News section, describing the Collier portrait of Purves in good terms and stating that Purves was the inventor of the 'now famous links of St George's at Sandwich'
3. 1896 November 13<sup>th</sup>. Scotsman newspaper cutting mounted on card – the Society of Portrait Painters has gone to the Grafton Gallery and... there is a 'strong, golfing portrait of Dr Laidlaw Purves by Mr John Collier, the "Columbus" of Sandwich...'
4. 1896 December 4<sup>th</sup>. Letter to Purves from A J Robertson of "Golf, a weekly record of the "Royal and Ancient" game, 80 Chancery Lane, W.C. regarding engraving the Purves portrait and having photographs of it taken.
5. 1898 December 10<sup>th</sup>. Letter to Purves from a golf admirer
6. 1899 February 8<sup>th</sup>. 1 page of "The Sketch" magazine, featuring 'Prominent golfers who frequent the Royal Wimbledon Link. Includes photograph of "Dr Purviss, the "Father of Golf".'
7. 1907 May. Card with mounted extract from Fry's Magazine featuring a rear view drawing of W. Laidlaw Purves and a printed comment on the image.
8. 1918 January 19<sup>th</sup>. Pages 611-612 of The Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News, containing an article by Henry Leach on 'The Golfer's Progress' and mentioning Purves.
9. 1918 February 1<sup>st</sup>. 1 page from "Golfing and Ladies' Golf" featuring the death of Purves as a supporter of the Ladies' Golf Union and golfing pioneer.
10. 1918 February 1<sup>st</sup>. A second page extracted from "Golfing" magazine, on the death of two golf pioneers, including Purves.
11. n.d. Christmas card of the Royal St George's Golf Club, Sandwich, with a picture of "W. Laidlaw Purves, M.D. Founder and first Captain, 1887-1889", from the portrait by John Collier.
12. n.d. Typescript of extracts relating to Mr Laidlaw Purves from "Golfing reminiscences" by Mabel E. Stringer, (which had been published by Mills and Boon in 1924).
13. 1965. Green booklet "Royal Wimbledon Golf Club Centenary 1965" with highlighted area on an 1876 dispute between Purves and a Mr Lamb.

#### **GD 55/5 Miscellaneous**

##### **1852-1918**

1. 1854 December 29<sup>th</sup>. Certificate of Birth and Baptism of the Parish of St Cuthbert's, Edinburgh, of 'a son' [WLP], born 16<sup>th</sup> April 1842. No Baptism detail.
2. 1852-1855. 3 Alumnus cards for WLP from Schola Regiae Edinburgensis (High School, Edinburgh). Each features an engraving by W [H] Lizars, of the school building by architect Thomas Hamilton.
3. n.d. Letter (2, 1 each side) from William Purves to his mother. One side perhaps written as a child and the other as an adult.
4. n.d. Sample of handwriting of William L Purves (9 Hill Place)
5. n.d. Colour photograph of the John Collier painting of William Laidlaw Purves (depicted at top of page)
6. 1905 August 28<sup>th</sup>. Note "Mr Laidlaw Purves presents his compliments to Sir Archibald Hunter ...Company of Veterans"
7. N.d. Royal Review of 1905 September 18<sup>th</sup>. Draft/copy of notes sent related to this review.
8. 1905 August 16<sup>th</sup>. Letter from A. Grant to Purves giving dates of his service in the London Scottish R. V. Corps (1876-1884)
9. 1905 August 19<sup>th</sup>. Letter from John McLaren to WL Purves written on the reverse of WLP's letter to him regarding WLP's service with the Queen's R. V. Bde. (1859-1864)
10. 1905 September 28<sup>th</sup>. Royal review 18<sup>th</sup> September 1905. Letter from John McLaren to WLP telling him there will be no official list of veterans of No 5 Company present at the Review.

