

THE LOST LIBRARY OF THE WORSHIPFUL COMPANY OF BARBER-SURGEONS OF LONDON AND DR. RICHARD MEAD

Preamble

In September 1977 the Master Sir Francis Avery Jones and the Court of Assistants of the Worshipful Company of Barbers unanimously resolved the setting up of a Library and Archives Committee. The Court appointed a Committee of seven persons of which I had the honour of being appointed Chairman, the main objectives being to build up a Library with special reference to the Company and the history of surgery from the earliest times to the year 1746.

In 1745 by reason of an Act of Parliament the Surgeons achieved their long hoped for desire to separate from the non-surgical membership and form "The Company of Surgeons". The separation had been strenuously opposed by "The Barbers" and as the Act in many ways was not specific in the apportionment of the hitherto joint possessions, bitter argument ensued and Counsel's opinion was sought as to which party could claim possession of the notable Library.

The Barbers won, and offered first refusal to the Surgeons who did not take up the offer. The Library was therefore sold to a Mr. Whiston. It seemed to me appropriate with the forming of this new committee that an attempt should be made to set down whatever could be gleaned on the original Library formed c.1440 and its development through the centuries and the aftermath following its acquisition by John Whiston, bookseller.

Introduction

However important the continuity of language may be, the actual continuity of record is even more important. When our links with the Latin tongue began to weaken in the 16th century, continuity of record was strengthened by the influence of "humanism" on the "new learning", by the retention of Latin teaching in schools, and by the growing stream of translations in the vernacular.

The Reformation which brought about the dispersal of the monastic and

academic libraries in 1536-50 threatened a break in tradition which was largely averted by the zeal of the Elizabethan antiquaries.

If the art of communication is a vital step in our history, the art of recording communication is even more important, for only by written records can man communicate with man over distances of time and space. Libraries are repositories of recorded communication and must be seen as one of the foundation stones of human society.

For the Christian in particular the book has always been primarily a weapon of aggression or defence in a world of strife and it can be said that until the 18th century a disinterested love of scholarship was as rare as a disinterested library and the Libraries of the 17th and 18th centuries such as Bodley's at Oxford and the parish Libraries were all expressly formed for religious purposes.

The existence of Libraries and their proper use depends not merely on the ability to read and write but on the development of the habit of reading. It is well known that it was mainly during the 15th century that the lay population of England, especially in Southern and Eastern England, became literate. Before this century even clerical collections were far from common. Only one collection owned by a parish priest is known in the 13th century and this was a Library of forty-eight volumes owned by Geoffrey de Lawath, rector of St. Magnus the Martyr, London. A list of his books is found in a Liber Decretorum at Pembroke College, Cambridge. The volumes concerned Theology, Grammar or Dialectic but it is interesting to note that there were three medical works.

It may seem surprising that episcopal Libraries were few in number but the life of a Bishop moving from Palace to Palace or on diocesan visitations are not conditions likely to encourage the formation or even additions to a Private Library.

The Formation of the Library of the Barbers' Company of London

In c.1440 the Barbers' Company built their Hall in Monkwell Street, in the City of London, thus promising a security of tenure, a condition favourable to the formation of a Library. The working library now began to assume a familiar form and appearance though research on this aspect is still needed. The larger collections of books at this time were probably arranged on sloping shelves, sides uppermost, or on horizontal wall shelves, but so long as the Library remained small the books would be kept in an oak chest or

possibly piled on a table. Some information can be gathered from the changes in binding styles. Bindings with elaborate designs on their sides or with bosses on corners would certainly be intended to lie on sloping shelves but this would involve a great waste of the space available. As collections grew larger books were arranged upright with only their spines or fore-edges showing.

In the 16th century Dr. John Dee of Mortlake had collected a library of some 3,000 printed books and 1,000 manuscripts important enough to have merited at least one visit from Queen Elizabeth.

In collecting material for my book "The Cutting Edge", I examined and transcribed or took abstracts from many early wills of Barbers and Surgeons in London, meticulously noting bequests, particularly of books and surgical matters. It is evident that from 1400 onwards an increasing stream of books were bequeathed to the Company in terms exhibiting deep loyalty and affection to this corporate society.

