

# The Monros – three medical dynasties with a common origin

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**ABSTRACT** From origins in their heartlands in Easter Ross, clan Munro produced no fewer than three distinct medical dynasties, all descended from Hugh Munro, 9th Baron Foulis (c1352–1425), 12th chief of the clan. This paper describes what we believe to be a unique family of related medical dynasties which were influential in Edinburgh, London and the Scottish Highlands. It sets out in detail the family genealogy, provides some biographical information, and explores the reasons for the development of such medical dynasties, which appear to be different for each of the three dynasties within this family.

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The ‘Edinburgh Monros’ included the three Alexanders Monro, *primus*, *secundus* and *tertius*, who between them occupied the university chair of Anatomy at the University of Edinburgh for 126 years from 1720. Dr David Monro, son of Alexander Monro *tertius*, emigrated to New Zealand where his descendants included several doctors, the last of whom died in 2013. The ‘Bedlam Monros’ achieved fame, and some notoriety, in managing mental illness in London for the 154 years from 1728–1882. In contrast, the ‘Bonesetter Munros’ practised their skills in the local community in Ross-shire and one of them attracted patients from all over Britain. They practised their trade for over 100 years from the start of the 19th to the early 20th century.

**KEYWORDS** anatomy, bonesetters, medical dynasty, mental illness, Monros

**DECLARATION OF INTERESTS** No conflict of interest declared

## INTRODUCTION

While clusters of doctors from the same family can probably be found in every society, Scotland has produced some particularly notable medical dynasties. Successive generations of the Bell family – Benjamin Bell (1749–1806), his son Joseph (1786–1848), his grandson Benjamin (1810–1883) and his great-grandson Joseph (1837–1911) – were Edinburgh surgeons and each was deacon or president of the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh. The progenitor of this medical dynasty, Benjamin Bell senior, established what became the busiest surgical practice in Scotland and this was handed down to the succeeding three generations, along with various lucrative hospital appointments.

Another good example of dynastic succession in Scottish medicine is the Gregory family. James Gregory (1674–1733) held the chair of medicine at King’s College Aberdeen, as did his elder son James (1707–1755) and his younger son John (1724–1773), and the latter went on to hold the chair of medicine in Edinburgh. The latter’s son James (1753–1821) succeeded him in that chair while one grandson, William Gregory (1803–1858), held a chair of medicine in Aberdeen, then chemistry in Edinburgh, and another,

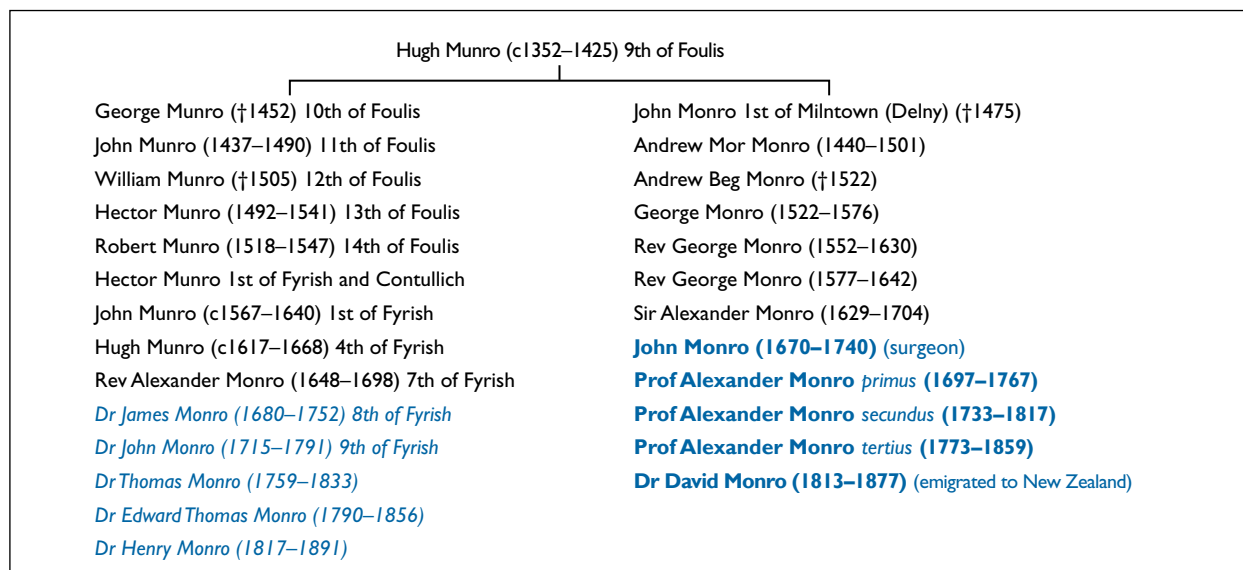
William Pulteney Alison (1790–1859), was professor of Medical Jurisprudence at Edinburgh.<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps the best known medical dynasties emerging from Scotland are the Monros and the Beatons. Two branches of the Monros dominated, respectively, anatomy in Edinburgh and treatment of ‘madness’ in London during the 18th and 19th centuries. A third, less well documented, branch of the family practised without formal training as bonesetters.