11. n.d. Envelope marked 1905 Royal Review and Volunteer Review 1905.
12. n.d. Small pencilled list of "My proudest Pleasures in life have been my wife & family, my wanderings and white days therein, my golfing days and fights, my days of research – not of practice for living-purposes, my doings for the poor, professionally and otherwise, my encumbrances, of my father, mother, aunts & brother, my dogs, my ... days – not now, my friends, Walker, Campbell, Mackenzie ..., my books, my pictures, my masters, Goodsir, Simpson, Syme, Christison, ...
13. 1908 May 30<sup>th</sup>. 1 page reprint from the Wimbledon Boro' News. WLP court case over dispute over Wimbledon Common Golf Course
14. 1908 September 7<sup>th</sup>. "My first memory" *"It comes to me as if it were y'day, the hard dusty road, the green hedge ...the footpath, my eating the hawthorn leaves, picking the tender ones and munching them as I walked that long walk to Haddington. A grey cloth suit with glass buttons showing a flower on them, which was in vogue at the time, and as I passed through the old stile at Duddingston ... loch ... Musselburgh, Tranent and in the last sunlight to Haddington; I ...was 10 or 11 ... "*
15. 1918 January 4<sup>th</sup>. Scotsman newspaper obituary for WLP and 1918 January 5<sup>th</sup>. Times newspaper obituary for WLP
16. n.d. Photocopy of images of WLP
17. 1918. 19 cuttings of death notices or obituaries gathered for Mrs Purves by the General Press Cuttings Association.
18. 1918 January 2<sup>nd</sup>. Letter from General Press Cuttings Association offering to gather newscuttings relating to the later WLP.
19. 1918. A death notice including his publications list, of WLP.
20. n.d. Booklet: "The history and adventures of Gil Blas de Santillane 1716" discusses the original.
21. n.d. Booklet: "Robeson Cruso" [sic] discusses the spelling of the name

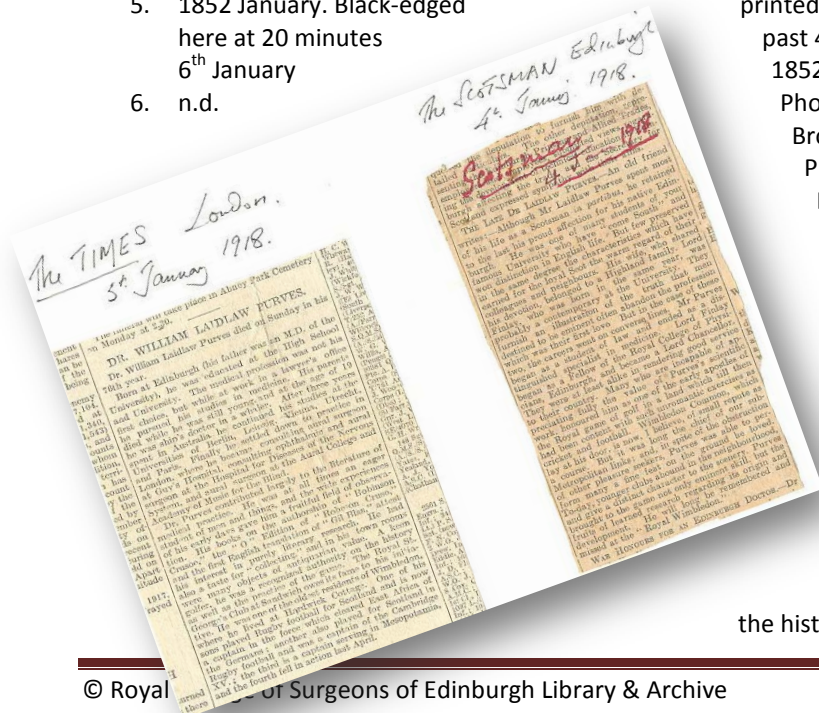


**GD 55/6 William Brown Purves (1799-1852), father of WLP 1844-1918**

1. 1844 April 19<sup>th</sup>. Large certificate of Right of Burial at the Edinburgh Cemetery at Warriston. Purchased by William Brown Purves [LRCSed] for himself and heirs.
2. 1844 July. Receipt for £2-15-10 for purchase of burial plot at Edinburgh cemetery.
3. 1844. Booking form for the Internment of John B. L. Purves [died 30<sup>th</sup> March 1844], William B Purves' eldest son
4. 1852 January. Black-edged printed extract from the Scotsman reporting the death of Mr William Purves, Surgeon, at 6 Hill Place, aged 50
5. 1852 January. Black-edged here at 20 minutes 6<sup>th</sup> January
6. n.d.

printed note "Mr William Purves, Surgeon, died past 4 o'clock afternoon. 6 Hill Place, Edinburgh 1852

Photograph of the gravestone – William Brown Purves; Margaret Laidlaw his wife; JBL Purves their eldest son; Euphemia and Jane Laidlaw.



**References**

**J Med Biog.** 1997 Nov; 5(4): 194-9.

Weir, N. William Laidlaw Purves (1842-1917) aurist, oculist and golfer.

