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## Pioneering Physician

Last updated: 02 January 2008

Brecon-born Frances Hoggan was the first woman in Britain to receive a Doctor of Medicine degree in 1870. Ken Jones, chairman of Brecknock Society and Museum Friends, recounts the life of this pioneering physician, patriot and philanthropist:



"During the past three centuries Brecon has been associated with three eminent women. The nationally famed actress Sarah Siddons in the eighteenth century will, I am sure, be familiar to very many people.

The majority of older Breconians will also be aware that Gwennllian Morgan, who was born in Defynnog, was not only the first woman town councillor in Wales but also became the first woman mayor in 1912.

However, it is likely that only a few people in Wales will know the name Frances Hoggan even though she had an international reputation.

Frances Hoggan was born in 19 High Street, Brecon in December 1843. Her father, Richard, was curate to the Rev. Canon Richard Davies of St. John's Priory and her mother Georgina appears to have been in some way, as yet unidentified, connected to the de Winton family of Breconshire.

When she was three the family moved to Glamorgan and after receiving her early education in Cowbridge and in Windsor, Frances continued with her studies in Paris and Dusseldorf.

At some stage Frances decided to become a doctor but in mid-Victorian Britain women were not permitted to study to become university trained doctors.

Undeterred, Frances passed the examination to enter Zurich University, which was the only university in Europe in 1867 to accept women medical students.

In Zurich University she is still something of a legend because she completed her six year course in three years, apparently while learning Sanskrit in her spare time, and in 1870 became, not as once thought the first Welsh woman, but the first British woman and the second in Europe, to be awarded the degree of Doctor of Medicine.

This was particularly remarkable since Frances' thesis on muscular dystrophy challenged the views of her eminent supervisor!

Frances Morgan (she married

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George Hoggan in 1874) received her Doctorate in Medicine (MD) three months before Elizabeth Garret. The latter had become a licentiate of the Society of Apothecaries in 1865, but obtained her Doctorate in Medicine in Paris in June 1870. Many people,

including doctors, appear to think that Elizabeth Garrett was the first female to be awarded the degree of MD in the UK.

After post-graduate work in Vienna, Prague and Paris and her marriage to Dr. George Hoggan in 1874, she and her husband established the first husband and wife medical practice in Britain and together, or separately, they published forty-two medical research and social issue papers in English, French and German.

She was always aware of her Welsh background and in the 1880s became intensely involved in the debate about intermediate and higher education in Wales, especially with regard to the opportunities for women and submitted several important papers to the Aberdare Committee into, "the present condition of Intermediate and Higher Education in Wales".

In 1882 Frances Hoggan wrote a small, but influential, book, "Education for Girls in Wales" and spoke about this issue at many meetings in Wales and London.

Dr. Gareth Evans in his 1990 book, "Education and Female Emancipation in Wales", described her as "... undoubtedly one of the leading feminist pioneers in Wales".

After the mid-1880s she became particularly involved in educational and social reforms in India, the Middle East, South Africa and especially the U.S.A.

In the United States she gave important lectures in which she campaigned against the lynching of Negroes in the south of the United States and wrote articles about the situation of Afro-Americans of which possibly the most significant was, "American Negro Women during the first fifty years of Freedom."

She was one of the speakers at the first Universal Race Congress held in London in 1911.

She died in 1927 and her ashes are interred with her husband's in an unmarked plot in Woking cemetery.

However, she was remembered in Brecon in 1970 when a service on the anniversary of her receiving her medical degree was held in the Cathedral, and the Brecknock Society presented the Cathedral with a suitably inscribed font ewer.

Onfel Thomas, who had had been secretary of the Brecknock Society for twenty-five years, also produced a well-researched pamphlet about Frances."

**Article written by Ken Jones, chairman of Brecknock Society and Museum Friends.**

**Mineke Bosch, from Groningen, Netherlands**

Frances Hoggan wrote an interesting chapter on Women in Medicine in the book edited by Theodore Stanton (son of Elizabeth Cady Stanton): *The Woman Question in Europe*. (1884) p. 63-89. In 1879 both she and Aletta Jacobs were members of the International medical Congress in Amsterdam, Frances Hoggan even delivering a paper. In 1881 the London organisers of the upcoming International Medical Congress decided that women could attend only the social and ceremonial meetings. I would be interested in possible correspondence between her and Aletta Jacobs, the first woman doctor in the Netherlands. After her PhD (8 March 1879) Aletta Jacobs went to London to get some practical experience in the Royal Free Hospital and in the Women's Hospital at Marylebone Street. She came back just in time for the International Congress in A. Curiously enough she does not mention Frances Hoggan in her autobiography. On her medical educational work a report was written by another Dutch feminist, Elise Haighton, in a free thinker journal at about 1884.

Tue Jul 14 13:55:33 2009

**Roger Ford from Vancouver, Canada**

I have many of Francis Hoggan's documents and papers. I know that she spoke German, and travelled extensively after the death of her husband, support social/women's issues. I will look through what I have. Another resource is Prof Neil McIntyre, who is researching and speaking about Francis. If I posted his email here, it would be deleted before this is posted. If you google his name, you could get contact information that way. I will watch for your response.

