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JOHN MARTYN'S BOTANICAL SOCIETY: A BIOGRAPHICAL ANALYSIS OF THE MEMBERSHIP

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Introduction

The middle years of the eighteenth century, from 1715 to 1770, after the death of Ray and Petiver and before the great surge of interest brought about by the Linnaean System and the Romantic Movement, constitute a relatively little-known period in the history of British botany and indeed a notably quiescent time for the biological sciences in general. It is therefore of considerable moment to discover more about the small Botanical Society that flourished in London between 1721 and 1726, under the secretaryship of John Martyn, later Professor of Botany at Cambridge. For not only was this apparently the first formally-constituted body of any stature devoted specifically to botany to exist in Britain, and perhaps even in the world, but it came into being at a time when interest in the field sciences had at last become sufficiently widespread for its devotees to meet and work in groups, thereby making possible the engendering of a common tradition in field methods, equipment and terminology.

It is necessary to qualify the claim made for this Society with the words 'first formally-constituted', in order to take account of the earliest body known to have existed in this field, the Temple Coffee House Botanic Club, lately brought to notice by the researches of Pasti (1950) and Stearns (1953). Unlike the Society examined in this paper, this club appears to have lacked any formal organization and was evidently never more than a loose coterie of friends. Its existence is only known from the private correspondence of its members, a truly brilliant assemblage which included Sloane, Lister, Tancred Robinson, Nehemiah Grew, William Sherard, Petiver, Buddle, Doody, Plukenet, Samuel Dale, Charles Du Bois, William Vernon and Dr. Henry Compton, Bishop of London. In the spring of 1691 the membership totalled as many as forty. Meetings took place at the coffee house every Friday evening, and on Sundays and occasional holidays in the summer months there were excursions to places of interest in and around London. Founded apparently in 1689, the year William and Mary came to the throne, the club is known to have survived till at least as late as July, 1713, the date of a pass granted to the members to proceed to Gravesend which has been accidentally preserved in the Sloane collection.

The further qualification 'of any stature' is also necessary to exclude at least two other, comparatively insignificant clubs that are known to have existed prior to 1720. One of these was a small

club started by Dr. Patrick Blair around 1706 in connection with the physic garden at Dundee (Gorham, 1830). The other was founded at Boston, in Lincolnshire, in 1711 by Dr. William Stukeley, shortly after settling in that town as a physician. 'The apothecarys and I', he records, 'went out a simpling once a week. We bought Ray's 3 folios of a joint stock' (Lukis, 1880, p. 122).

Martyn's Botanical Society certainly could never be claimed as the intellectual equal of the Temple Coffee House Club—which was really an unofficial appendage of the Royal Society at one of its periods of greatest renown—but equally clearly, as will be seen, its standards must have been higher than a cursory reading of the accounts of the Society that have come down to us might suggest. These accounts are, in fact, highly repetitive and can be shown to have been ultimately derived from a sole single printed source: Thomas Martyn's memoir of his father (1770). This can be usefully supplemented, as Edwards (1963) has pointed out, with information culled from one of the Society's minute-books, which survived among the Martyn papers and was passed to Banks and thus in due course to the British Museum (Natural History). A second minute-book (containing as well the original rules) was presented by Thomas Martyn to the Linnean Society in 1807 but has since, unfortunately, been lost. A third source, which till now has remained unexplored, is the private correspondence of the period, particularly the numerous letters from Blair in the Martyn Correspondence. For the rest, we have only such biographical data of the known members as can be pieced together on which to draw.

Origin of the Society

The Society was founded in 1721, the year following the bursting of the South Sea Bubble (of which the only faint echo to be heard is the ruin of Chandler's brother and sister-in-law) and the year preceding Walpole's emergence as leader of the government. George I had been on the throne seven years. Petiver, one of the last major figures of the preceding botanical generation, had died not long since, in 1718, without leaving any obvious disciples—unless this description could be said to include Isaac Rand. Buddle and Doody had also passed on, Samuel Dale was marooned in the depths of Essex, James Sherard increasingly seduced from field botany by his garden. Of the other foremost figures remaining, only Sloane and William Sherard still performed on the centre of the stage; but the latter spent much time abroad and Sloane, now sixty, was increasingly immersed in public affairs—and their interest in the flora of Britain was, in any case, only marginal. Thus, for the first time for many years, British botany found itself in a vacuum.