**Journal of The Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh,** v37 (4), December 2007, p367-371

Macintyre, IMC. "Edinburgh surgery and the history of golf"

**William LAIDLAW PURVES.**

(16.04.1842 / 30.12.1917)

Licentiate of the Royal College of Surgeons, Edinburgh.

Licentiate of the Royal College of Physicians, Edinburgh.

Licentiate of Midwifery, Edinburgh.

Licentiate

- 16.04.1842. Born the 3rd Son of  
William Brown PURVES and Margaret LAIDLAW  
(12.01.1799/6.01.1852) (19.09.1798/30.03.1855)  
at Hill Place, Edinburgh. (S. of The Surgeons' Hall)
- 30.03.1844. Died, his eldest brother, John B. L. Purves.  
1852 & 55. Died, both parents; probably of a disease caught from a patient.  
The two spinster aunts, Jane & Euphemia LAIDLAW, raised the two surviving boys at 4 Lindsay Place opposite E. entry to Greyfriar's.  
Census Return of 1861 shows 3 Lodgers & 1 servant. Boys education continued at The High School.
- 1857 ? Elder brother, Alexander Pattison PURVES (11.09.1840/28.02.1897) apprenticed to Will. Forbes SKENE WS. Presumably Will. joined same Office 2 yrs. later. However, in spare time, studied Medicine with some success, passing entry exam to Edinburgh University, thus began his medical career. Alex P.P. remained in Law.. W.S. 1874.
1862. Joined S.S." POLYNIA", steam whaler at Dundee as ship's Dr. to fleet  
(18.01/3.10) His Journal exists in library of Royal Coll.of Surgeons, Edinburgh with other mementos.Narwhal Tusk presented by grateful crew members
8. 10. 1864. Graduated M.D.,Edinburgh Univ. His address.. 7 Gilmore Place, Ed.  
09 & 19.1864. Dates of Testimonials or C.V's(still existing) seeking appointments.  
06 & 07.1865 ditto in Cardiff. in Edinburgh.  
05.04.1867/70. In Med.Register for Victoria.AUSTRALIA Cert.No.554.Practiced at HORSHAM; also at sometime Coroner for State of Victoria.
- 07/12.1867. In Melbourne, Australia, Registrar of Births, Ms & Ds(295 Queen St.) records Marriage to Rebecca GRANT .. Reg. No. 3114
- 07.1870. In Australian Med.Journl.p.22 name erased..'Left Colony'.  
?? Returned to Europe&studied Berling,Vienna,Paris
- 02.&04.1873. Published medical treatise Utrecht,Brussels, etc.  
10.03.1874. London address.. 7 Hanover Street.  
1874. Appointed Surgeon & Lecturer, GUY's Hospital, London.  
1880. Married Elizabeth ADIE ( 1862/20.01.1940) at St.Peter's,Vere St..  
d. of Patrick ADIE, Worton Hall, Isleworth, s. of Alex.J.ADIE, opt. inst.maker & inventor, Edinbgh..See.'Brass& Glass',R.Scot.Museum, Ed.  
Hon.Sec.to International Medical Congress...'Diseases of the Ear'.  
1881. Born at 20 Stratford Place,Oxford St...2 daughters.  
1881 & 4. Freedom of City of London. Admitted Wrshpl.Co of GIRDLERS  
18.05.1885. Born at Hardwick Cottage, Wimbledon Cmmn. first of 4 sons, all at  
1886. this new address. Stratford.Pl. retained as Consulting Rms.  
1887. The Royal St.George's Golf Club, Sandwich; first Captain etc.  
1888. The Littlestone Golf course laid out with his guidance.  
19.04.1893. 1st Meeting of The Ladies' Union.  
W. L P described as .."*Fairy Godfather of Ladies' Golf*"...Amy Pascoe.
1896. Sat for portrait by The Hon. John COLLIER (1850/1934). old Etonian, s. of Lord Monkswell; alas, failed to hang at the R.A.,tho' artist says it was his best work. Club Members' commissioned it;W.LP.gave it to them; it hangs over fireplace in dining room;replica at R.Wimbledon.
1902. Master of GIRDLER's Company for year ensuing.  
1904. Consultant Aural Surgeon, GUY's Hospital.  
1908. Court case over dispute on Wimbledon Common Golf Course.  
30.12.1917. Died at Hardwick Cott. By then Member of 32 golf Clubs.