This paper describes these branches and their relationship to the Beaton medical kindred, who were prominent in Scotland between the 14th–18th centuries. The reasons for the development of each of these branches into a medical dynasty are briefly explored.

## THE ANCESTORS OF THE EDINBURGH MONROS

The following genealogy is taken from two sources, Munro’s 1734 genealogy<sup>2</sup> and Mackenzie’s 1898 *History of the Munros of Fowlis*.<sup>3</sup>



**FIGURE 1** Genealogy of the Bedlam Monros (doctors shown in italics) and the Edinburgh Monros (doctors shown in bold)

Hugh Munro, (c1352–1425) the 9th Baron Foulis, was the earliest common ancestor of the various Munros and Monros considered here (Figure 1). He was the 12th chief of the Clan Munro whose seat was Foulis Castle in Ross-shire, which remains home to the chief of the Clan Munro. Although he is traditionally the 9th Baron and 12th overall chief of the clan, he is only the 2nd Munro chief that can be proved by contemporary evidence.<sup>2</sup>

His son, John Monro (d 1475), was notable for leading the clan at the Battle of Clachnaharry (1454), just outside Inverness. He acquired lands at Milntown and Delny, near Invergordon in present day Easter Ross, and became 1st of Milntown. According to MacKenzie he was the first to use the Monro spelling of the surname.<sup>3</sup>

John was succeeded by his eldest son, Andrew *Mor* Monro (1440–1501), 2nd of Milntown; ‘a bold, austere, and gallant gentleman, esteemed by his friends, and a terror to his enemies.’<sup>3</sup> Andrew Beg [small or son of] Monro (d 1522), 3rd of Milntown, his son, acquired more land by crown charter and was given the office of chief steward of the Earldom of Ross. Further patronage in 1512 from James IV of Scotland resulted in even more land and he became known as ‘Black Andrew of the seven castles’, as he reputedly had a castle on each of his seven estates and was noted for his ferocious temper.

He was followed by his son, George Monro (1522–1576), 4th of Milntown, who was appointed by Mary, Queen of Scots as her bailie and chamberlain for the royal lands of Ross and the Black Isle. Continuing to enjoy royal patronage, his son, Rev George Munro (1552–1630), 1st of Pitlundie, was given the lucrative position of Chancellor of Ross by King James VI in 1571, which supplemented his stipend as a parish minister. As a result, he was able to acquire the Pitlundie Estate on

the Black Isle. His son, also Rev George Munro (1577–1642), inherited his father’s charge as minister of the small community of Suddie on the Black Isle. His second son, Alexander Monro (1629–1704) of Bearcrofts, was knighted for his service in the army and made Commissioner of Stirling.<sup>4</sup> He bought the estate of Auchinbowie, just outside Stirling, and served as MP for the County of Stirling. Sir Alexander Monro’s son John Monro (1670–1740) became a surgeon, the first of the ‘Edinburgh Monros’.<sup>2,4</sup>

### MONROS OF AUCHENBOWIE – ‘THE EDINBURGH MONROS’

John Monro (1670–1740) was the first doctor in this line of the family (Figure 1).<sup>4,5</sup> A career in medicine at this time was becoming increasingly acceptable for the sons of the landed gentry who could afford to provide financial support during training. Monro was apprenticed to the surgeon William Borthwick of Pilmuir (1641–89) who was the first in the Edinburgh Incorporation of Surgeons to have an international perspective, having studied in Padua in Italy and Leiden in Holland. His Leiden education and his appointment in 1679 as Chirurgeon Major to the Army in Scotland, both influenced his young apprentice.<sup>6,7</sup> Monro also studied medicine in Leiden and returned fired with ambition to replicate its university medical school and associated teaching hospital in Edinburgh, the first of its kind in the British Isles. John Monro became deacon (president) of the Incorporation of Surgeons, a member of the Edinburgh Town Council and deacon of the Edinburgh Convenerie of Trades, positions which gave him the political power to fulfil his ambition to establish the new medical school.<sup>5</sup> Monro and his political ally, Provost Drummond, built on the foundation laid by Robert Sibbald and the recently established Royal

