

# The property of a gentleman: the library of J Colin Dagnall

Wilfred Foxe

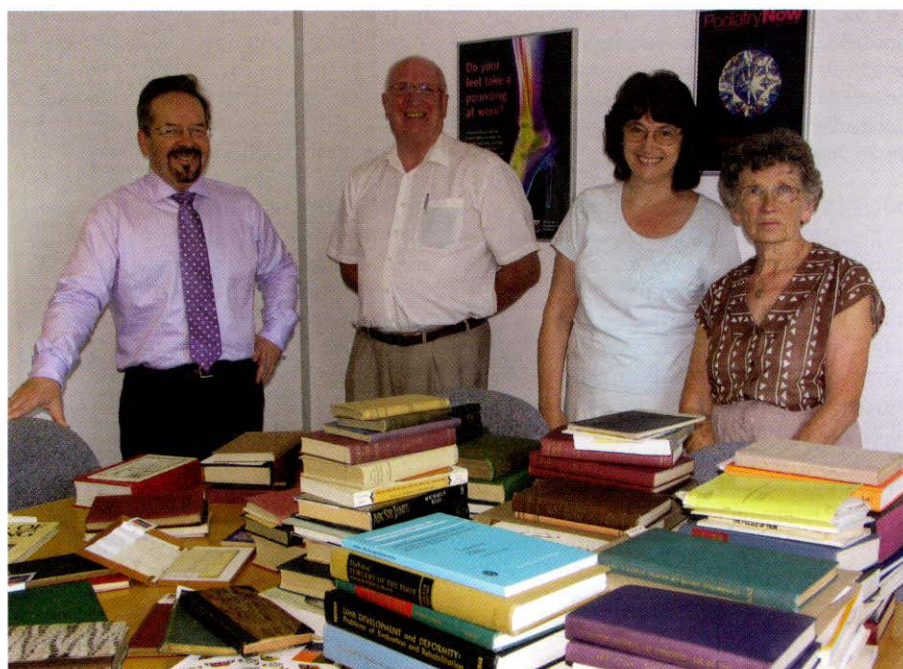
*'It is with great pleasure that I inscribe this book with my compliments to my friend J Colin Dagnall, MChS, whose efforts over the years on behalf of our profession I have admired.'*

Thus Dr William H Woolf inscribes his book *Toe Casting and Liquid Rubber Technic* (New York, 1937); this work, together with related ephemera, now forms part of the SCP's library holdings.

On 10 July 2008, Colin Dagnall's library came under the hammer at Bloomsbury Auctions, London, and representatives of the SCP bid for sundry items and, subsequent to the auction, the lion's share of the collection was acquired for a combined cost of under £1500. This figure represents astonishing value for money, and our principal bidder, Gwen French, must take much of the credit for this.

Dagnall's entry in the catalogue for Bloomsbury Auctions Sale 656 was included under the Medicine Section and entitled 'The Property of a Gentleman'; it accounted for some 50 out of nearly 700 available lots. Here, books on chiropody and podiatry sat alongside works that have changed the world. The latter included copies of Charles Darwin's *Geological Observations on the Volcanic Islands Visited During the Voyage of HMS Beagle*, first edition (1844), which fetched £4,800; James Hutton's *Theory of the Earth*, first edition (1795-1799), £3,600; Charles Babbage's *On a Method of Expressing by Signs the Action of Machinery*, first edition (1826), £3000; and many other items by such luminaries as André Marie Ampère, Robert Boyle, Pierre and Marie Curie, Baron Cuvier, Sir Humphry Davy, Albert Einstein, Benjamin Franklin, the Marquis de Laplace, Blaise Pascal, Louis Pasteur, *et al.*

Observers of Anglo-French scientific rivalry may be interested to note that Volume XLII (1744) of the *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London* (founded 1660) sold for £1,600, whereas the *Histoire année MDCXCIX – MDCCIII* of the Académie Royal des Sciences (founded 1666) fetched £2,600. Also under the hammer was an item from a much older academy, the Sienese Accademia degli Intronati (founded 1525): Alessandro



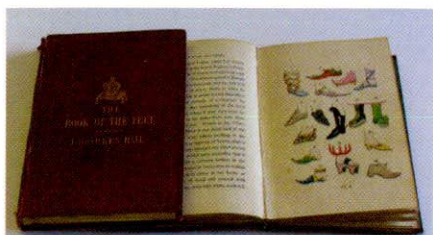
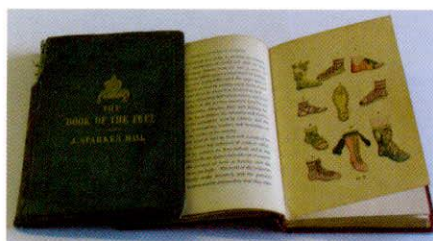
**Figure 1.** On view is about 5% of the material acquired from the Dagnall Collection. From left to right Dr Wilfred Foxe, Donald Lorimer, Dr Margaret Graham and Gwen French.

