

**Books from the Library of the Medical Society of London : an exhibition 14  
January to 3 April 1985 / [compiled by John Symons].**

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WELLCOME INSTITUTE FOR THE HISTORY OF MEDICINE



Founded 1773

BOOKS FROM  
THE LIBRARY  
OF THE



MEDICAL SOCIETY OF LONDON

AN EXHIBITION

14 January to 3 April  
1985

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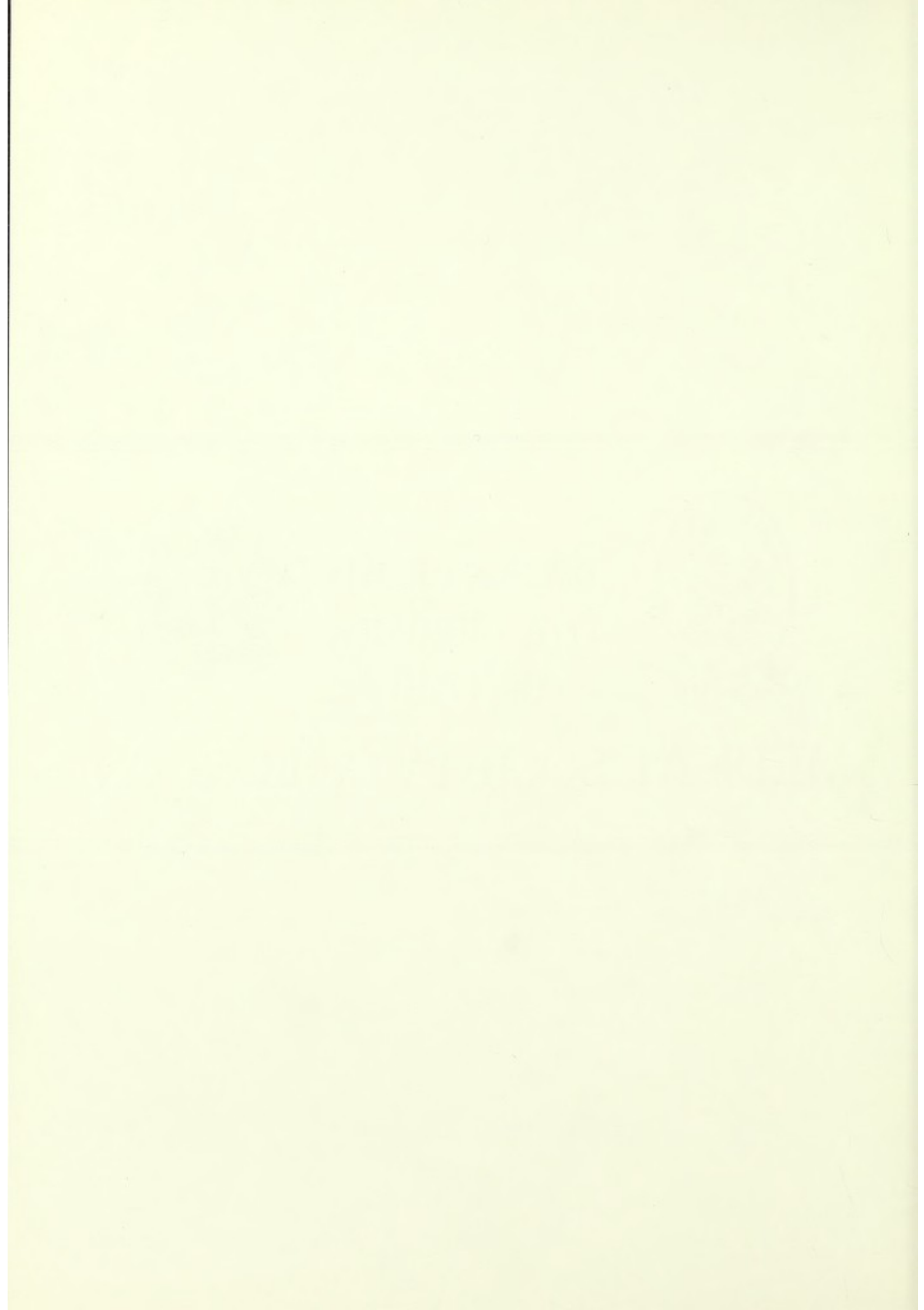
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and Understanding  
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**WELLCOME  
COLLECTION**