John Martyn, the founder of the new society, was at this time just twenty-two, a bored clerk in the counting-house of his father, a Hamburg merchant, off Cheapside. His interest in botany had only really developed some three years before and the forming of

his herbarium had hardly begun. Letherland and, more particularly, Wilmer had already become good friends of his, the three probably having met on the excursions of the Society of Apothecaries (which interested outsiders were permitted to attend). These excursions or 'herbarizings' were botanical field classes which the Society had long provided, in connection with its Chelsea Physic Garden, as part of the formal education of its apprentices. They can be traced back in the records to 1620 and may well be older still. By this time one was held in each of the six summer months, normally under the leadership of a special official of the Society called the Demonstrator of Plants. The rendezvous was at six o'clock in the morning, traditionally at this period (Wilmer *in litt.* to Martyn, April, 1720) at a place called Joe Hill's.

The leader on at least some of the 'herbarizings' in these years was the popular and capable Isaac Rand, who had inherited an apothecary business in the Haymarket from his father. Praised as a botanist of great promise by Plukenet as long ago as 1700, he was now, at the age of about forty-five, a highly experienced veteran; and it was probably due largely to him, through the keenness his teaching instilled in some of the more earnest of his pupils, that the Botanical Society—which was clearly very much an offshoot of the Apothecaries' excursions—was brought into being.

These excursions appear to have been notorious, at certain periods, for their rowdiness. An entry in the minute-book of the Physic Garden Committee dated February, 1724, records that 'several complaints have of late been made of disorders frequently happening on the days appointed for the private herbarizing'. As a result it was laid down that apprentices who wished to attend must in future bring a permit from their masters. This tightening up of discipline looks very much like the work of Rand, who about this time was made Director of the Garden. And it may be that the Botanical Society met with his every encouragement just because it offered itself as a kind of intellectual greenhouse, in which the tender shoots of learning put forth by the more promising of his pupils could be shielded from the uncongenial outside climate. Certainly, Rand's term of office seems to have coincided with a period of great activity in the affairs of the Garden, reinforced by the arrival of Philip Miller as Gardener in 1722, the year in which Sloane at long last settled the Garden on the Society of Apothecaries. After Rand's death in 1743, the excursions seem to have gradually lapsed again into indiscipline, reaching a nadir under William Hudson, the over-mild author of the *Flora Anglica.* It was apparently at the latter that complaints were chiefly directed by several apothecary masters in 1767: they had been deterred, they protested, from sending their apprentices 'to the Lectures and Botannick Walks, so often as they would have done, by the Irregularity and Indecent Behaviour of some Persons who have frequented those Walks, fearing their own apprentices might

be corrupted by such Examples' (Wall, Cameron & Underwood, 1963).

Apart from Rand, the suggestion of a botanical society might also have been made to Martyn by his friend Patrick Blair, who had already had experience of one at Dundee. Blair, like Rand another link with the previous generation, had become acquainted with Martyn some years earlier shortly after his release from Newgate, where he had been imprisoned for implication in the Jacobite Rebellion of 1715. In April, 1720, however, he left London to become Physician to the Port of Boston and thereby perhaps forfeited his chance of being asked by the Society to become its President.

The President who was in fact secured was Dillenius. Preceded already by an international reputation for his work on fungi and mosses, Dillenius was brought over from Germany by William Sherard to work as his botanical amanuensis in August, 1721. As he presumably spoke little English and was still unfamiliar with the English botanical world, it is hard to believe that he played any active part in the formation of the Society. But assuming that Martyn waited for a president to be found before proceeding further with his plans, the inaugural meeting must presumably have occurred sometime that autumn. This is perhaps confirmed by the fact that four years later, at any rate, the Annual General Meeting 'to elect a President' was held around Michaelmas (at the end of September)—as mentioned in a letter Martyn wrote to Sloane in that year in an abortive attempt to persuade him to honour the Society by becoming its next President. Dillenius had apparently stayed in office till then, his increasing irascibility perhaps being the eventual cause of his decision to resign. A patently thin-skinned person and much inclined to overwork, he seems to have suffered from considerable nervous strain building up at times into mild paranoia—until he met Linnaeus in 1736 he was convinced the *Genera Plantarum* was written against him—and this may have owed something to, and certainly cannot have been helped by, his need to depend totally on the benevolence of the Sherards. Martyn and Miller both exasperated him, and it is not unlikely that the Society had already been subjected to bouts of the *furor teutonicus* that we find breaking surface in 1727 in a letter to Samuel Brewer: 'As to Martyn publishing descriptions and figures of the new plants about London, I believe this hath been underhand and carried on for some time past—Miller I take to be the chief contriver; for Martyn does not know a Nettle from a Dock' (Turner, 1835, p. 286). A year or so later he quarrelled with Brewer too. Lord Petre, a leading horticulturalist, dismissed him as nothing but 'an arrant old woman' (Turner, 1835, pp. 313, 316). Nevertheless, despite his temperament, his abilities were undeniable; and the invitation to him to edit the greatly extended 1724 edition of Ray's *Synopsis,* in itself an impressive tribute to such a recent immigrant, clearly coincided usefully with his Presidency in bringing him into touch with this group of very

