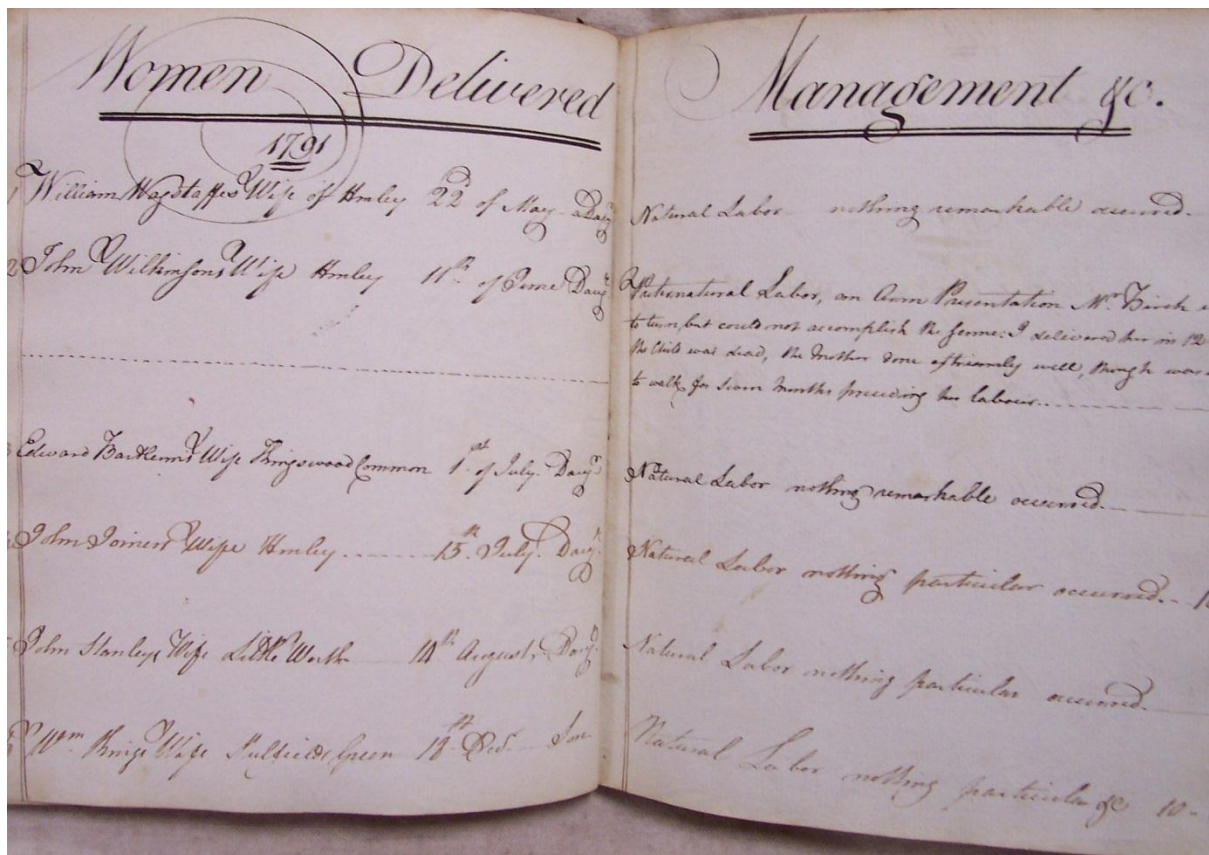


**Lectures on Midwifery by Drs Osborn and Clarke with a list of Women
Delivered by T. W. Jones - [CR3019](#) (Z0383(sm))**



At the end of July we greeted a new royal baby, Prince George of Cambridge, but what was it like to give birth during the Eighteenth Century which saw the throne occupied by three royal Georges.

This month's document of the month focuses on midwifery practice at the end of the 18th century, which was a century of incredible change in the practices and even gender of midwives.