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## Introduction

The Medical Society of London, founded in 1773, is the oldest surviving general medical society in London. Its founders, among whom the leading figure was the Quaker physician and philanthropist John Coakley Lettsom [1744-1815], planned the Society deliberately to cut across intra-professional boundaries and to unite what were then the three distinct branches of physicians, surgeons and apothecaries. It has always retained this comprehensive character and provides a meeting ground for general practitioners and specialists without sub-division by specialty. In 1805 a dissident group seceded from the Medical Society to form the (Royal) Medical and Chirurgical Society, which in 1907 amalgamated with other societies to become the Royal Society of Medicine. The Medical Society, however, chose to retain its independence and still continues to follow its original aims.

From the beginning an important function of the Society was the provision of a library. Indeed in the original prospectus this function is given pride of place. Lettsom himself was an avid book collector with a library of some 12,000 volumes at his residence, Grove Hill, in Camberwell and he and the first Librarian, Nathaniel Hulme [1732-1807], physician to the Charterhouse, were influential in the formation of the Society's library. The library grew rapidly, both by purchase and by donation and by 1790 it contained over 10,000 books. In 1800 the Society purchased the library of the then president, James Sims [1741-1820], amounting to some 6,000 volumes. Sims had built up an important collection of early books and manuscripts and the library owes much of its character as a rare book collection to this purchase. It is sad to record, however, that Lettsom was compelled by financial



difficulties to disperse most of his own library by auction in 1811. The remainder was sold in 1816 after his death. Some of his books were acquired by the Society and others are to be found at the British Library and elsewhere.

The library continued to grow throughout the 19th century. Perhaps its last major accession was a bequest of 2,500 volumes from the library of Lord Lister in 1912. However, as the 20th century progressed it became increasingly difficult for the Society to maintain its coverage of current medical literature; the fellows normally had access to alternative sources and the library became for the most part a static collection, primarily of historical interest. Expenditure on the library came to be devoted to the preservation of the older books rather than to the purchase of new works. In 1928 a large capital sum was raised by the sale of the diaries of John Ward [1629?-81], physician and Vicar of Stratford-upon-Avon, and this was applied partly to the purchase of the freehold of the Society's house at 11 Chandos Street and partly to an extensive programme of rebinding. The Ward diaries are now in the Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington D.C.

By the 1960s the Society had become concerned at the heavy responsibility involved in the maintenance of such an important historical collection and in 1967 an agreement was reached with the Wellcome Trustees for the deposit of a selection of books for safe-keeping at the Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine, where they could be used in conjunction with the Institute's own collections of historic primary texts and modern secondary literature. In this way their physical security was assured and their accessibility to readers improved. Some 10,000 books were selected and the period of deposit was set

initially at 20 years. As the end of this period approached, thought was given to the long-term future of the collection and in 1984 negotiations for the outright purchase of the deposited books by the Wellcome Trustees were successfully completed. This would not have been possible without additional generous assistance from the National Heritage Memorial Fund, the Wolfson Foundation, the Hayward Foundation, the Pilgrim Trust and the Friends of the National Libraries. The present exhibition has been prepared to mark this acquisition, the most important addition to the Institute's library since the death of the founder, Sir Henry Wellcome, in 1936.

The approximately 10,000 books selected offer a representative cross-section of the Medical Society's library and of its character as a medical library of the Georgian period with classical and medieval medical texts balanced by works of the 18th and 19th centuries. Of the books not transferred to the Wellcome Institute, a large section (some 3,500 volumes) was purchased en bloc in 1971 by Dr. Jason A. Hannah and is now the property of the University of Toronto. Some other books are still retained by the Society, so that the integrity of the original collection has by no means been totally destroyed.

The collection contains over 160 manuscript volumes ranging from the 12th century to the 19th; there are a number of important Greek manuscripts, two medieval English receipt books and a comprehensive collection of 18th century lecture notes. Although the Ward diaries mentioned earlier no longer form part of the collection, a partial transcript was made prior to their sale by Sir D'Arcy Power [1855-1941] and copies of his typescript are held both at the Wellcome Institute and at the Medical Society.