College of Physicians of Edinburgh. He arranged that his son Alexander (1697–1767) should have a medical education and training which would allow him to become a professor and leader in this new venture.

Fortunately for all concerned, Alexander *Monro primus* (1697–1767) had the intellectual and leadership qualities to fill this role. Following education in Edinburgh, London and Paris, he was appointed Professor of Anatomy at the University of Edinburgh in 1720, teaching at first in Surgeons' Hall and, from 1725, in the University building. He was diligent, conscientious and a gifted lecturer and, with the added attraction of lecturing in English rather than Latin, was soon attracting large numbers of students from all over Britain.<sup>5</sup> His magnum opus *The Anatomy of the Human Bones*<sup>6</sup> ran to 11 editions and was translated into several European languages. Monro's other major contributions included the foundation of the Society for the Improvement of Medical Knowledge (forerunner of the Royal Society of Edinburgh). He was also the moving force behind *Medical Essays and Observations*, the journal of that society,<sup>9</sup> a major innovation and regarded as the first regular medical journal in Britain and one of the first in the world. It contained news of medical advances from all over Europe, case reports and book reviews. It was also the first journal to introduce peer review<sup>10</sup> and established *Monro primus* as a major figure of the Scottish Enlightenment.<sup>11</sup>

Having seen the new medical school successfully established, *Monro primus*, prepared his son Alexander *Monro secundus* (1733–1817) to be his natural successor by appointing him, at the age of 21, joint Professor of Anatomy<sup>12</sup> the year before he graduated MD from Edinburgh. *Secundus* pursued further anatomy studies in London, Leiden and Berlin<sup>13</sup> and went on to become one of the most influential anatomy teachers in the English speaking world. His American student, Benjamin Rush, wrote that 'In anatomy he is superior, perhaps, to most men in Europe'.<sup>14</sup> Comrie, a later historian, considered that he even outshone his father. 'The second Monro' he wrote 'showed himself the greater man, both as a teacher and investigator. Among more brilliant colleagues than those with whom his father had to compete, he maintained an easy equality and was the acknowledged head of the developing medical school'.<sup>15</sup>

In the spirit of the Enlightenment, he conducted animal experiments, mainly on the nervous system, and the results were included in two of his most successful books *Observations on the Structure and Function of the Nervous System*<sup>16</sup> and *Three Treatises on the Brain, the Eye, and the Ear*.<sup>17</sup> Yet for all his skill as a teacher and author, controversy remains about the originality of some of the discoveries attributed to him. It now seems clear that he was not the first to describe the function of the lymphatic system,<sup>12,18</sup> nor the first to describe the

foramen of Monro, the communication between the third and lateral ventricles.<sup>18,19</sup> He laid the groundwork for another hypothesis which bears his name, the Monro-Kellie doctrine. George Kellie, the Leith surgeon, and John Abercrombie, the Edinburgh physician,<sup>20</sup> had both been taught by Monro and held him in great esteem. Monro collaborated with Kellie, who then defined the doctrine from post-mortem studies while Abercrombie was largely responsible for the experimental confirmation and for its promotion around the world.<sup>21-23</sup>

Alexander *secundus* was a practising physician and although he never practised as a surgeon, he was professor of Anatomy and Surgery, and insisted on teaching surgery, an anomaly which caused dissatisfaction among the local surgeons and led to the establishment of a chair of surgery. Like his father he was an enthusiastic secretary (jointly with David Hume) of the Philosophical Society and editor of *Medical Essays and Observations*. He was an early and influential advocate of vaccination against smallpox.