willing young field-workers. The Society, as a result, was both a parent and a child of the Dillenian *Synopsis,* at once the handbook for the next generation of British botanists, and many contributions made by the members appear in its pages or in the *Synopsis* herbarium at Oxford (cf. Druce & Vines, 1907; Clokie, 1964).

The meetings of the Society took place each Saturday at six in the evening, at first in the Rainbow Coffee House in Watling Street and later in a member's home. According to its rules, every member in turn was obliged to exhibit a certain number of plants each time and to make observations on their uses and any other characteristics of special interest—in other words, every member his own Demonstrator of Plants.

THE MEMBERS

The names of twenty-three members are known, most of them being listed by Martyn (1770) and a further six (probably not founder-members) referred to in the 1724-26 minute-book. Four of them, Martyn (1699-1768), Dillenius (1684-1747), Rand (c. 1675-1743) and Philip Miller (1691-1771) are well enough known and sufficiently covered in the *Dictionary of National Biography,* if not elsewhere, to render any further detailed accounts superfluous. Of the remaining names, all but two can now be identified; and even for the few about whom a certain amount has been known already considerably more can now be revealed for the first time.

To avoid much repetitive citation, certain sources which have been drawn on fairly generally in securing the biographical details that follow are listed below:—

Minute-books of the Chelsea Physic Garden Committee (Guildhall Library).

Registers of apprentice bindings and freedoms, of the Society of Apothecaries; and of the Company of Surgeons (Guildhall Library).

Lists of members of the Society of Apothecaries living in and about the City of London, 1693-1752 (British Museum).

The Martyn Correspondence (Dept. of Botany, British Museum (Natural History)).

Munk's *Roll of the Royal College of Physicians of London,* Ed. 2 (1878).

Nichols' *Literary Anecdotes* (1812-15) and *Illustrations of the Eighteenth Century* (1817-58).

Foster's *Alumni Oxonienses,* Early Series (1891)

Venns' *Alumni Cantabrigienses,* Part I (1921-27).

The five members about whom a good deal has already been revealed in the botanical literature are described first.

VINCENT BACON (*d. 1739*) *SURGEON-APOTHECARY*

Brought up in Grantham, Lincolnshire, he was perhaps the son of the Rev. Edward Bacon. The Rev. Francis Bacon, a Cambridge graduate and headmaster of the Grammar School at Grantham from 1729 to 1768, was probably a brother. Apprenticed in the Society of Apothecaries to John Payne in June, 1718, he was admitted a Freeman in July, 1729—an abnormally long apprenticeship of eleven years, perhaps interrupted by illness or absence from London. In July 1728 he also became a Freeman of the Company of Surgeons, by payment. During this period as an apprentice he evidently returned to Grantham for vacations, a list of plants from that district, contributed in 1726, appearing under his name in the Botanical Society's minute-book. This list includes what is now known to be the first British record of *Armeria maritima* subsp. *elongata* (Hoffm.) Bonnier (Gibbons & Lousley, 1958), but apart from a record for *Cerastium arvense* L., taken from it by Martyn (1732), it remained unnoticed until published by Woodruffe-Peacock (1898). By February 1732 he was established in the practice at Christchurch, Spitalfields, in which he was to continue till his early death—contrary to the statement by Martyn (1770) that he later practised at Grantham, for which no evidence can be found. In that month he delivered a paper to the Royal Society on "The case of a man who was poisoned by eating Monk's-hood or *Napellus*", subsequently printed in the *Philosophical Transactions,* a peculiarly grisly account of the fate of one of his silk-weaver patients in Spitalfields. On the strength of this he became a candidate for Fellowship of the Society, his sponsors being Edmund Halley, R. M. Massey (both friends of John Martyn) and Richard Graham, and was duly elected that same November. The Members' List of the Society of Apothecaries for 1738 show his practice still in Spitalfields, where he died the following April. There is a tombstone in Grantham Church commemorating Mary, 'daughter of Vincent Bacon, F.R.S.', died 16.8.1765, aged 27 (Turnor, 1806), which implies a marriage by 1737 at the latest.