Among the printed books the bulk - about half - are of the 18th century but there are nearly 1,000 from the 15th and 16th centuries, and it is here that the items of greatest rarity are concentrated. There are editions of the classical and Arabic medical authors, such as Hippocrates, Galen and Avicenna, including early editions of the Greek texts and important Latin translations. The 16th century books include several writings of Vesalius and a number of English vernacular works such as the surgical writings of Thomas Gale and William Clowes and editions of Roesslin's Birth of mankind. Among the Wellcome Library's desiderata for the 17th century are the first edition of Malpighi's De pulmonibus and a useful series of London bills of mortality. Many of the works of the late 18th and early 19th centuries are original presentation copies from the authors to the Medical Society. It should be noted that the estimate of 10,000 books does not refer to physical volumes, since well over half the collection is contained in a series of over 500 bound volumes of pamphlets. These are predominantly of the 18th century and constitute a valuable assemblage of rare and ephemeral material.

The collection is also important as a repository of books from the libraries of individual book collectors. Lettsom, Sims and Lister have already been mentioned. Many of Sims' books were acquired at the sales of Anthony Askew [1722-74], John Lewis Petit [1736-80] and Richard Wright [1738?-86]. Earlier English medical collectors whose books can be identified include Sir Theodore Turquet de Mayerne [1573-1655], the Exeter physician John Bidgood [1624-91], the surgeon Charles Bernard [1650-1711], Richard Mead [1673-1754] and Swithen Adee [1704-86]. Among scientists and naturalists, there are books from the libraries of Robert Hooke [1635-1703], James Petiver [1663-1718], William Sherard [1659-1728], Isaac Rand [d.1743] and William Spence [1783-1860]. From the 19th century there is a large quantity of

books from the library of Peter Mark Roget [1779-1869] and several of Lister's books had formerly belonged to his father-in-law, James Syme [1799-1870]. Continental collectors include the Paris surgeon François Rasse Des Neux [d.1589/90] and the Belgian botanist Carolus Clusius [1526-1609]. Finally, among collectors whose main interests lay outside the medical field, books have been found from the collections of John Lord Lumley [1534?-1609], Robert Harley, Earl of Oxford [1661-1724], Richard Bentley [1662-1742] and Richard Rawlinson [1690-1755].

The primary purpose of the exhibition is to display a representative selection of rare books and manuscripts from the collection. In addition, a few items have been selected to illustrate the formative years of the Society and its library.

I am grateful to Dr Richard Palmer for the selection and description of the manuscript volumes exhibited, to Mr William Schupbach for the provision of material from the Wellcome Institute's Iconographic Collection and to Major T. Tudor-Williams for allowing the loan of items from the archives of the Medical Society of London. Mrs Barbara Luff has given invaluable technical assistance with the mounting of the display.

John Symons



## The Foundation of the Medical Society

### MEDICAL SOCIETY OF LONDON

A proposal for founding a medical library; and instituting a society, to be called the Medical Society of London.

[London.] 1773.

The original prospectus of the Society. The opening paragraph emphasises the importance of the library as a function of the Society. [M.S.L. T. 193. 11.]

### MEDICAL SOCIETY OF LONDON

Statutes of the Medical Society of London, instituted MDCCLXXIII.

[London.] 1773.

The original statutes with detailed instructions for the management of the library. James Sims' copy. [M.S.L. T. 191. 9.]

### MEDICAL SOCIETY OF LONDON

An early library label with an abstract of the rules.

### MEDICAL SOCIETY OF LONDON

Stipple engraving by Nathan Branwhite of the so-called 'Founders Picture' by Samuel Medley.

London: R. Wilkinson. 1801.

The original painting is still in the possession of the Medical Society. The traditional name of the 'Founders Picture' is a misnomer: only four of those present (Lettsom, Hulme, Ford and Combe) were among the founder fellows and the painting in fact may have been intended to commemorate Lettsom's presentation of the title deeds of the Society's house at 3 Bolt Court, Fleet Street, but it is certainly not meant to represent the event itself which took place in 1788.