His elder brother, Donald Monro (1727–1802), having graduated MD in Edinburgh, left for London, perhaps to leave the career path clear for Alexander. He became Physician-General to the army, physician to St George's Hospital and a Fellow of the Royal Society.<sup>24,25</sup> His book on military health, *Observations on the Means of Preserving the Health of Soldiers*, advocated improvements in military hygiene and sanitation and became a classic of its kind.<sup>26</sup>

Alexander *secundus* followed the family tradition by arranging that his son Alexander *tertius* should succeed him when he finally retired in 1808, 54 years after his appointment.

Alexander *Monro tertius* (1773–1859) did not inherit the teaching skills of his father or his grandfather.<sup>27</sup> Although a prolific writer, his textbooks did not sell and his lectures were seen as old fashioned and were unpopular.<sup>28</sup> Charles Darwin, who attended these lectures as an undergraduate, summed up student opinion. 'He made his lectures on human anatomy as dull as he was himself'.<sup>29</sup> The shortage of bodies for dissection made his teaching even less satisfactory and led to many students moving to the lectures of Drs Barclay and Knox in the extra-mural school, where the latter's guarantee of human dissection for every student led to the Burke and Hare scandal. The death of *Monro tertius* brought to an end the Monro anatomical dynasty, who among them had held the chair of Anatomy in Edinburgh for 126 years.

*Monro tertius'* son, James Monro (1806–1870), graduated MD from Edinburgh and pursued a career as a military surgeon, becoming a surgeon-major in the Coldstream Guards.<sup>13</sup> James's younger brother

David Monro (1813–1877) was to continue the medical dynasty in New Zealand.<sup>30</sup>

## MONROS IN LONDON – ‘THE BEDLAM MONROS’

These Monros were also descended from Hugh Monro, the 9th Baron, through his elder son George (10th of Foulis), whose descendants were to become Monros of Fyrish, an estate adjacent to Foulis.

Dr James Monro (1680–1752) 8th of Fyrish, a descendant, ten generations on, of Hugh Munro, the 9th baron, (Figure 1) was an almost exact contemporary of his distant cousin, the Edinburgh surgeon John Monro described above.<sup>3</sup> James was the son of the Rev Alexander Monro (d1698), 7th of Fyrish, who became Principal of Edinburgh University before moving to London.<sup>31</sup> James graduated from Balliol College, Oxford, and became a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians of London (FRCP). In 1728 he was appointed physician to Bethlem (or ‘Bedlam’) England’s oldest, and until the early 18th century, only public hospital for the insane. He was the first of four generations of his family to hold this office. The post of physician was largely an honorary one which carried a small salary and required only occasional visits. Although he did not write on the treatment of mental illness, he enjoyed fame and status through his Bethlem appointment and acquired a large private practice.<sup>32,33</sup>

James’s son, John Monro (1715–1791), after prolonged studies at St John’s College, Oxford, and in Edinburgh and Leiden, graduated MD from Oxford in 1747. He was appointed joint physician to the Bethlem alongside his father, becoming sole physician from 1752. Although his approach to mental illness could be conservative, Monro presided over many of the Bethlem reforms of the 1760s and wrote that ‘care...depends on management as much as medicine’. As the foremost doctor treating insanity he was asked to assess many prominent people including King George III during his first bout of ‘madness’.<sup>34</sup>

Monro emulated his father in three respects: he built up a large private practice, running the private asylum Brooke House, which allowed him to indulge his hobby as a connoisseur and a patron of literature and fine art; he wrote virtually nothing about the treatment of mental illness; and, as his father had done for him, he arranged that his son Thomas should succeed him in the nepotistic tradition which bore an uncanny resemblance to that of their cousins, the Edinburgh anatomists.<sup>32</sup>

After schooling at Harrow, Thomas Monro (1759–1833), graduated MD from Oxford in 1787 and was elected FRCP. He followed the now familiar career pathway with appointment as assistant physician to his

father at the Bridewell and Bethlem. He also inherited from his father the private asylum Brooke House, which his father had run in Clapton, and he too was invited to give an opinion on the madness of George III.<sup>35</sup>

Like his father and grandfather, he was regarded as an authority on madness because of his Bethlem appointment rather than his writing on the subject. Like his forebears he wrote little about madness. Rather he is remembered for his attitude to the treatment of madness which emerged from his evidence at a parliamentary enquiry into abuse of patients at the Bethlem.<sup>36</sup> He regarded restraint by chains appropriate for the ‘mad poor’ in the Bethlem, but did not allow it in Brooke House because, he reasoned, ‘if a gentleman were put in chains he would not like it.’<sup>37</sup> He was accused of ‘wanting in humanity’ and his treatment was variously described as old fashioned, ‘cruel’ and ‘useless’. These allegations were publicised in the *Third Report from the Committee on Madhouses in England* and Monro resigned his Bethlem post, then retired from medicine and indulged himself in his true passion: fine art. He is widely regarded as a founder of the British school of water-colourists, and JMW Turner was among the many artists whom he supported and encouraged.<sup>35</sup>