THOMAS DALE (*1699 or 1700-1750*) *PHYSICIAN*

An excellent account of Dale by Christy (1919) has been generally overlooked. This reveals that he was the son of a Hoxton apothecary and nephew of the famous Samuel Dale, the apothecary friend and neighbour of Ray. He graduated M.D. at Leyden in September 1723, submitting a thesis on medico-botany, two copies of which are now in the British Museum. In this he names as his patrons or introducers Samuel Dale, William Sherard, Boerhaave, Dillenius and Martyn — the two last reflecting his membership of the Botanical Society, of which the minute-book reveals him as Secretary in 1726. For eight to ten years after taking his degree he practised medicine in London, living apparently in Bishopsgate. An expert linguist, he devoted much of his time at this period to the translation of important medical

works from Latin and French into English, an interest which he shared with Martyn and which was doubtless well remunerated by publishers. One of these translations was dedicated to Dr. James Douglas.

In March, 1731/2, his life suddenly changed. Leaving England under a definite cloud—it seems he was in debt and had offended his family by paying court to a lady of whom they disapproved (causing Samuel Dale to cut him out of his will, leaving him only the proverbial shilling)—he sailed to America and settled in Charleston, Carolina. From here, in 1736-37, he sent specimens to his uncle which are now in the British Museum (Natural History).

Various details of this later part of his life have been uncovered by Seibels (1931) and by Waring (1964). Soon after his arrival, in March 1733, he married Mary Brewton, the daughter of a local colonel and one of the wealthiest local citizens. The house which the latter gave to the couple as a wedding present still stands in Charleston and still bears its original name: "Daughterdale". This first wife died in childbirth, however, in 1737. The next year he married Anne Smith and on her death, without issue, in 1743 married yet again, only five months later. This wife, Hannah Simons, bore him three children, the eldest of whom returned to Britain to settle, qualified in medicine, at Edinburgh and became Registrar of the Literary Fund for Impoverished Writers. Dale himself was one of the earliest known writers of verse in America, contributing prologues and epilogues (of appropriate eighteenth-century raciness) to the plays performed at the local theatre—an interesting parallel to Martyn's later activities and suggesting that the proceedings of the Botanical Society may have had a bitingly satirical undertone. In 1734, presumably through the influence of his father-in-law, he was made a Judge in the Supreme Court of South Carolina and served in that capacity till his death. He continued to practise medicine even so, numbering among his patients the Queen of the Catawba Indians. A hot-tempered man, he argued for the methods of tradition with constant fervour, being particularly vehement against inoculation. His obituary refers to 'his great and extensive reading', from which he 'had a great fund to entertain in conversation'. His effects, sold in 1751, included 2,273 books, 325 of them on medicine and botany, as well as 'several very valuable negroes'. In his will he bequeathed his herbarium to the elder Gronovius, a friend presumably from Leyden days; but it is not clear whether it did indeed find its way across the Atlantic into the Gronovius collections, which were sold at Leyden in 1778.

It remains to be added to these accounts that Dale wrote several letters to Philip Miller from Charleston in 1746, one of which is now in the Martyn Correspondence. In this he asks Miller to remember him to Dillenius and to 'pray beg Dr. Martyn to favour me with a botanical correspondence'. There is no evidence that Martyn complied.

GEORGE CHARLES DEERING (*c. 1690-1749*) *PHYSICIAN*

In the case of Deering we are fortunate to have a lengthy fragment of autobiography, which was subsequently published by Nichols (1817).