In his will dated 6 September 1456 John Queldryk, citizen and barbour of London, left to the Commonalty of the Barbers Art of London his spruce chest bound with iron and with three locks, for putting in the same chest valuables and goods of the same Art for safe custody of the same. Richard Esty barber and surgeon in his will dated 2 June 1475 states "Also I bequeath unto the fellowship of the Barbers of London 7 bokes of surgery of my best and a maser of a quart with a band and a prynt of sylver and gilt, to bide and remain to the use of the said fellowship for evermore."

It is important to remember that there is no evidence of any moveable presses designed for effect as well as utility before the Restoration.

The year 1476 was that in which William Caxton, the first English printer, introduced printing into England from Flanders. He set up a press in Westminster Abbey and the first book printed in England was the Dictes and Sayings of Philosophers, 1477. From this time until 1745, when the Library was sold, gifts and acquisitions mounted on a rising scale.

As has been mentioned previously a sense of stability is one of the vital conditions in the formation of a Library and the first Hall of the Company erected between 1440-45 was a great incentive. The second was in 1540 when the Union of the unincorporated Guild of Surgeons and the incorporated Company of Barbers took place as decreed by Henry VIII.

By 1557 it was recognised that there should be regular custodians for the Library and the two Masters of the Anatomies for the time being were assigned this responsibility as well as seeing that instruments were kept clean. Printed books in the vernacular were becoming more accessible and this is reflected in the following Minute:

27th August, 1557

"The same day it was further ordered and agreed that all men of the said company and fellowship using the mystery and craft of Surgery may take unto his or their Apprentice any person or persons although he or they be not learned in the Latin tongue, any Act heretofore made to the contrary notwithstanding."

In this connection an extract from the Schedule contained in the will of Robert Balthrop, Serjeant-Surgeon, proved 16th December 1591, is of considerable interest:

"Also I give and bequeath unto the Companie of the Barbors and Chirurgeons of the Cittie of London the Chirurgery of that most excellent writer John Tagaultius the lattin booke and also the English translation that I have made thereof. And also the Chirurgerie of the expert and perfect practitioner Ambrose Parey both which workes I have written into Englishe for the love that I owe unto my brethren practising Chirurgerie and not understanding the latin tounge and given them into the Hall for their Dayly use and Readinge both in Lattin and Englishe and Desiringe that they may be kept faire and cleane for my sake which wish them all prosperous and good successe in their workes and endeavours they take in hande to the glory of God and the advauncement of the Arte."

It is clear from the Minutes of the Company that the Library was expanding by the presentation of books, gifts of money for the express purpose of acquiring books and from bequests in the wills of Surgeons and Surgeon-Barbers. The Library had now become so important that in the extensive building programme that took place in 1638 and the years immediately following a new Library was considered a necessity.

The Barber-Surgeons' Great Building Programmes of 1636 and 1638 and THE NEW LIBRARY

The year 1636 marks two momentous decisions taken by the Court:

- 1) at a Court meeting on the 11th February 1636 it was agreed that an Anatomy Theatre be built
- 2) at a Court meeting on the 8th March 1636 it was agreed that a New or Great Parlor be erected

The Anatomy Theatre was to the design of that great architect Inigo Jones and was elliptical in plan. The details of the Parlor on which the Company expended a considerable sum of money are described in great detail in the building accounts. Little did the Company imagine that in 30 years from this time the Anatomy Theatre alone would survive after the Great Fire of London which gutted the rest of the complex.