Apart from Lettsom and Sims the painting includes Nathaniel Hulme, the first librarian, and one of his successors, Joseph Hart Myers. The figure of Edward Jenner was added after the completion of the picture.

Wellcome Iconographic Collection.

John Coakley LETTSOM [1744-1815]

Portrait, drawn and engraved by T. Holloway.

London: T. Holloway. 1792.

Lettsom, a Quaker born in the West Indies, graduated at Leyden in 1769 and practised as a physician in London. Like other Quakers of the time he was active in various philanthropic activities, particularly the General Dispensary, Royal Humane Society and Royal Sea-Bathing Hospital at Margate. He took a leading part in the foundation of the Medical Society of London in 1773 and was three times elected president in 1775, 1809 and 1813. Himself an active book collector, he took a great interest in the Society's library, to which he several times presented books.

Wellcome Iconographic Collection.

John Coakley LETTSOM

Lectures on the practice of medicine, and on materia medica.

These notes are in Lettsom's handwriting, and were probably made while he was a student at Edinburgh in 1768 or 1769. The lectures on materia medica were given by James Fordyce. [M.S.L. MS. 77.]

John Coakley LETTSOM

Dissertatio inauguralis medica, sistens observationes ad vires theae pertinentes.

Leyden: T. Haak. 1769.

Lettsom's inaugural thesis on the medicinal properties of tea. An English version was published in 1772. This copy was presented by the author to the Medical Society of London soon after its foundation. [M.S.L. T. 431. 5.]

Lettsom's book label. He was compelled to sell his library by auction in 1811 as a result of a financial crisis caused by his generosity to philanthropic causes. A number of his books came to the Medical Society.

MEDICAL SOCIETY OF LONDON

Council Minutes. Vol. I. 16 August 1789.

Transcript of a letter by Lettsom, dated 9 August, expressing his interest in the library and presenting books.

Lent by the Medical Society of London.



James SIMS [1741-1820]

Soft ground etching by W. Daniell after a drawing by G. Dance, 1796.

London: G. Dance. 1802.

James Sims, an Irishman by birth, practised as a physician in London and served as president of the Medical Society continuously from 1786 to 1808. His autocratic rule eventually led to discontent among the younger fellows and was one of the factors behind the secession in 1805 resulting in the foundation of the Medical and Chirurgical Society, now the Royal Society of Medicine.

Sims was an active book collector and the Medical Society's library owes much of its character as a rare book collection to the purchase of his library estimated at 8,000 volumes, in October 1800. For this Sims was to receive £500 and an annuity of £30 but in 1802 the cataloguing committee reported that there were no more than 6,000 volumes, with many imperfect, and Sims agreed to accept a reduced annuity of £15.

Wellcome Iconographic Collection.

BRITISH MUSEUM

A catalogue of the duplicate books, coins, and medals ... Which will be sold by auction ... by Leigh and Sotheby ... March the 6th, 1788, etc.

[London: Becket, etc. 1788.]

Marked copy with prices and names of purchasers, among whom James Sims is prominent. Many of the Society's books are marked as having been included in this sale.

Wellcome Institute copy.

MEDICAL SOCIETY OF LONDON

Council minutes. Vol. IV. December 1799. The opening of negotiations for the purchase of James Sims' library.

Lent by the Medical Society of London.

Bookplates of John Lewis Petit and Richard Wright.

Many of Sims' books were bought at the sales of the libraries of these two physicians and still bear their armorial bookplates. John Lewis Petit [1736-80] was physician to St. Bartholomew's Hospital; his collection was primarily medical. Medicine formed a part only of the library of Richard Wright [1738?-86], physician to St. George's Hospital, which was rich also in literature, history and drama.

## Manuscripts

### A RECIPE BOOK

'Here beginneth good medicines for all manner of evils that every man hath, that good leeches have drawn out of the books of those whom men call Archippus and Hippocrates....'

The manuscript was written in England in the mid-fifteenth century. As well as medical recipes, it contains notes on diseases and the properties of herbs, and advice on health. It represents a compilation from various sources, many of them of considerable antiquity. Folio 13 consists of a calendar, offering advice for each month of the year:

'In the month of July, hold thee from women, for thy brain beginneth to gather its humours...'

'In the month of November come thou into no bath...'