Piccolomini's *La prima parte delle theoriche overo speculationi de i pianetti* (Venice, c.1558) which fetched a modest £440. However, Lot 151, Voltaire's *Elemens de la philosophie de Neuton* (Amsterdam 1738), a bargain at £650, was the curtain raiser for the principal item of interest to us. Perhaps the rendering into French of extracts from Sir Isaac Newton's *Philosophiae naturalis principia mathematica* (London, 1687) by a Gallic member of the Intronati was an entirely appropriate overture to the 'Property of a Gentleman'.

Despite the fact that there were many items with widespread appeal to those having deeper pockets than the SCP,

Dagnall's collection itself attracted a good deal of interest: there were some 30–40 people in attendance, and at least five made bids for podiatry items. Unfortunately, the single highest bid the SCP made fell short of the £1500 that secured David Low's *Chiropodologia, or, A Scientific Enquiry into the Causes of Corns* (London, 1785), a book that makes extensive and unattributed use of material from Nicholas-Laurent Le Forest's *L'art de soigner les pieds* (Paris, 1781).

During the auction proper, the SCP purchased items by Annandale, Burton, Dionis, Durlacher, Hall, Rawling, and Renshaw; and, following the auction,



**Figures 2 & 3. Pictures from Hall's Book, 2nd edition 1846; the green copy was once owned by Walter Seelig (1898-1955) and the red was formerly owned by Edward Sneddon, a Fellow of the Society who practised in Manchester; he appears to have bought the book at Simms and Dinham Booksellers, Exchange Street, Manchester on 25 July 1917.**

offers were made for unsold books by Kahler, and Lake. The Kahler, Lake, and Rawling items were each contained within boxes filled with other and no less interesting material. Furthermore, a few days after the auction, the auctioneers telephoned to ascertain if the SCP had any interest in the remainder of Dagnall's library and, after a short period of negotiation, the remainder was secured.

In total, the SCP purchased some 70 boxes of books, journals, and ephemera. To bring order to these new acquisitions is a major undertaking and, to that end, a working party has been convened comprising the SCP's two honorary librarians, Gwen French and Don Lorimer; Dr Margaret Graham; and the Director of Education. Members will be kept informed of progress and the availability of the collection. It is hoped that some of the rarer items may be exhibited at the Bournemouth Conference. Given below are extracts from some of the acquisitions.

Contained within one of the boxes was an invitation to the SCP's annual dinner scheduled for Thursday, 20<sup>th</sup> March, 1947. The programme for the event describes an extensive French meal (which cannot easily be reconciled with post-war austerity), a listing of the proposed toasts (to His Majesty the King, The Society, and The Medical Profession), and a programme of entertainment that included performances by two singers, a pianist, and a ventriloquist. Clearly, those fortunate enough to be invited must have

eagerly anticipated the event. On the inside cover of the programme, however, the following is written: 'Dinner cancelled owing to strike of staff of Savoy Hotel.'

The 'Jottings of Old Chiro', Edward Runting, were a regular feature of *The Chiropodist*: 'Medicine has placed too much emphasis on the cure of disease and too little on preventing it' appears in Volume 33 (October 1945), three years before the formation of the NHS. Readers will have their own view on the veracity of this statement but the importance of health promotion as well as illness management has been a fundamental tenet the podiatrist's philosophy for longer than many will admit to remembering.

The SCP now has five copies of Joseph Sparkes Hall's *The Book of the Feet: A History of Boots and Shoes with Illustrations* (London, before 1846) and three of these are from the Dagnall collection, including a copy of the first American edition (New York, 1847), in which are additional chapters relating to the history of boots and shoes in the US as well as some quaint 'biographical sketches of eminent shoemakers'. By way of examples, the Rev. William Carey DD, was an 'eminent Christian missionary, and distinguished oriental scholar. ... A gentleman in New York, has preserved in his Library ... a pair of shoes made by him.' Equally interesting is the following: 'George Fox, the founder and first preacher of the Christian sect of Friends, or Quakers, ... was born in 1624. [His] youth was divided between shoemaking and the tending of sheep.'

According to the frontispiece of his books, Hall was a 'patent elastic bootmaker to Her Majesty the Queen, The Queen Dowager, and The Queen of the Belgians' and he gives his address as 308 Regent Street [London], a location now well beyond the means of most SCP members.

The books contain coloured pictures of footwear as shown in Figures 2 and 3.