Despite his resignation from the Bethlem under a shadow, he was able to ensure that his son, Edward Thomas Monro (1790–1856), succeeded in the family tradition of appointment as physician to the Bethlem in 1816. Edward Thomas pursued the well-trodden family path, graduating MD from Oriel College, Oxford, becoming a FRCP and progressing to Censor and Treasurer of the RCP.<sup>32</sup> Under his charge, conditions at the Bethlem changed for the better, with one visitor in 1844 describing an atmosphere of ‘humanity and benevolence’.<sup>38</sup> While his three forebears offered neither refuge, nor cure, nor comfort, Edward Thomas at least tried to offer the latter.

Edward’s son, Henry Monro (1817–1891), represented the fifth and final generation to serve as a physician treating mental illness. He too took the traditional family career pathway of education at Harrow and a medical degree from Oxford, election as a FRCP and service as RCP Censor.<sup>3</sup> Henry, however, broke with family tradition in two ways: he was appointed physician to St Luke’s Hospital, for long the rival of the Bethlem, and he was the first of the dynasty to write several papers and a major work on mental illness – *Remarks on Insanity*.<sup>39</sup> Like all his forebears he had a large private practice, having inherited Brooke House in Clapton.<sup>40</sup> While regarded as a reformer at St Luke’s, his treatment of private patients came in for a volley of criticism reminiscent of that directed against his grandfather, with Brooke House described as ‘old-fashioned and dilapidated’. Yet he is credited with founding, in the

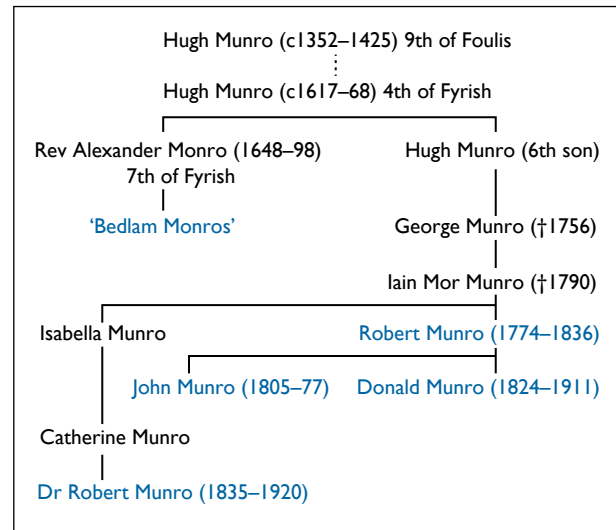
spirit of Victorian philanthropy, the House of Charity, a home for the destitute in Soho Square, which he supported for 40 years. In the family tradition he was an art collector and a competent amateur artist. The portraits which he painted of himself and his father were presented to the RCP to join those of Alexander, John and Thomas.<sup>41</sup>

Henry's death in 1891 marked the end of a dynasty of doctors who treated madness in London. They were involved for 154 years, (1728–1882), even longer than the 126 year period for which their distant cousins held the chair of Anatomy in Edinburgh