Of German extraction (his name was originally Dering), he was brought up in Saxony and sent to school at the Gymnasium in Hamburg. From here, in 1708, he went to Leyden, where he attended the lectures in the Physic Garden and studied under Boerhaave—but without proceeding to a degree—and later moved on to Amsterdam to become a pupil of the famous naturalist Ruysch. A Holsatian nobleman then took him round Europe as his companion, and this experience led to his appointment on returning to Hamburg as secretary to Baron Schack, Envoy Extraordinary of the Czar of Russia to Queen Anne. This brought him in April 1713 to London, where he occupied the extensive leisure permitted by the post in chemical experiments and reading English medical books not yet published in other languages. In 1715 he resigned his secretaryship and, deciding to stay on in London, became a private tutor. In November 1718, he married (rather against his better judgment) and spent his honeymoon in Rheims, staying just a month to collect a doctor's degree before moving on to Paris to study midwifery. There he stayed still the next summer, when he 'went the botanical walks about Paris' and attended the lectures of Bernard de Jussieu. Returning again to London in August, he soon after set up in practice in Spitalfields, where he remained for the next seventeen years, specialising in midwifery among the poor. He quickly resumed his botanising and (probably through the Botanical Society) became friendly with his fellow expatriate, Dillenius, with whom he shared an obviously cantankerous temperament and a total want of humour. Several records from the London area, including mosses, stand to his credit in the Dillenian *Synopsis*.

In 1736, on the death of his wife (who had evidently been a great trial to him—he writes of his 'hard struggles . . . through the indiscretion of my yoke-fellow') he decided on a fresh start and moved to Nottingham. After initial success gained by his novel treatment of a smallpox epidemic, his unfortunate temper undermined his practice and, crippled by gout, he eventually died in the uttermost poverty. His *Catalogue of Plants . . . about Nottingham* (1738), one of the earliest British local Floras, was the principal fruit of this final period. The herbarium on which it was based was bought by his patron, the Hon. Rothwell Willughby (a relative of Ray's great friend), but has long since been lost to sight. Many mosses from the Nottingham district were also sent by him to Dillenius.

WALTER TULLIDEPH (*d. 1794*) *SURGEON*

Much is also known about Tullideph thanks to the lucky survival of his letter-books. Although lengthy extracts from

these have been printed by Oliver (1899), they have not hitherto been drawn on to any extent for the botanical literature.

A Scot by birth (the surname is Gaelic), Tullideph was educated at the High School, Edinburgh, and subsequently went to France (possibly Rheims) to qualify in medicine. Later he moved to London and at the time of his membership of the Botanical Society was working (according to Martyn, 1770) as amanuensis to Dr. James Douglas, a renowned anatomist who also had a keen interest in plants.

About 1726 he went out to the West Indies at the invitation of a cousin, who owned a sugar plantation in Antigua. Here he practised as a physician and surgeon, and for the next thirteen years sent many botanical specimens to Sloane. In January 1735/6, he married the young widow of a wealthy creole and thereby became the owner of a very substantial estate. Between 1748 and 1754 he became successively a member of the island's Assembly and Council and a lieutenant-colonel in the militia. A son and at least three daughters were born to him, and it was to bring one of the latter to school in Chelsea (where perhaps he looked up his old friend Martyn) that in 1751 he made the first of several visits home.

In 1758 he returned to Britain to settle, buying a £6,000 estate at Dundee, which he named Tullideph Hall. An elder brother, a professor of divinity, had been Principal of the nearby College of St. Andrews for some years. In 1763, perhaps out of boredom, he started a business in Dundee. He eventually died at what was clearly a great age and, as his will discloses, in considerable affluence. Whether he made contributions to the botany of Angus in these later years is not known.

JOHN WILMER (*1697-1796*) *APOTHECARY*

Some useful additional details about Wilmer, hitherto overlooked, appear in an exhaustive genealogical account by Foster & Green (1888).

Wilmer was baptised and brought up at Ellesborough, near Wendover, in Buckinghamshire, where his father, an Oxford graduate, was rector. (His grandfather was a lawyer of the Inner Temple who inherited a number of houses in the parish of St. Botolph without Aldersgate). In September 1712 he was apprenticed in the Society of Apothecaries to his cousin Henry Prockler, with whom he resided while in London, and probably developed a passion for botany and entomology a year or two later through attending the Society's excursions. It was he who introduced the nineteen year-old Martyn to botany in June 1718. He seems to have spent much of his summers out at Ellesborough and several early Buckinghamshire records made by him lie in the Martyn Correspondence apparently still unpublished. In September 1719 he visited Oxford and looked up the younger Bobart, finding him helpless. 'We had a great deal of talk', he wrote to Martyn, 'and I saw his collection of plants, insects, fossils, etc.

