Sir Jonathan Hutchinson (1828–1913) and an early description of temporal arteritis

The subject... was an old man... the father of a well remembered beadle at the London Hospital College 30 years ago... I was asked to see him because he had "red streaks on his head" which were painful and prevented his wearing his hat. The "red streaks" proved to be his temporal arteries which... were inflamed and swollen. Pulsation could be feebly detected in the affected vessel, but it finally ceased; the redness then subsided, and the vessels were left impervious cords. "The old gentleman lived, I believe, several years after this without any other manifestation of arterial disease".1

Although headache does not figure prominently in Hutchinson's description, the inflammatory signs are unmistakable. Widespread recognition succeeded the 1934 paper of Horton, Magath, and Brown.2

Hutchinson was born in Selby and with his friend Hughlings Jackson, studied at the York School of Medicine and Surgery, proceeding to St Bartholomew's, London, in 1849, qualifying MRCS and LSA in 1850. He was appointed to the London Hospital Medical College in 1862 and became FRS in 1882. His fame earned him honorary degrees from the Universities of Glasgow, Cambridge, Edinburgh, Oxford, Dublin, and Leeds. He was knighted in 1908.

Hutchinson was, like his associate Thomas Hodgkin (1798–1866), a devout Quaker, who lectured on Sunday afternoons at the meeting house near his home in Haslemere, Surrey, where he housed a library and museum. Few doctors have been so versatile; he practised as surgeon, ophthalmologist, neurologist and dermatologist. He wrote the 10 volume Archives of Surgery (1885–99) a remarkable single-handed labour. But he is most remembered for his studies on syphilis based on more than a million patients, and for the notched, short, narrow, central upper incisor permanent teeth of congenital syphilis—Hutchinson's teeth—and for the fixed dilated pupil of temporal lobe coning—Hutchinson's pupil.

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1 Hutchinson J. Diseases of the arteries. Arch Surg 1890;1:323–33.