### THE MONROS AND THE BEATONS – LINKED MEDICAL DYNASTIES

Although the Beaton and the Munro/Monro medical dynasties have both been well documented, the link between them is not widely known. The Beatons/Bethunes were a medical family who served as doctors to the Lords of the Isles, to the Kings of Scots and to some of the larger Scottish clans.<sup>42</sup> Bannerman identified 76 such Beaton/Bethune physicians between 1300 and 1750.<sup>43</sup> Most of the physicians were based in island communities on Islay, Mull, Skye, the Uists and mainland Argyllshire serving powerful clans, but we also know something of their close associations with Clan Munro in the eastern Highlands, both at Foulis and at Delny. By a charter dated 16 June 1557, Robert Mor Munro of Foulis, the 15th Baron, granted and confirmed the lands of Culnaskea, very close to the Castle at Foulis, in life rent to 'his cousin and servitor Angus Leych'. Leych, a derivative of Leich meaning doctor, is used here as a surname at a time when occupational names were often used as such. In 1591 a tack of land was given by Hector Munro and his wife Annas to Neill Og Leitch in return for 'the service and cure of leitch craft in all pointis'.<sup>39</sup> In 1615 Angus is described as 'the late Angus Beatune alias Leich' when Robert Dubh Munro, the 19th of Foulis, granted lands of Culnaskea in Ross-shire to Angus's nephew Neil Beaton and his male heirs 'who shall be expert in surgery'.<sup>44</sup> Neil Beaton's sons and grandson continued as physicians to the Munros of Foulis until the lands were returned to the Munros in 1734.<sup>43,44</sup> In nearby Delny a related branch of the Beaton family served as physicians to the Munros of Milintown from around 1615; Angus Beaton was thought to be actively practicing medicine in Easter Ross at least until 1650.

In addition to the physician/patient relationship between the Beatons and Munros, their marriages to the Munro hierarchy brought the Beatons into an even closer alliance with their landlords. The Beatons provided medical care in the Highlands for several centuries, using both the oral tradition and many of the great



**FIGURE 2** 'Bonesetter Munro' genealogy. The three bonesetters and the doctor are shown in blue

works of European medicine translated into Gaelic.<sup>42</sup> During the late 17th century and the early 18th century their influence began to fade as the increasingly anglicised clan chiefs began to appoint doctors trained by formal apprenticeship or in the new university medical schools.<sup>42</sup> As the Beaton dynasty went into decline as a result of the fading influence of the clan system and very lengthy apprenticeships, the Monro medical dynasties, whose doctors were trained by formal apprenticeship or at university, were beginning to develop in Edinburgh and in London, where the nepotism, such a prominent feature of the Beaton dynasty, soon became prevalent within the Monro medical dynasties.

### MUNROS/MONROS IN KNOCKANCUIRN – 'THE BONESETTER MUNROS'

The Bonesetter Munros were, like the 'Bedlam' Monros, descended from Hugh Munro, 4th of Fyrish, (Figure 2) and were tacksmen (senior tenants) of farms owned by their relatives, the chiefs of Clan Munro. The information about these 'Bonesetter Munros' is taken from the Ferindonald papers.<sup>45</sup>

Robert Munro (1774–1836), son of Ian Mor Munro (d1790), was a tenant farmer at Knockancuirn, on the Foulis estate, who became widely known as a bonesetter. His skills were in great demand in the productive farming communities of Easter Ross and the Black Isle where, in addition to setting bone fractures, he would have been involved in treating backache and performing manipulation for a variety of common chronic conditions. Robert died in 1836 from typhus fever and he was succeeded as tenant on the farm by his oldest son John.<sup>3,45</sup>

John Munro (1805–1877) inherited healing skills from his father. Alexander McKenzie, the historian of the Munro clan, records that ‘he was a famous bonesetter and his services in that direction were much sought after.’<sup>3,45</sup> John died, unmarried, in 1877 and was succeeded both in the farm and in the bonesetting practice by his brother Donald.

Donald Munro (1824–1911) became famous throughout the north of Scotland and beyond, attracting patients from John o’Groats to Plymouth. He is reputed never to have charged a fee for his efforts, choosing instead to live off the proceeds of his farm. Donald rented a room once a month in a Dingwall hotel on ‘sale’ days so that the farming community at the market could attend his clinics.

He was held in such high esteem that that he received many handsome testimonials. In 1895 ‘hundreds’ of subscribers contributed to the purchase of a pony, trap and harness, while in 1909 he was presented with a fur coat and a cheque. Donald Munro died in 1911 and, as he had no offspring, the bonesetting skills which were practised for around 100 years at Knockancuirn died with him.<sup>3,45</sup>

A close relative of the bonesetting Munros, and great grandson of Iain Mor Munro, Dr Robert Munro (1835–1920) was born in the same parish as his bonesetting relatives. He qualified as a doctor in Edinburgh and entered general practice in Kilmarnock, where he became a keen amateur archaeologist. When the nearby Lochlea crannog (a 1st century manmade island) was discovered, he was asked to superintend the excavation and preserve whatever relics were discovered.<sup>46</sup> His hobby became a consuming interest and eventually he gave up medicine to concentrate on archaeology/ anthropology.