. . . He gave his service to all our botanical aquaintance in which you are included'. In the spring of 1720 he was still marooned, for some reason, out at Ellesborough and invited Martyn to make use of his vasculum and other botanical equipment.

By 1722 he was in business as an apothecary in London, in Bishopsgate Street. A few records made at this period appear in the Dillenian *Synopsis*. His botany evidently took him quite far afield, for there is a *Gentianella* of his in Herb. Sherard from near Beaconsfield, while Martyn (1732) credits him with a *Clavaria* from Marlborough Downs. In 1735 he appears as the donor of two books to the library of the Chelsea Garden, and the close association with the Apothecaries' botanical activities that this seems to imply was rewarded by his election in 1741 to the Garden Committee, at whose meetings he was an assidous attender for the next three years.

About 1745 he ceased to practise as an apothecary, abruptly and mysteriously, and moved out to Cowley, near Uxbridge. Here he remained about three years, evidently botanising a great deal, for many records of his from the Cowley district are cited by Blackstone (1746).

In April 1748 his appointment as Demonstrator of plants, an 'onerous and exacting' office, by the Society of Apothecaries, in succession to Joseph Miller, caused his removal to Mealman's Row in Chelsea and, as a matter of course, his reappearance on the Garden Committee, on which he was to remain till 1758. The following summer he catalogued the Garden library and was presumably responsible, in his official capacity, for a notable *faux pas* in hiring a band for the Society's barge on the occasion of the General Herbarizing (Wall, Cameron & Underwood, 1963). In August of that year he first appears as 'Dr.' Wilmer, and it may be that the years at Cowley were devoted to acquiring a medical degree—certainly, in a communication to the Royal Society in 1755 his name is followed by the letters M.D. His position at the Garden carried mainly prestige (the salary was only £30 a year) and he supplemented this by practising as a physician.

He finally relinquished direction of the Garden in October 1764 and retired to live in Dartmouth Street, Westminster, probably with the niece to whom most of his property was bequeathed. He had no children by his wife, a Miss Skelton, who predeceased him and was buried (as he too asked to be) by the north door of Westminster Abbey. In his will he left £100 to the Society of Apothecaries and his botanical books, a gold watch and some folios of plants painted by Philip Miller to Stanesby Alchorne, another leading apothecary. A herbarium which he donated to the Garden is believed to have been destroyed about a century later.

The next twelve members have not previously been identified as British botanists.

J. CHANDLER *(1700-1780)* *APOTHECARY*

Son of the minister of a presbyterian congregation at Bath, and born probably at Bath or Hungerford, John Chandler was apprenticed in the Society of Apothecaries to James Siddall in April 1716, gaining his freedom in January 1724. A brother, Samuel Chandler, D.D., F.R.S., F.S.A., a noted preacher and controversialist, and a sister, Mary, authoress of a volume of poems that went into eight editions, also feature in the *Dictionary of National Biography*. Their brother John is briefly mentioned in this work as the author of *A Discourse concerning the Smallpox* (1729), which doubtless procured his election to the Royal Society in February 1734/5, and *A Treatise on the Disease called a Cold* (1761), in which he gave the credit to Letherland (his one-time fellow member of the Botanical Society) for first drawing attention to the disease now recognised as diphtheria. After practising in Lothbury, he became a partner in 1741 in the firm of Smith & Newsom, in King Street, off Cheapside, where he remained for the rest of his working life. His interest in botany was evidently kept up, for in May 1759 he was elected to the Committee of the Chelsea Garden, on which he served for many years. In this capacity he played a leading part in the famous skirmish between the Committee and its unco-operative Gardener, Miller. In 1767, perhaps partly in recognition of his many services to its Garden, the Society of Apothecaries elected him Master. His children became closely involved with St. Thomas's Hospital, his son becoming the senior surgeon there and his daughter marrying the Treasurer.

JOSEPH FORSITT *(fl. 1702-1763)* *APOTHECARY*

Forsitt was apprenticed in the Society of Apothecaries in May 1716, almost simultaneously with Chandler and Latham. His master was Joseph Cruttenden, who himself appears to have had botanical leanings and, like John Field, was possibly given to nudging promising apprentices in this direction. After obtaining his Freedom in December 1725, he practised at a variety of addresses in London, the last known being in Great Carter Lane, where he remained from 1748 till 1763, if not later.