[M.S.L. MS. 136.]

### ACTUARIUS

On urines.

The Medical Society of London collection includes several Greek manuscripts, ranging in date from the fourteenth to the eighteenth century. This copy of the celebrated treatise on urines by the Byzantine author Actuarius dates from the 16th century, and has Latin marginalia in an Italian hand of the late sixteenth century. [M.S.L. MS. 124.]

### A MEDICAL NOTEBOOK

This manuscript bears the signature of James Macculloch, and the date 1676. Its contents include notes on anatomy, diagnosis and the causes of disease, and a glossary of pathological terms. Folio 18 contains an autobiographical note relating to the slave trade in 1678:

'In October 78 passing from Affrick to America with 150 slaves, moors and negroes, the 20 of the said month and the 7 from our departure from Affrick, they taking occasion of our weakness, being but 16 in all both for navigating the ship and suppressing them, revolted and killed 7 of our number before we could any the least advantage of them. Our fight continued 7 hours, all of us wounded but 2. Our Captain and his brother had each of them a wound in the head betwixt the sagital suture and the temporal muscles. I was wounded with an half pick betwixt the 6 and 7 false ribs.'

[M.S.L. MS. 19.]



## METEOROLOGICAL OBSERVATIONS

History of the atmosphere in observations on the weather at Bristol begun to be made in January 1774.

This volume contains observations on the weather at Bristol in the years 1774-78. It includes barometric and thermometric readings, measurements of rainfall, and notes on prevailing diseases. The writer has been identified as Samuel Farr, M.D. [1741-95], physician to the Bristol Infirmary. [M.S.L. MS. 111.]

## LYCEUM MEDICUM LONDINENSE

Minute book, 1795-1801.

The Lyceum Medicum Londinense was founded in 1785 under the patronage of John Hunter and George Fordyce. Its members included many of the leading physicians and surgeons of the day, including Abernethy, Astley Cooper, and Everard Home. It met, until 1793, in John Hunter's anatomy theatre.

At each meeting time was given to case reports or news of recent developments in medicine. On 14 November 1798 William Blair introduced the topic of cowpox as a preventative of smallpox, 'a subject at present engaging the attention of medical men'. Edward Jenner's Inquiry had been published only a few months earlier. [M.S.L. MS. 140b.]

## Incunabula

### NICOLAUS SALERNITANUS

Antidotarium.

Venice: N. Jenson. 1471.

Klebs 703.1. The first printed pharmacopoeia. This and the Liber servitoris of Abulcasis bound in the same volume - also a pharmacological work - are the two earliest printed books in the collection.

### PETRUS DE ABANO

Conciliator differentiarum philosophorum et praecipue medicorum.

Mantua: P. Septemcastrensis & J. Vurster for L. Carmelita. 1472.

Klebs 773.1. A collection of questions intended to organise and harmonise the opinions of Greek, Latin, Jewish and Arabic writers, with particular emphasis on medicine. A finely illuminated copy.

### Matthaeus SILVATICUS

Liber pandectarum medicinae.

Venice: J. de Colonia & J. Manthen. 1480.

Klebs 919.5. A dictionary of medicinal plants with names in Arabic, Greek and Latin. Elaborately decorated with, in the margin of the first page, a heraldic shield supported by a 'wild man'.

### BARTHOLOMAEUS ANGLICUS

De proprietatibus rerum.

Cologne: J. Koelhoff. 1481.

Klebs 149.4. An early printed edition of the popular medieval encyclopaedic work, covering medicine among other topics.

### HORTUS SANITATIS

Ortus sanitatis.

[Strassburg: J. Prüss. 1496.]

Klebs 509.2. A fine copy of this illustrated herbal with coloured woodcuts and initials.



## Sixteenth Century

Hieronymus von BRUNSCHWIG

The vertuose boke of distyllacyon of the waters of all maner of herbes ... translate into Englysshe [by Laurence Andrewe].

London: [P. Treveris for] L. Andrewe. '1427' [i.e. 1528?].

STC 13436. Two distinct editions of this translation of Brunschwig's Liber de arte distillandi were printed, dated 18 April 1527 and 17 April '1427'. The latter is generally considered to be an error for 1528. This copy (which is incomplete) is of the second edition. The only other recorded copy is in the British Library, formerly the British Museum Library, from which the present copy was discarded as a duplicate in 1788.