Thu Jun 4 12:09:40 2009

**Sarah Collins, University of Nottingham**

I am very interested to see that Dr Frances Hoggan still has so many living relatives! I am a PhD student at the University of Nottingham and my research on an organisation called the Society for Promoting the Employment of Women has shown that Frances was involved in work for this Society and travelled to Berlin, Germany on their behalf. I am trying to find out more about her links with Germany and would very much appreciate it if anyone could let me know whether her personal papers reveal any contacts with German citizens. You can look me up on the University of Nottingham History webs! it's where you will find my email address. Thanks in advance!

Fri May 1 15:39:34 2009

**Roger Ford Vancouver, Canada**

Dear Mrs. Harrington-Bullock, As we are related, I hope you will not be offended if I call you Lynne. My father was a Mormon. As such, he did extensive genealogical research. I was aware of Georgiana and her appointment as judge. I was thrilled to read your entry. My frustration now, is how do I contact you directly? BBC does not allow us to share email addresses at this site, ironically, to protect our privacy, something which neither you nor I wish in this instance. I have checked this site daily, since my first entry, hoping that you or your sister would revisit it. I have 20 pictures and documents which would interest you. There is extensive genealogy available through the Mormon church, even if, like me, you are not a member. We have many interesting ancestors, including General Sir Thomas Picton, the highest ranking allied officer killed at Waterloo, his namesake, whose

service in the Spanish Civil War is legendary and of course the famous Captain Morgan.

Sun Nov 9 21:25:13 2008

**Lynne Harrington-Bullock, Sonoma, California**

Dear Mr. Ford, It was not too long ago that I learned that my great-aunt Dr. Hoggan had a daughter and I have been wondering who she was and what had happened to her. Therefore, it was with great interest and excitement that I read your comment on this site. I hope you will contact me as I would love to share information on our remarkable ancestor, though it sounds that you have far more knowledge about her than I do. Thank you.

Thu Nov 6 08:26:26 2008

**Roger Ford, Vancouver Canada**

I read your (Jharna Gourlay's) comments with great interest. I remember reading 'Contesting the Zenana' some time ago. I have forwarded your name to Prof. Neil McIntyre, who is trying to piece together information about Francis' travels to India, America etc. I hope you do not mind.

Mon Nov 3 09:29:41 2008

**Jharna Gourlay , London**

Being an Indian I cannot claim that I am related to Dr. Frances Hoggan, though they say that the Celts and the Indians were once related. However, many people did not know how deeply she was involved in developing female medical education and health care in India. From 1881 onwards she was writing about women's health situation in India and together with Dr. Elizabeth Garrett Anderson, inspired and helped some Indian social reformers to establish a Fund in Bombay to care for zenana women. I am researching on this at the moment and will welcome any relevant information about her or other British medical women who came forward to help Indian women.

Wed Oct 29 08:33:00 2008

**Roger Ford**

I am a direct descendant of Francis Hoggan, through her daughter, Elise, my great-grandmother. I have the Onfel Thomas article and many of Francis' personal papers. I am very proud of my Welsh heritage and of the social reforms which Francis was involved in. I have had the good fortune of communicating with Prof. Neil McIntyre, whose research has proven the true relationship of Elise to Francis. He regularly lectures on this and other topics in England and Wales. I would be happy to share copies of any pictures/documents with any interested parties.

Thu Sep 25 09:51:10 2008

**Barbara Bullock-Wilson, Carmel, CA**

My sister was kind enough to forward the link to Mr. Jones' wonderful article on Dr. Frances Hoggan and I would like to share some additional information. Our grandmother, Georgiana Phillips (Morgan) Bullock, otherwise known as Judge Georgia P. Bullock, was Great Aunt Fannie's niece. Judge Bullock was the first woman jurist in California and also became the first women Superior Court judge in that state. Like Aunt Fannie, she championed the rights of women and children. Judge Bullock's son and our father, Wynn Bullock, became a world famous photographer. Through his art, he was known for his explorations into the greatest mysteries of the universe.

Fri Aug 15 08:06:48 2008

**Lynne Harrington-Bullock, Sonoma, California**

I read with great fascination your article on Frances Elizabeth (Morgan) Hoggan. She was my great aunt and sister to my great-grandfather, Thomas Herbert Morgan. As you mentioned in your article their father was Rev. Richard Morgan. Their mother was Georgiana Catharina Philipps, the daughter of Captain John George Philipps, R.N. The Philipps Family Estate is named "Cwmgwili" and is located in Carmarthenshire, Wales. Furthermore, would you happen to know whether Onfel Thomas's pamphlet on Dr. Hoggan is still in print and available for purchase? Thank you for the article. I enjoyed reading and learning about by illustrious ancestor.

Tue Aug 12 09:28:06 2008

**Mark Hoggan, Utah USA**

She was an amazing person.

Thu May 31 09:53:55 2007

**Verena E. Müller, Zurich Switzerland**

There are interesting comments on Miss Morgan during her time in Zurich by Auguste Forel, a fellow student, who is now represented on the Swiss 1000-Francs-Note.

Fri Apr 13 10:40:49 2007

**Margaret Dodd, Welshpool**

Very interesting young people today should realise how short a time woman have been able to show they too have a good brain. Does anyone know where in Defynnog Gwenllian Morgan was born?

Fri Feb 16 15:06:38 2007

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