Hall makes reference to developments in tanning:

*Dr Turnbull, after patient and repeated experiments on the science of tanning, has discovered the true cause of all this hardness and breaking – to him the tanners and the public owe a debt of gratitude which they will both best discharge by patronising his invention. I have had opportunity of personally inspecting his process at Bermondsey, from beginning to end, and I am enabled through his kindness to convey the following information respecting his improved process of tanning ...*

That Dr Turnbull should receive such high praise in the publication of the Queen's bootmaker probably gave rise to

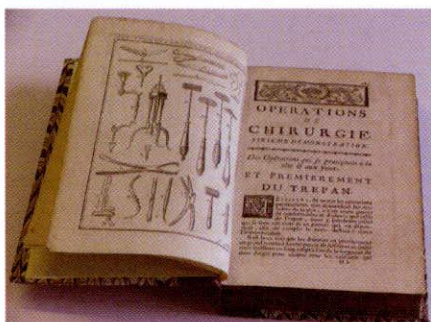
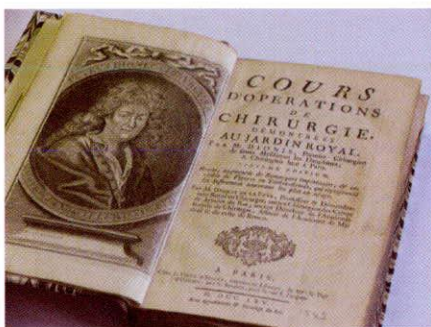
an increase in his commercial fortunes. However, the allusion to Bermondsey is also interesting for Fellmongers' Path, the location of the SCP offices (NB a fellmonger removed the hair from animal hides before tanning), is adjacent to Tanner Street, which leads directly to Leathermarket Street. Hall, however, is thereafter less than wholesome in his support for the quality of work then carried out in the location:

*There is a class of persons in London, &c., who sell boots and shoes, but do not manufacture them. The greater part of those persons know no more how a boot or shoe is made, than the boots and shoes can be said to possess such knowledge. These articles are principally made in the country or the eastern part of the metropolis, and sent up for sale: perhaps a hundred dozen pairs are made on one pair of lasts; the makers of course have no idea who will be the purchasers, or the form of the feet or the parties who may wear them; nor do they care, their object being merely the sale and the money.*

Hall continues:  
*The Northampton, Daventry, and Wellingborough wholesale manufacture of the man's shoe and boot, may be traced to the same cause, and is as productive of the like bad result. ... We see at present the goods of these places in the shop window of almost every town in the kingdom; ticketed up at so much the pair; the prices charged being in many cases much less than what some masters pay to the better qualified journeyman for the mere making of similar looking articles.*

Hall's perspectives on Victorian market forces bear the ring of familiarity, for so many aspects of British industry and history has shown that his arguments are as applicable to the shoe manufacturers of the UK Midlands as they are to the tailors of Savile Row.

Pierre Dionis' *Cours d'opérations de chirurgie* ... 6<sup>th</sup> edition (Paris, 1765) was one of the most important surgical publications of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. Although perhaps less influential than the work of Hermann Boerhaave, the fact that Dionis' work was still being printed some 60 years after the first edition of 1707 is incontrovertible testimony to the historical importance of the publication. There is a chapter devoted to the foot, which includes some devices of alarming appearance for the treatment of misshapen feet. The book is enriched by many pictures of surgical instruments though somewhat light on physiological representations (Figures 4 and 5).



Figures 4 & 5. Dionis 1 and 2

Like Joseph Sparkes Hall, Lewis Durlacher could boast an impressive

address: 15 Old Burlington Street, Mayfair. Durlacher's *The Foot: Its Pains and Penalties being a Concise View of the Disorders of the Feet with Advice for their Proper Treatment* (London, 1850) includes the following within its preface.

*Amongst the endless aches and pains to which the human frame is liable, there are few ailments entailing annoyances so great and sufferings so acute as those which attack the feet. Corns are the universal torment of mankind; and although in general held of no moment, and indeed exciting little or no sympathy, still they do ring a confession of pain by many an outward indication, from those who are ashamed to acknowledge it in words.*

*'Long corns and short shoes to the enemies of Great Britain!' was a standing toast during the late war; and the author must have undoubtedly have been a sad martyr; to wish no greater punishment to our enemies than corns.*

As well as being the 'universal torment of mankind', corns are the bread and butter of many SCP members. Regarding

the toast and reference to the 'recent war', however, Britain was involved in the Spice Wars during the early 1840s and the Punjab finally fell to British forces in 1849. Moreover, in August 1848 Lieutenant General Sir Harry Smith, a veteran of Waterloo and hero of the Battle of Aliwal, defeated the Boers at the Battle of Boomplaats. Smith, upon whose head the Duke of Wellington was prepared to heap praise, was a celebrity soldier, and his wife, Juana Ponce De Leon Smith, one of the most elegant women of her age. Hence, given the then celebrity of the protagonists, it is plausible to suggest that the toast referred to the South African conflict.

The SCP now has a library worthy of an organisation with its history, a resource for the present and future generations of historical researchers, and a source of entertainment and edification for members. Although the direction of Aristotle may now have become hackneyed, it is apposite for our SCP: if you would understand anything, observe its beginning and its development. The means by which this may be done is readily to hand.



# Lopalmed

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