ROBERT FYSHER, M.B. *(1698-1747)* *PHYSICIAN* (never practised)

The sixth son of a Lincolnshire squire, whose family seat was Grantham Grange, Fysher went up to Christ Church, Oxford, his uncle's old college (Salter, 1921), at the age of sixteen, graduating B.A. in 1718, M.A. in 1724 and B.Med. in 1725. His elder brother, Francis, who inherited the family estate, was M.P. for Grantham in 1722-27; an uncle was at the Bar, and a niece married the grandson of Ray's friend Willughby (Maddison, 1902). It was doubtless while up to study at the London hospitals, in preparation for his medical degree, that he became involved with the Botanical Society—possibly introduced by Bacon, whom he must surely have known back in Grantham. Three records

made by him round London at this time were sufficiently noteworthy to find their way into print: *Erodium moschatum* (L.) L'Hérit. near Battersea — the first record for Surrey — *Damasonium alisma* Mill. at Stoke Newington (both in the Dillenian *Synopsis*) and *Anagallis foemina* Mill. near Peckham (Martyn, 1732).

At Easter, 1723, he was elected to a Fellowship at Oriel College, Oxford, by examination—indicative of great ability—and retained this for the rest of his life, thereby precluding his marrying. Gilbert White, author of *The Natural History of Selborne,* also became a Fellow, and later Dean, of Oriel and the two must have known each other, possibly quite well. In December 1729, the post of chief librarian at the Bodleian having fallen vacant, Fysher was the candidate of the Tory party and proved unexpectedly victorious by 100 votes to 85. Thomas Hearne, gloating over the victory in his diary, calls him 'by much the worthier man, as far as I can yet learn' (Macray, 1890; Salter, 1915). Little is known about his work at the Bodleian except that he was responsible for issuing the 1738 catalogue, which was held in high repute for its minute and abundant cross-references. His work was much impeded by ill-health and he died comparatively young, while on a visit to Sevenhampton, in Wiltshire. Part of his coin collection was left to the Bodleian (Macray, 1890). Whether he possessed a herbarium is unknown.

Joseph Harris (*b. 1704*) *SURGEON-APOTHECARY*
Thomas Harris (*b. 1708/9*) *SURGEON-APOTHECARY*
Samuel Harris (*b. 1710*) *SURGEON-APOTHECARY*

The apprenticeship records confirm the inevitable suspicion that the three members named Harris were in fact brothers. Their father, John Harris, was a surgeon in Lambeth Street, in the parish of St. Mary, Whitechapel, and also had an apothecary business in Goodman's Fields, nearby, until at least 1738. (He is doubtless the John Harris to whom Plate 8 in the third decade of Martyn's *Historia Plantarum Rariorum* (1728-37) is dedicated). The baptismal register of St. Mary, Whitechapel (now at County Hall), provides the dates of birth. All three were apprenticed to their father, in both the Apothecaries and Surgeons Companies, in 1718-19, 1722-24 and 1725-27 respectively, but only Thomas (in the Surgeons Company, 1731-2) acquired the Freedom of either.

Only Joseph appears in the list of members given by Martyn (1770), which suggests that he joined a good year or two before his brothers. He is also the only one to whom specimens are unambigously credited in herbaria — four gathering from the London area, including a moss and a fungus. in the Dillenian *Synopsis* herbarium (Druce & Vines, 1907, pp. 17, 36, 80, 156) and others in Herb. Sherard (Clokie, 1964), all at Oxford. Three unlocalised gatherings attributed to 'Mr. Harris' in Herb. Martyn at Cambridge, apparently received after 1729, are also doubtless

his. He must also be the 'Mr. Harris' mentioned several times in the Society's minute-book, especially as co-author of the still partially unpublished list of plants found on a walk from London to Dulwich with Rand in August, 1725—carelessly misattributed by Thomas Martyn (1763) to Samuel Harris, whose age, now established as fifteen, would make this in any case rather unlikely. The identification with the Harris to whom Scheuchzer (1723) dedicated a plate, suggested by Clokie (1964), is certainly erroneous.

None of the three subsequently practised as London apothecaries (a Thomas Harris who appears in the Apothecaries' lists is not the same person) and their later history remains unknown.