So pleased were the Company with their building efforts that they determined in 1638 to build a New Library. They were determined it should do them great credit and be arranged to conform with the latest ideas in every detail, and made personal inspections of other Libraries. On several occasions it is stated: "The Master, Wardens and Committee went by water to see the Library at Westminster" and "The charge in sitting up our books and auncient manuscripts in our New Library" is gone into in great detail:-

	s	d
Paid for 36 yards of chaine at 4d. the yard and 36 yards at 3 d of the yard cometh to	xxij	vj
Paid to the coppersmith for castinge 80 brasses to fasten the chaines to the bookes	xij	iiij
To porters at several times to carry those bookes	ij	
Paid to the bookebynders for new byndinge 15 books	xlvij	vj
Paid for claspinge 19 large and small books		

and fasteninge all the brasses to the iron chaines to three score and foure books in the Library, new bosses for two great books
 8s. setting on old bosses js. mending auld Claspes ijs.

xxxjx viij

Paid for makeinge ringes, swiffles and fittinge all the iron chaines

xij

Som is

 vj li. xviiij s.

In 1642-3:

Paid for 60 yards of chaine for bookes in the Librarye at 4d. per yard

£l. 0. 0d.

Paid to the copper smith for 60 brasses

10. 0d.

To the claspemaker for setting on 32 brasses

8. 0d.

Books by surgeon members of the Company were now appearing in increasing numbers, some being revised from time to time, and revealing advancement in technique. It must be remembered however that the Minute of 20th March 1578 was still in force

"That yf any man of this misterie shall at any time hereafter make any booke or bookes of Surgerie the same shall not be published unless the same booke or bookes be first presented unto the Masters Governors and examinors of this Companie for the tyme being upon payne of 10 li."

The Great Fire, 1666

The only building of the Barber-Surgeons in Monkwell Street which survived the Great Fire was the Anatomy Theatre designed by Inigo Jones. The fact that the contents of the Library, Archives, Pictures and Plate were preserved was due to three factors:

- 1) The dedication of members and servants of the Company
- 2) A quick-thinking individual able to take charge and

- 3) Last but by no means least the fact that the west boundary wall abutted the churchyard of St. Giles Cripplegate and that there were windows opening on to it and a hatch for bodies to be passed through after dissection had been performed.

The New Hall

The rebuilding of the Post Fire Hall, Court Room and other accommodation was carried out between 1667-1671. Edward Jarman was the Architect. This Hall remained intact until 1864 when demolition took place except for the Court Room, Ante Room, the main staircase and rooms on the upper floors.

Although a plan was prepared of the complete ground floor before demolition it is not certain where the Library was located and although the Company possesses Inventories of its possessions dating from 1710-1745 no reference is made to it, or to books, Library furniture, bookshelves or presses. It would seem that a likely place was a room called the Committee Room on the first floor approached from a landing on the main staircase. To senior members it was also known as the Long Gallery and was in existence until destroyed by War Damage in 1940. The usual Inventory reference is as follows:

"In the Long Gallery up one pair of staires"

Two elbow chairs
A little table
The figures of the muscles
15 old Turkey worked chairs

A skeleton frame with black curtains around it, a pulley and cord,
a skeleton

20 cain bottomed chairs
An Escritore
A print of a skeleton

A long gallery was a traditional place for the display of books and in this instance would have been most accessible, quiet and users would cause no interference with ordinary routine. In this space a considerable number of books would have been available both by open access or in presses or book cases.

A Committee Minute of 29th July 1701 clearly proves that the Library was in constant use and presented problems of administration, also that books borrowed were often not returned and when returned had suffered damage, and that examination of bindings and repairs needed to be tightened up. Dr. Tyson had previously drawn up a series of proposals which the Committee decided to implement. The proposals are so important that I have transcribed them in full.

Comittee XXIX day of July 1701
(James Wall)

The Master Mr. Markes Mr. Cades Wardens Mr. Thomas Page, Mr. Wm. Pleahill Mr. Charles Barnard Mr. William Layfield Mr. Zach. Gibson Mr. Clarke & Mr. Worts

The Committee begins on Tysons proposalls & advices as follows vizt.

That the Library shall consist onely of Books of Surgery Anatomy Naturall History and Pharmacy

That all Books on Surgery, Anatomy, Naturall History & Pharmacy in all languages, as likewise such various Editions of them (when there is any considerable alteration or additions) shall be provided.

If it happens Books of a different subject should be given to this Library; That then by a Statute or order to be made, such Books should be sold or exchanged for other. But an Accountt of it to be taken in a Book provided for that purpose.

