

Title

Designing a Library in 1651: the Architectural Drawings of John Webb for the London College of Physicians

Summary

John Webb's drawings for the library of the London College of Physicians are dated 1651; the building was completed in 1653 and destroyed in the Great Fire of 1666. This is the earliest library building in Britain for which architectural drawings survive. John Webb (1611–1672) was the pupil and successor of Inigo Jones; this was the first fully classical building in Britain to house a library and the first purpose built specialist medical library. No surviving library of this period has survived modification so that their original form and function is often hard to interpret. In contrast, Webb's drawings enable us to understand this building and its fittings as it was originally conceived. This paper will analyse, for the first time in any detail, the six sheets of architectural drawings by Webb at Worcester College, Oxford, together with related drawings at the Royal Institute of British Architects. These are: three capitals designed by Webb for the library, and an anatomy theatre by Inigo Jones designed for the College to link with the new library building, but never built. Further evidence of the layout and management of the library will be drawn from the library catalogue compiled by Christopher Merret and printed in 1660. The paper will explore the architecture of the building and its meaning and function as the ceremonial and intellectual centrepiece of the College of Physicians. Of particular importance for library history are the details Webb gives of the construction of a stall system shelving. Measured drawings are provided of the book presses, attached reading desks and benches. These will be compared and contrasted with stall system libraries at Oxford and Cambridge colleges.

A version of this paper will be published in a Festschrift for Ove Hagelin, founder librarian of the Hagströmer Biblioteket, to be published at Stockholm in April 2010.

Roger Gaskell: Curriculum Vitae

Address: 17 Ramsey Road
Warboys
Cambridgeshire PE28 2RW
01487 823059
roger@rogergaskell.com

Date of Brith: 10 July 1952

Education:

1970–73 University of Bristol, BSc Hons Biochemistry (2:2)

Employment:

1973–1981 Bernard Quaritch Ltd, London, manager of Science and Medicine Department

1981–1989 Pickering & Chatto Ltd, managing director, founding editor of Pickering and Chatto (Publishers) Ltd.

1989– Roger Gaskell Rare Books

Publications:

1973– over 100 annotated rare book catalogues

1985 Co-author with Christopher Edwards and Roger McCrow, William Rees-Mogg (ed) *How to Buy Rare Books* (Phaidon)

1989 'The Errata Leaf of Harvey's *De Motu Cordis*, Frankfurt, 1628', *The Book Collector*, 38, 60–65

1990 'The Plates of Harvey's *De Motu Cordis*, Frankfurt, 1628', *The Book Collector*, 39, 205–219

1995 'Science and Medicine' in Catherine Porter, *Miller's Collecting Books*, pp. 156–163

2000 'Engraved Book Illustration', *Biblis* 10, 41–52.

2001 'From Collector to Reader: Bern Dibner and History of Science Collections', in *The Dibner Library of the History of Science and Technology at 25 Years* (Smithsonian Institution)

- 2000 'The Terms of the Trade, Antiquarian Booksellers Association, *Handbook* 2000–2001 (reprinted with minor revisions 2002–2003 and in subsequent years)
- 2004 'Printing House and Engraving Shop, a Mysterious Collaboration', *The Book Collector* 53, 213–251
- 2005 with Patricia Fara, 'Selling the Silver: Country House Libraries and the History of Science', *Endeavour* 29, 14–19

Conference papers:

- 1999 'The development of the Scientific Book Trade from the Festival Of Britain to the Millenium', Library Association Rare Books Group, Cambridge
- 2002 'The Technology of Illustration: Engravings in Early Modern Natural Philosophy' History of Science Society, Milwaukee
- 2009 'Engraving Flamsteed's Star Charts', SHARP, Toronto 2009.

Public Lectures:

- 1999 'Don't trust Words: the importance of Illustration for the early Royal Society', New York Public Library
- 1999, 2000 'Printing House and Engraving Shop, a Mysterious Collaboration', Winship Lecture, Houghton Library, Harvard University; given again for the Cambridge Bibliographical Society
- 2001 'From Collector to Reader: Bern Dibner and History of Science Collections', Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC
- 2006 'Recreating the Harveian Library of the London College of Physicians', New York Academy of Medicine
- 2007 'Star Wars: Mapping the Celestial Frontier', Linda Hall Library, 17 May 2007; revised as 'Star Wars: the Golden Age of the Celestial Atlas.' Ticknor Society and the History of the Book Seminar, Harvard University, 7 April 2008.