In 1882 he published *Ancient Scottish Lake Dwellings*<sup>47</sup> to great acclaim and travelled widely to study lake dwellings. He was awarded honorary degrees by Edinburgh and St Andrews universities and was honoured by many foreign learned societies. An annual lectureship which he endowed at Edinburgh University in 1910, the Munro Lectures on Anthropology and Archaeology, recently celebrated its centenary.<sup>48</sup> *Lake Dwellings after Robert Munro* explored the context of his work<sup>49</sup> and he is now recognised as one of the major international pioneers in anthropology/archaeology.<sup>50</sup>

## THE LATER MONROS

Sir David Monro (1813–1877) was born in Edinburgh, the seventh of twelve children of Alexander Monro *tertius* (Figure 3). Having graduated MD in 1835, he embarked on a grand tour of Europe, before setting up

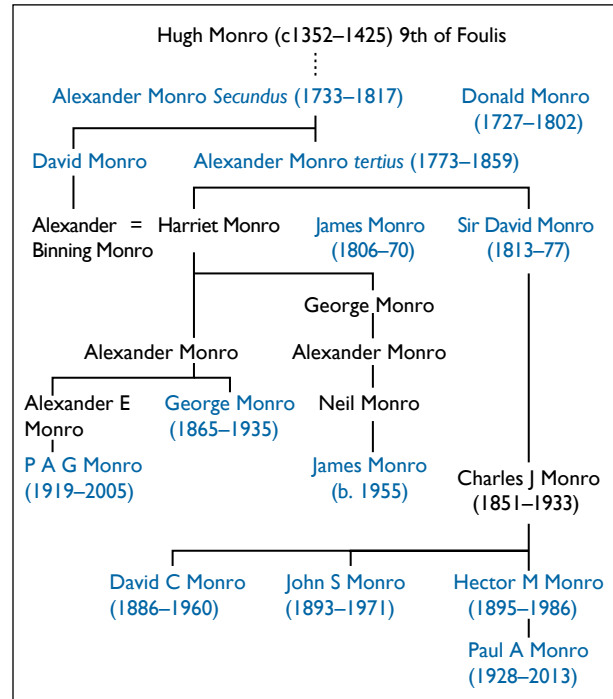


FIGURE 3 The later Monros. Doctors in blue

in medical practice in Edinburgh. He emigrated to New Zealand in 1841 and became one of the original settlers in Nelson where, in addition to practising as a doctor, he became a farmer and subsequently a politician. He became a spokesman for the Nelson settlers and in 1853 was elected to the House of Representatives, becoming its Speaker eight years later. Monro was knighted in 1866.<sup>30,51</sup> Sir David’s son, Charles Monro, arguably made an even greater mark on his adopted country than his father had done.

Charles John Monro (1851–1933) was not a doctor but is remembered as the founder of Rugby Union football in New Zealand. In January 1870 Charles Monro returned home to Nelson from school in England and suggested that the local football club switched from association to rugby union football under his tuition. He organised the first game later that year with Nelson Football Club playing Nelson College and he inevitably played a key role.<sup>52</sup> Rugby came to be New Zealand’s greatest sport and one in which they have dominated the world for over a century. A memorial to him was unveiled by his grandchildren at Massey University in 2011<sup>53</sup> and a statue of him as the ‘father of New Zealand rugby’ unveiled that year outside the rugby museum in Palmerston North.<sup>54</sup>

His son, David Carmichael Monro (1886–1960), returned to the family tradition of medicine, as did two of his brothers. He was educated at Wellington College, before going to Edinburgh to study medicine, where he

would later describe his embarrassment at being introduced to his fellow classmates as a descendant of the famous Monro dynasty.<sup>55</sup> He joined the Royal Army Medical Corps (RAMC), serving in France during the First World War. He asked for a posting to Edinburgh where he obtained the FRCSEd in 1934. He rose to become Professor of Military Surgery at the RAMC College, Millbank. During the Second World War he saw service in the Middle East and North Africa and took a leading part in the introduction of advanced mobile field surgical units.<sup>56</sup> Sir Heneage Ogilvie, who succeeded him as consultant surgeon to the Middle East forces, described him as ‘the father of the field surgical units.’<sup>57</sup>

David Carmichael Monro had two younger brothers who also went into medicine; the younger of these, Hector MacDonald (Peter) Monro was a New Zealand graduate who qualified FRCSEd in 1924 and became a respected country doctor in Fielding near Palmerston North. His elder brother John Stuart (‘Jack’) Monro (1893–1971) graduated from the University of Edinburgh and worked as an ENT surgeon in Palmerston North.