This notebook contains lectures on midwifery by Drs Osborn and Clarke. William Osborn (1736–1808) was a man-midwife who was born and educated in London. Osborn set up a private school of midwifery with Thomas Denman, and they taught together from about 1770 to 1782 until a disagreement over the use of the vectis or forceps led to Osborn lecturing alone.

Later he partnered with John Clarke (1761–1815) and it is from this collaboration that the lectures in this note book were compiled by Thomas Wawen Jones, Surgeon who practiced as a man mid-wife himself around western parishes of Warwickshire including Henley-in-Arden and Wooten Wawen.

Osborn published a book of lectures in 1792 entitled *Essays on the practice of midwifery, in natural and difficult labours*, in this and in previous lectures and writings he advocated the use of the crochet to manipulate the pelvis when it was small and

the forceps; but in general believed in non-intervention where possible. These beliefs are reflected in the use of these instruments by Thomas Jones.

The midwife had traditionally been a woman who had been apprenticed to a local woman serving as midwife for the community; they gained practical experience which they could use and pass on. During the 18th century however there was a gradual appropriation of role of midwife by male surgeons.

The surgeon or physician had formal medical training and had often been called in to difficult labours prior to the Eighteenth century with the unfortunate stigma that cases they were involved in often resulted in the death of either the child , the mother or both. As a result many women were reluctant to adopt them over the local female midwife. It was not until the middle of the Eighteenth century when this association began to disappear; perhaps largely due to improvements in the fields of anatomy training and instrumentation. As more women survived their encounters with the male midwife their profile grew and more women employed their services.

The male midwife co-existed with the traditional midwife and this time, some of the cases recorded by Thomas Jones suggest that he was called in by them in difficult cases, in one he mentions that his attendance had been held up by an 'old woman' for six days.

The number of births for which he records that a natural birth was achieved without complications is quite high, showing that women in this area of Warwickshire were happy to employing his survives in an ordinary labour.

However given the numbers of women he helped it is likely that many more gave birth with a more traditional midwife, perhaps because they could not afford the 10s 6d which appears to be the standard rate for his attendance. Despite this there are some cases which show no fee, demonstrating perhaps that he would help any that needed it. This area of Warwickshire was perhaps ahead of other parts of the county in employing a male-midwife at a time when their role was increasing but remained the subject of debate.

[Dictionary of National Biography - Dr William Osborn](#)

Below are a few extracts from the Women Delivered section of Thomas' text. The cases are chosen to highlight some of the more specialised skills and difficult cases he had to deal with a majority of the notes say *Natural Labor nothing particular occurred*

There is a steady increase in the number of cases Thomas Jones worked; reaching its peak in 1798 when he delivers 78 women.

Women Delivered					Management & C.
1791					
2	John Wilkinsons Wife	Henley	11 th of June	Daughter	A preternatural labor, an arm presentation Mr Birch endeavoured to turn, but could not accomplish the same. I delivered her in 12 minutes the child was dead, the mother done extremely well, though was unable to walk for seven months preceding her labour.....
7	William Mitchils wife	Yarlingal	December 24 th	Son	Preternatural labor of a discased Pelvis, obliged to use the Perforator Crotchis the woman did remarkably well 10s. 6d.
1792					
11	Shakespears Wife	Hockley Heath	July 24 th	Son	Flooding case happened for five days preceding labor though was not attended with any immediate necessity for delivery yet was obliged to it on account of the great weakness it occasioned the woman done remarkably well 10s. 6d.
In the year 1792 Women 9					
1793					
31	Mrs Clarke	Rookery	July 7 th	Son	Premature labor having completed only 30 weeks of gestation 10s. 6d.
35	Mrs Hartley	Henley	August 7 th	Son	Natural Labor the child still born having a very large Hydrocephalus with scarcely any ossification of the Bones of the Cranium
1793 Women 29					
1794					
54	Anna Baker	Bearley	April 12 th	Daughter	Difficult labor having been kept by an old woman six days – the last 24 hours two violent floodings came on. She was easily delivered by the forceps and done well 10s. 6d.