Andreas VESALIUS

Paraphrasis, in nonum librum Rhazae ... ad Regem Almansorem.

Louvain: R. Rescius. 1537.

The first edition of Vesalius' first publication, presented as his thesis at the University of Louvain.

Andreas VESALIUS

Epistola, docens venam axillarem dextri cubiti in dolore laterali secandam.

Basle: [J. Oporinus.] 1539.

The first edition of Vesalius' epistle on bloodletting, recommending the drawing of blood from a vein adjacent to the seat of the ailment, a reversion to the classical procedure, in opposition to the Arabic practice of letting blood from a remote part of the body.

Walter Hermann RYFF

Omnium humani corporis partium descriptio, seu ut vocant anatomia.

Paris: J. de Gourmont. 1545.

A collection of anatomical illustrations originally published at Strasbourg in 1541, based for the most part on Vesalius and Dryander. The illustrations for the original edition have been attributed to Hans Baldung Grien. The present edition is printed from blocks cut by Cornelis Bos, who issued Latin and French versions at Antwerp in 1542. The arteries and veins from Vesalius' Tabulae sex are here superimposed on male and female figures.

Michael SERVETUS

Christianismi restitutio.

[London. 1723.]

Primarily a religious work setting out the author's antitrinitarian views. It has a section describing the dissemination of the divine spirit through the body by way of the blood and incidentally containing the first western description of the pulmonary circulation. All but three copies of the original edition printed at Vienne in 1553 were destroyed as heretical and Servetus himself was burnt at the stake.

This London reprint of 1723 was suppressed by order of the Bishop of London while printing was still in progress and nine copies are believed to have survived. This was formerly in the possession of the antiquary Richard Rawlinson [1690-1755] and has his bookplate. It ends at p.252, as do most copies, although a copy in the Bodleian Library extends to p. 260.

AVICENNA

Kitāb al-Qānūn fī al-ṭibb.

Rome: Typographia Medicea. 1593.

The first printing of the Arabic text of Avicenna's Canon.

Eucharius ROESSLIN

[The birth of mankind.]

[London: R. Watkins? before 1598.]

Numerous editions were published of this English version of Roesslin's Rosengarten, which became the standard vernacular midwifery text of the 16th century. The original translation by Richard Jonas was published in 1540 and later extensively revised by Thomas Raynalde. The present edition, from which the title page and last leaf are wanting, has not previously been recorded. It is similar to the edition printed in 1598 by Richard Watkins but appears to be earlier.



Association Copies

ABULCASIS

Liber theoricae necnon practicae.

Augsburg: S. Grimm & M. Wirsung. 1519.

With the signature of Charles Bernard [1650-1711], a distinguished surgeon and book collector, several of whose books are in the Medical Society's library. This is of interest as having been presented to Bernard by the anatomist Edward Tyson.

GALEN

Methodus medendi, vel de morbis curandis. Thoma Linacro ... interprete. [Edited by G. Budé.]

Paris: D. Maheu for G. Hittorp. 1519.

First edition of this translation by Thomas Linacre. This copy belonged to the 16th century Paris surgeon and book collector François Rasse Des Neux, who has noted that it was originally presented by the editor, Guillaume Budé, to his father Rasse Des Neux, surgeon to four kings of France and noted for his interest in the classical medical authors.

GALEN

De temperamentis, et de inaequali intemperie libri tres Thoma Linacro interprete.

Cambridge: J. Siberch. 1521.

STC 11536. The first of Linacre's translations of Galen to be printed in England, a product of the short-lived first Cambridge press of 1521-22 from which seven books have been recorded. This copy is of the second issue; copies exist of an earlier state omitting De inaequali intemperie. The title page has the signature of the Roman Catholic recusant physician Thomas Vavasour [fl. 1535-74].

HIPPOCRATES

Βιβλία ἅπαντα ... Libri omnes. [Edited by J. Cornarius.]

Basle: Froben. 1538.

From the library of the Oxford physician Swithen Adee.

Joannes MANARDUS, Ferrariensis

En postremum tibi damus ... Joannis Manardi ... epistolarum medicinalium libros XX.