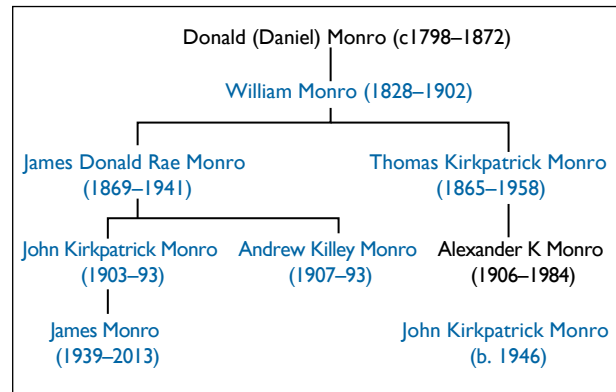
Peter’s son, Paul Alexander Monro (1928–2013), who graduated in New Zealand in 1957 became a general practitioner in Fielding. His death in 2013, just four days before his 85th birthday, marked the passing of the Monro medical dynasty in New Zealand.<sup>58</sup>

Another descendant of the Edinburgh line, Dr George Monro (1865–1935), studied at St Andrews University and completed his medical studies at Edinburgh. He was a GP who later moved to China where he worked for an insurance company and then became doctor for the Port Authority in Shanghai. His nephew also studied medicine and became an anatomist. Dr PAG Monro (1919–2005), taught anatomy at the University of Cambridge, published research on microcirculation and developed a technique for measuring the velocity of red blood cells in microcirculation. He conceived the idea of the British Microcirculation Society in 1963, organised its first meeting and served as its Secretary for almost 20 years.<sup>59</sup>

A further descendant of the Edinburgh Monros, Dr James Monro, who was born in 1955, studied at Oxford and at the London Hospital and became a GP in Somerset from 1988–2012.

## CONCLUSIONS

Favouring and facilitating the advancement of family members has been common throughout history and this appears to have been a common factor in the families considered here. The Edinburgh Monro dynasty also seemed motivated to continue and better its



**FIGURE 4** A fourth Monro medical dynasty. Doctors are shown in blue

academic tradition, which could be done by arranging the best possible medical education for a son. For the Bedlam Monros a further element was the legacy of the lucrative family business. Being in charge of the private family asylum required training in ‘mad doctoring’. Both families could be regarded as beneficiaries of either nepotism or simply family tradition and yet they practised in an age where patronage was an accepted, and in some cases essential, aspect of medical practice. The Bonsetter Monros, whose skills were passed down the family, are more representative of the ancient oral tradition of medicine. Like the Monros, many were farmers, well accepted within rural communities and many practised into the 20th century.

If we consider John Monro as the progenitor of the medical Monros in the Edinburgh line then there have been eight generations which, with the exception of the sixth, have produced doctors; a remarkable dynastic tradition.

### Footnote

We are now aware of yet another Monro medical dynasty; the descendants of Donald (aka Daniel) Monro (1798–1872), blacksmith/veterinary surgeon, Arbroath (Figure 4). His son William Monro (1828–1902) was a physician in Arbroath, while one grandson, James Donald Rae Monro (1869–1941), was a surgeon in East Finchley and another, Thomas Kirkpatrick Monro (1865–1958), was Professor of Medicine in Glasgow. Two great-grandsons were surgeons – John Kirkpatrick Monro (1903–1993), Professor of Surgery, Singapore and Andrew Killey Monro (1907–1993), a surgeon in London and Southend. Two of the next generation became doctors. James Monro (1939–2013), a cardiac surgeon in Southampton and John Kirkpatrick Monro (b.1946), a general practitioner in New Zealand. The parents of Donald (Daniel) Monro, William Monro and Janet Ross, have been traced back to Easter Ross, but as yet we have been unable to link them to Monros described in this article.

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## CORRECTION

The following changes have been made to this paper after online publication (30/3/15) and print publication (30/3/15):

p72, column 2, line 11, 'Charles James Munro' has been changed to 'Charles John Munro'.

p74, Acknowledgements, 'Alastair Gainsford' has been changed to 'Alastair Gaisford'.

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