

## **Sir Astley Cooper and the Making of Modern Medicine**

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Manor Park Hotel

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'Sir Astley Paston Cooper (1768-1840) was a ground-breaking surgeon and clinical teacher at Guy's Hospital in the first quarter of the 19th century. As well as becoming the most famous and the wealthiest surgeon of his day, he was twice elected President of the Royal College of Surgeons, and was Vice-president of the Royal Society.

Cooper was a wild Norfolk boy who became a society dandy. He trained with Henry Cline at St Thomas's and became senior surgeon at Guy's at the age of 32. He was deeply involved in the bodysnatching business and was at the centre of a web of illegal dissection and anatomical teaching. He was a tireless dissector and researcher, keeping meticulous records of his cases, and published practice-changing treatises on the surgery of hernias and vascular, breast, and testicular surgery, re-discovering the empirical methods of Harvey and Hunter. He was the first surgeon to successfully ligate a carotid artery, and was given a Baronetcy for excising a sebaceous cyst from the scalp of King George IV without any of the feared complications of surgery.

Beside his acclaimed educational and clinical contributions, Cooper also contribute to the formulation of the Anatomy Act of 1832, and had a massive, indirect effect on the development of medicine through his support of Thomas Wakley, the founding editor of the Lancet.

Cooper was interred, at his own direction to protect him from the body snatchers, in a lead-lined coffin in the crypt of the chapel at Guy's.'

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