That a Book of Six Quires be prepared for this purpose. Likewise if Duplicates of the same Book be given & of the same edition, That then one of them should be exchanged.

However the Benefaction is to be registered & what it is exchanged for to be expressed in that Book provided for that purpose.

When any Book is given, underneathe the Title Page or in the most convenient place, to be wrote Liber Bibleothecae Chirurgon Lond: ex Dono A.B. Apr 1697 & on the covers on both sides to be impressed the Armes of the Society in gold.

That a Stampe be cut in copper of the bigness of a crown peice, & that

it be done on the book in gold.

That once in a year at least a view of the Books to be made by the two Chirurgeons Governors & the Auditors for the time being, to see that none be wanting; if wanting to enquire how, & to observe likewise if any want binding, and to take care thereof.

That no Book be lent out of this Library, but by order of the Governors and Surgeons for the time being, & the person who borrows the book to deposit at the same time the double reputed value of the book, which he is to forfeit to the use of the Library, unless within a Month he restores the said Book undamaged & as perfect as it was lent to him.

When a convenient Collection of Books of the Subjects are procured a person one day in the weeke (or oftner if thought convenient) to attend at the Library from 9 in the morning to 12, and from 2 in the afternoon till 6 in the summer & to 4 in the winter, to let any person (who shall have leave) to peruse any of the Books in the Library.

That one Beadle do attend on Wednesday in every weeke at the hours aforesaid.

That an Alphabetical Catalogue of the Books be made.

That by knowing hereby what books are wanting, it may encourage Benefactors to give them, & by knowing what are there, render them usefull to such as have a mind to peruse them.

That the severall Books before menconed to be provided for the purposes aforesaid be made by Mr. George Minnikin.

Order that the next comittee inspect the Book of ffree Gift.

Adjourned to the 12th of August next at three in the afternoon.

Edward Tyson, M.D. (1650-1708) the formulator of these proposals lectured on Anatomy to the Barber-Surgeons for some years until 1699 when he resigned. The Barber-Surgeons had his portrait painted and it hung in their parlor until 1746 when they sold it to his relative Luke Maurice for ten guineas. It is doubtless the portrait now in the possession of the College of Physicians presented in 1764 by his grand nephew Dr. Richard Tyson.

Of the Committee, two members Sir Charles Barnard and George Minikin were of special significance, the first was a famous bibliophile and the second a bookseller with a book shop in St. Martin le Grand and who had been Master in 1698.

Sir Charles Barnard (1650-1711) Surgeon, was elected Surgeon to St. Bartholomew's Hospital on 26th August 1686, upon the special command of the King. He attained the chief surgical practice in London of his time, and became Serjeant-Surgeon to Queen Anne in the first year of her reign. He was famous for his skill in operating and his desire never to operate unnecessarily. Barnard has left no professional works, but a contemporary essay (*The Present State of Chyeurgery*, London 1703) shows that he held correct opinions in advance of his time.

He was Master of the Barber-Surgeons' Company in 1703, and a fine portrait of him hangs in our Hall. A Sheriff of London having neglected to deliver the bodies of criminals for dissection, Barnard whilst Master proceeded against him and obtained his dismissal.

His Library, which he collected with regard to the beauty as well as to the intrinsic merit of the books, was sold after his death (*Bibliotheca Barnardiana*). Swift, who was one of his friends, in the "Journal to Stella" expresses a wish to go and look at the Library before it was sold, and afterwards tells how he attended the sale and bought nothing. Barnard was accustomed to make notes on the blank leaves as to the author or edition of his books and paid great attention to their condition and binding.

Books were his relaxation and delight and no surgeon in England, before his time, had been so learned as he. He had a great practice and was respected in his profession.

In spite of the admirable intent of the Minute of the Committee it would seem it was never implemented and this makes it almost impossible to identify today books from this Library. The last Minute of MS.5257/6 is dated 21 August 1701. The next minute book is lost and thus there is a gap until 1707.

