

War Against Smallpox

Michael Bennett provides the first history of the global spread of vaccination during the Napoleonic Wars, offering a new assessment of the cowpox discovery and Edward Jenner's achievement in making cowpox inoculation a viable and universally available practice. He explores the networks that took the vaccine around the world and the reception and establishment of vaccination among peoples in all corners of the globe. His focus is on the human story of the horrors of smallpox, the hopes invested in vaccination by medical men and parents, the children put arm-to-arm across the world and the early challenges, successes and disappointments. He presents vaccination as a quiet revolution, genuinely emancipatory, but also the sharp end of growing state power. By the end of the war in 1815, millions of children had been vaccinated. The early success of the war against smallpox paved the way to further advances towards eradication.

MICHAEL BENNETT is Emeritus Professor of History at the University of Tasmania. He is the author of four books on late medieval England and is a Fellow of the Australian Academy of Humanities and a Life Member of Clare Hall, Cambridge.

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*Edward Jenner and the Global Spread
of Vaccination*

Michael Bennett

University of Tasmania



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For Fatimah, Masni and Amy

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Preface and Acknowledgements

The germ of this book goes back almost two decades to two encounters, one in a second-hand bookshop and the other in an open access library, cultural spaces now almost of another era. In the shop, I bought a copy of *Lady Nugent's Journal* and was soon reading of her anxiety in 1802 about having to give her baby smallpox. Browsing in the library, I came across Michael M. Smith's remarkable study of the Royal and Philanthropic Vaccine Expedition to New Spain in 1803–5. Although I knew about Jenner's cowpox and the final eradication of smallpox in 1980, I had no awareness of the first years of cowpox inoculation and the early spread of the practice around the world. I began to discover the surprising richness of the sources relating to vaccination in its first years that revealed aspects of human life rarely documented. Above all, I was enthralled by the discovery of a fascinating episode of humanitarian endeavour and global connectedness that had been somewhat overlooked.

For my research on the early history of vaccination, I was supported by Australia Research Council grants for a pilot-study (2004) and a major project (2008–10). The grants were used to fund research assistance and translation. I was fortunate to have as collaborators: Glynn Barrett, who sought out and translated Russian sources; Rebekah McWhirter, who completed a PhD thesis on vaccination in Australia; Diana Barnes who worked on Mary Wortley Montagu and assisted in the compilation of a database of Jenner's correspondence; Jacqueline Gratton, who completed an MA thesis on inoculation in Spain, undertook most of the research on vaccination in Spain, read through early drafts of this book, and was responsible for many improvements; and Jennifer Penschow, who completed a PhD on inoculation in northern Germany, read through the penultimate draft of the book, and saved me from many errors. For work in note-taking and translating foreign language sources, I thank Jacqueline Fox (German), Nell Tyson (Dutch), Ella Ashley (Polish), Håkan Arvidsson (Swedish) and Al Taskunas (Lithuanian). I was especially pleased that my sister Margaret Le Blanc was able to do some early proofreading.

It has been my good fortune to work in the School of History and Classics (now the History and Classics Discipline in the School of Humanities) at the University of Tasmania, and thank my former and current colleagues for creating a stimulating and supportive environment, namely Kate Brittlebank, Peter Chapman, Gavin Daly, Peter Davis, Tom Dunning, Elizabeth Freeman, Hamish Maxwell-Stewart, Anthony Page, Stefan Petrow, Mike Powell, Cassandra Pybus, Henry Reynolds, Michael Roe, Asim Roy, Pam Sharpe, Rod Thomson and Elisabeth Wilson.

As a historian who has spent most of his career working on late medieval and early modern history, I have enjoyed engaging with new communities of scholars. I benefitted from the vaccine network brought together by John Buder, the hospitality of Sanjoy Bhattacharya in London and York, the generosity of Peter Sköld who sent a copy of his monograph, and the expert advice of Gerda Bonderup, Chang Chia-Feng and José Rigau-Pérez. I have received valuable references from Edward Duyker, Jennifer Spinks, James Walvin and Richard Yeo.

I have had the pleasure of working in wonderful libraries and archives, with the Wellcome Library and the British Library in London having pride of place. I was made welcome in the libraries of the Royal College of Physicians, the Royal College of Surgeons and the Royal Society of Medicine, in London; the New York Academy of Medicine; the Countway Library in Boston; the Medical Center Library, Duke University; the Bibliothèque de l'Académie nationale de médecine, Paris; and elsewhere. I am grateful for photocopies of rare material supplied by the Arxiu Comarcal de la Cerdanya, Puigcerdà, Catalunya; the Lietuvos nacionalinė Martyno Mažvydo biblioteka, Vilnius, Lithuania; and the Württembergische Landesbibliothek, Stuttgart.

While I have been working on this book for some fifteen years, I have had many other commitments. I made most progress during three periods of study leave but, during this time too, I was dividing my time between a series of other smaller but often more pressing projects. For a time, my project of vaccination was borne aloft, but then almost swamped by the vast amount of information made available through digitalisation. I found myself making notes from far more material than I could possibly use.

I presented an early outline of my book as lectures to the University of the Third Age, Hobart, and am grateful to Leone Scrivener for her invitation to give the lectures and her continuing interest. I have had the opportunity of presenting papers on aspects of the project at several conferences and symposia, including three of the biennial conferences of the Australia and New Zealand Society for the History of Medicine.

I am grateful to Michael Watson at Cambridge University Press for his enthusiasm for the project and his patience as it proved a longer enterprise than originally anticipated. I am very appreciative of the valuable suggestions made

by the press's anonymous reader. I thank Lucy Rhymer and James Baker for their support and courtesy, Liz Steel for her careful and constructive attention to the text, and Ruth Boyes and Vinithan Sethumadhavan for overseeing the production process.

Above all, I would like to thank my wife Fatimah, my daughters Masni and Amy and my family and friends for their love and support while writing this book.

Abbreviations and Acronyms

AN	Archives Nationales, Paris
BB, S&A	<i>Bibliothèque britannique, sciences et arts</i>
BHM	<i>Bulletin of the History of Medicine</i>
BL	British Library, London
BMJ	<i>British Medical Journal</i>
GM	<i>Gentleman's Magazine</i>
HRA	<i>Historical Records of Australia</i>
HRNSW	<i>Historical Records of New South Wales</i>
JHM	<i>Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences</i>
MH	<i>Medical History</i>
MPJ	<i>Medical and Physical Journal</i>
NVE	National Vaccine Establishment
PTRS	<i>Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society</i>
RCP	Royal College of Physicians, London
RCS	Royal College of Surgeons, London
RJS	Royal Jennerian Society
TNA	The National Archives, London
WHO	World Health Organisation
WLL	Wellcome Library, London