Basle: M. Isingrin. 1540.

From the library of John, Lord Lumley [1534?-1609]. His collection formed a major part of the Old Royal Library, which was presented to the British Museum in 1757. This volume was sold as a duplicate in 1769. A slip pasted to the title page carries the inscription of Lumley's brother-in-law, the physician and antiquary Humphrey Llwyd, and under this slip is the inscription of Archbishop Thomas Cranmer, many of whose books came to the Lumley Library.

Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries

LONDON, Bills of Mortality

The Medical Society's collection of weekly bills of mortality is practically complete for the period 1665-1700. The bills, compiled by the Company of Parish Clerks, constitute an important statistical source.

Marcello MALPIGHI

De pulmonibus observationes anatomicae.

Bologna: G.B. Ferroni. 1661.

The only copy in Great Britain of the first edition of Malpighi's observations on the lungs, in which he demonstrated the existence of the capillaries.

Thomas WILLIS

De anima brutorum.

Oxford: University Press for R. Davis. 1672.

Presented by the author to John Wilkins [1614-72], Bishop of Chester and first Secretary of the Royal Society. After his death, presented by his executor John Tillotson (afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury), to Robert Hooke.

Sir Hans SLOANE

Catalogus plantarum quae in insula Jamaica sponte proveniunt, vel vulgo coluntur.

London: D. Brown. 1696.

With the signature of Isaac Rand [d. 1743], Keeper of Chelsea Physic Garden, and with marginal notes by him.



Hermann BOERHAAVE

Libellus de materie medica et remediorum formulis.

Leyden: I. Severinus. 1719.

Presented by the author to the botanist William Sherard [1659-1728], founder of the chair of botany at Oxford.

Thomas TOMLINSON

Proposals for publishing by subscription A synopsis of the general practice of physick... Translated from the Latin of Joseph Lieutaud.

Birmingham: J. Baskerville. 1770.

A unique example of Baskerville's printing. This proposal for an English translation of Lieutaud's Synopsis universae praxeos medicae by the Birmingham surgeon Thomas Tomlinson failed to attract sufficient subscribers. Only the first 16 pages of the text were printed and this is the only copy known to have survived. [M.S.L. T. 42. 16.]

### Nineteenth Century

Thomas ADDISON

On the constitutional and local effects of diseases of the supra-renal capsules.

London: S. Highley. 1855.

The classic account of 'Addison's disease'. Addison was the first to appreciate the importance of the adrenals in clinical medicine. Author's presentation copy.

Ignaz Philipp SEMMELWEIS

Die Aetiologie, der Begriff und die Prophylaxis des Kindbettfiebers.

Pest, Vienna & Leipzig: C.A. Hartleben. 1861.

Semmelweis was a pioneer of asepsis in obstetrics and recognised puerperal fever to be a form of septicaemia. At the time, his theories aroused strong opposition. This copy of his treatise bears the signature of the Hungarian physician Lajos Markusovszky and may have reached the Medical Society through Joseph Lister.

Joseph LISTER, 1st Baron Lister [1827-1912]

Photogravure.

Lister's bequest of some 2,500 volumes formed the last major single accession to the Society's Library. The remaining portion of his library was sold by Messrs. Sotheran in 1913 and substantial collections of books from this sale are preserved at Glasgow Royal Infirmary and King's College Hospital Medical School. The books bequeathed to the Medical Society were at first shelved as a special collection but later dispersed into the library's general stock. Those now at the Wellcome Institute are for the most part of the 19th Century and include volumes from the library of James Syme.

Wellcome Iconographic Collection.

Joseph LISTER, 1st Baron Lister

Notes of a course of lectures on physiology delivered by William Sharpey at University College London in 1849, with later notes and additions also in Lister's hand. [M.S.L. MS. 80.]

FREDERICK III, Emperor of Germany

The illness of the Emperor Frederick III. Described from official sources. [Translated by R. Brudenell Carter.]

[London. 1888?]

This translation of the official German account by Robert Brudenell Carter (President of the Medical Society in 1886/7) was prepared for a London newspaper but never published. Carter preserved this set of proof sheets as the only surviving copy.



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