The Disposal of the Library

As referred to in the Preamble the separation of the Surgeons from the Barbers took place in 1745 by Act of Parliament 18 Geo II Cap. 15. Serious complications arose over the apportionment of the possessions and the five

entries quoted from the Minutes from 18th May 1747 to that of 3rd September 1751 tell the sad sequence of events (resulting in the sale of the Library).

Minutes of the Barbers' Company

18th May 1747

The Master acquainting the Court that he had employed Mr. Whiston the Bookseller to putt the Company's Library in order and to make a Catalogue and valuation thereof. And that Mr. Whiston had appraised the same at Twenty Guineas. And the Clerk acquainting the Court that a learned Physician had offered twenty-five Guineas for the Library together with the Skeleton and other curiosities formerly kept in the Library. It was ordered that the Clerk should acquaint the Master of the Worshipfull Company of Surgeons with the said offer made to this Company And that this Court being desirous to manifest their esteem for and preserve the friendship of the Surgeons did give them the refusal of the said Library Skeleton and Curiosities at the said price of Twenty ffive Guineas And that in case of their acceptance thereof the rich and ancient Pall belonging to this Company should be at their service as a free gift.

16th July 1747

The Clerk reported that he had made the above offer to the Surgeons who replied that they considered themselves entitled to the Library under the Act of 1745, but that to avoid controversy with the Barbers they would be willing to refer the matter to Counsel, whereupon it was resolved that the matter should be submitted to the opinion of Counsel.

5th July 1749

Ordered that the Library of Books formerly belonging to the late united Company be forthwith sold for the most money that can be gotten for the same.

1st August 1750

Ordered that the Clerk do cause a Catalogue to be made of the Books in the Library, and that he deliver a copy thereof to Mr. Samuel Rutter.

3rd September 1751

The Clerk was again directed to endeavour to sell the Library and it was disposed of to Mr. Whiston the Bookseller for £18.

The Mr. Whiston referred to is John Whiston (1711-1780), son of William Whiston, an eminent and controversial divine. John was for many years a very considerable bookseller and publisher in London. He set up for himself about 1734 and quickly became known. His connections lay chiefly among the clergy and amongst the distinguished men to be seen there was the Bishop of Gloucester, William Warburton; the Dean of Lincoln, Dr. William George; Horace Walpole and others. In 1747 he was called in by King George I to catalogue the Library of Bishop Moore which had been bequeathed to Cambridge University in 1715 and which had been neglected for want of room to shelve it. He also acted for Eton College in the disposal of the Library of Nicholas Mann, Master of the Charterhouse, who died in 1753. In 1759 he was compelled to retire from business in consequence of a nervous break-down caused it is said by a fright as a result of a practical joke. For a time he was in an asylum. He recovered and made his will in 1766 and lived on for another 14 years.

That so eminent a bookseller was called in to prepare a catalogue and valuation is in itself a testimony to the value and quality of the Barber-Surgeons' Library. What might appear a low figure can be accounted for in many ways.

Subsequent Events

That the Surgeons' Company never acquired the Library is proved by the harsh criticism of Gunning who when Master in 1789 in describing the affairs of the Surgeons' Company commented "Your Theatre is without Lectures, your Library is without books and is now an office for your Clerk and your Committee Room his parlour" (See my Vicary Lecture 1969).

ALL the evidence points to the conclusion that Whiston acted as agent for Dr. Richard Mead who thus acquired the Library in its entirety. The Minutes of 18th May 1747 record that "a learned physician" had made an offer for the Library and two names immediately come to mind, those of Richard Mead, M.D. and Sir Hans Sloane. Both were great bibliophiles and Alexander Pope with his astute assessment of character wrote as follows:-

Rare monkish manuscripts for Hearne alone,
And books for Mead and butterflies for Sloane

Sloane was also a devoted naturalist and his great and varied collections formed the nucleus of the British Museum.

Mead and Sloane in their time became Vice President and President of the Royal Society respectively and it is important to bear in mind that at the time the Library was sold, Mead was 74 and Sloane 81 years of age. Of the two men Mead was the far greater scholar and would have been fully aware of the Library and its contents as he was a frequent lecturer at Barber-Surgeons' Hall, of which the following entry is an example:

24th, 26th and 27th days of December 1711

A public Anatomy was held at the Hall - Public Lectures upon the muscles prepared by Dr. Richard Mead - being Alderman Arriss's gift.

Richard Mead, M.D. (1673-1754)

Richard Mead was the 11th child of Matthew Mead, minister, of Stepney, Co. Middlesex and was born in that parish on 11th August 1673. His father was ejected for non-conformity in 1662, but his private means being large he continued to reside there in comfort. His 13 children were educated at home. Richard learnt Latin until he was ten years old from John Nesbitt, a non-conformist, and from 1683-1689 was sent to a private school kept by Thomas Singleton, who was a fine scholar as he had at one time been Second Master at Eton. Mead became an excellent classical scholar and devoted to classical learning. He was well versed in the medical writers of the Middle Ages in addition. He enjoyed the "Schola Salernifana" and had the earliest edition of the "Rosa Anglica" (his copy is now in the Library of the Royal Medical and Chirurgical Society).

He entered the University of Utrecht at the beginning of the Academical year at the end of 1689 and under the instruction of Graevius for three years acquired an extended knowledge of classical literature and antiquities.

In 1692 he entered at Leyden as a student of medicine and in 1695 he travelled in Italy with his elder brother and Dr. Thomas Pellett of Cambridge.

Following this comprehensive training, which was to pay him a handsome dividend, Mead set up his practice in 1696 in the house where he had been born and where things went so well that on the 19th December 1717 Hearne wrote in his diary: "My great friend Dr. Richard Mead hath recovered the Princess of Wales (as she is called) when other physicians had certainly killed her, had their prescriptions been followed. This hath gained Dr. Mead great reputation at Prince George's Court, and Dr. Garth and Dr. Sloane are now out of favour as well as others". It was in this year that Mead became Vice-President of the Royal Society and remained a member

of the Council until his death. In 1720 he moved to Great Ormond Street where his house stood on the site of the present Hospital for Sick Children.

If as a physician he was not an observer of the first order he nevertheless brought learning, careful reasoning, and kindly sympathy to the bedside of his patients, and very many sick persons must have been the better for his visits. His life was an example of the magnificence befitting a great man. Of the many men who have grown rich in the professions few have expanded their riches during their life-time as generously or so wisely as Mead.

Mead died on 16th February 1754 at his house in Great Ormond Street after an illness of only five days. He was buried on 23rd February in the Temple Church.

Mead's collection of books, manuscripts, statuary, coins, gems and drawings was the largest formed in his time. His Library as appears by the printed catalogue consisted of 6,592 items, containing upwards of 10,000 volumes in which he spared no expense for scarce and ancient editions. It is remarkable that many of his books sold for much more than they had cost him.

The sale of the first part of this collection consisting of 3,280 items began on November 18th 1754 and lasted 28 days. The second sale, containing 3,461 items, besides some out of the catalogue, began on April 7th 1755 and lasted 29 days. The 29th day's sale is lacking in most of the catalogues, having been printed afterwards and distributed separately. The result of 57 days' sale of books being £5,518.10.11d. less an amount of £19.6.6d. the price realised for 15 book-cases.

To me the break up of a Library is an occasion of great sadness and I do not think I can come to a more fitting conclusion than by quoting a letter from a correspondent to The Gentlemen's Magazine in 1786:

"The representation of the state of the Spalding Society and their museum in the Gentlemen's Magazine for July 1786 awakens my deepest regret, when I reflect on the depredations of time on the best intended and most elaborate designs.

This is but an instance of the natural mutability of all sublunary undertakings. Accidents and Revolutions which destroyed the best writings and finest Libraries of Antiquity, after they had survived their

Authors or Collectors, and immortality was fondly supposed to be ensured to them, conspire against the successors of both in the present age. Libraries are disposed of by auction the moment they change proprietors; MSS are hawked about to sale in the mass, or dispersed, and the whole chain of their connection broken by one stroke of the hammer."

R.T.B.
31.01.78