SAMUEL HORSMAN, M.D. *(1698-1751)* *PHYSICIAN*

A native of Middlesex, Horsman studied medicine at Leyden, graduating M.D. in October, 1721. His thesis, now in the library of the Royal Society of Medicine, is dedicated to his uncle, a lawyer in Lincoln's Inn. In 1728 he received a Cambridge M.D. by decree and in September 1737 won election to the College of Physicians, of which he acted as Treasurer from 1746 till his death. He practised, like Christopher Merrett before him, in Hatton Garden. His sole published botanical contribution appears to have been the first British record of the lichen *Cladonia sobolifera* Del., collected on Hampstead Heath and given to Dillenius for inclusion in the *Synopsis* of 1724 (Druce & Vines, 1907, p. 30).

SAMUEL LATHAM (*fl. 1716-1760*) *APOTHECARY*

Apprenticed in the Society of Apothecaries in July 1716, becoming a Freeman in March 1724, Latham was fortunate to have as his master John Field, of the Bell in Newgate Street, the botanical friend of Joseph Andrews and John Blackstone. He subsequently practised in Newgate Street, presumably as Field's junior partner, at least until 1752. A brief appearance on the Committee of the Chelsea Garden, in May 1760, was not repeated; but he was doubtless the person of this name elected Master of the Apothecaries for the year 1768-69 in immediate succession to Chandler.

J. LETHERLAND, M.D. (*1699-1764*) *PHYSICIAN*

Born in Stratford-on-Avon, the son of a prebyterian minister, Joseph Letherland had come to London by 1719, probably to attend medical lectures, and there became a special botanical friend of Wilmer and Martyn. In September 1722 he went to Leyden to read medicine and graduated M.D. there in July 1724. A Cambridge M.D. by decree followed in 1736 and in the next year he was elected to the College of Physicians. For the last forty years of his life he practised in London, in Aldermanbury. Additionally he was appointed Physician to St. Thomas's Hospital

in 1736 and to the Queen in 1761. Bishop Warburton in 1763 rated him and his friend Dr. William Heberden the two best physicians in Europe. Although retiring and little known even in his profession, he was highly regarded for his immense learning and formed a notable collection of ancient manuscripts.

JOHN PAYNE (*fl. 1707-1718?*)
'APOTHECARY IN LONDON' (Martyn, 1763)

There were no less than four persons of this name in the Society of Apothecaries at this period, perhaps all related. The member of the Botanical Society was most probably the one apprenticed in May 1707 to John Bernard and later turned over to Bartholomew Shorthose, gaining his Freedom in December 1718. The Apothecaries' membership lists have unfortunately not all survived, but he may well be the John Payne who appears in 1736 and subsequent years without any business address appended —perhaps indicating that he merely assisted his father. He may conceivably have been the 'Mr. Pain' who contributed a specimen of *Filago gallica* L. from near Dartford in 1739 to Herb. Rand (Hanbury & Marshall, 1899).

A John Payne whose herbarium is listed in Kent (1958) turns out, on investigation, never to have existed: the entry is an error for John Bateman (Allen, 1966B), whose *hortus siccus* is the only one of this period in the possession of the Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain.

T. RICHMOND (the initial is misprinted as 'J' in Edwards, 1963) (*1695-1758*)
PHYSICIAN?

There was no one of this name at this period in either the Apothecaries or Surgeons Companies. Thomas Martyn (1770), however, includes in a list of his father's correspondents 'Dr. Richmond of Burton, near Wootton Bassett, Wilts.' Burton is a slip for Purton, a village four miles from Swindon. A branch of a prominent North Wiltshire family called Richmond had long been settled at Chadderton, near Purton, and the owner of the estate at this time was a certain Toby Richmond, whose youngest son Thomas followed his two brothers to Balliol College, Oxford, in January 1711/2. The Oxford records imply that the father moved to Marlborough between 1707 and 1711; but if so, the family evidently retained lands at Purton, for Toby Richmond features as an owner there in a perambulation record of 1733 (Maskelyne, 1918).

After graduating B.A. in 1715, Thomas Richmond went down in the summer of the following year, only to enter St. John's College, Cambridge, in 1722. His membership of the Botanical Society suggests he subsequently moved to London to study medicine, but no record can be traced of his having obtained an M.D. He appears to have returned to live in Wiltshire and died unmarried, without leaving a will.

MR. WITHERS (*fl. 1708-1736*) *APOTHECARY*

A person of this name who exhibited a fungus to the Society in 1726 can only be William Withers, a senior member of the Society of Apothecaries who became Master in 1732. One of the subscribers to the fund for improving the Chelsea Garden in 1708, he was also on the Garden Committee in 1734. He died in 1736 or 1737.

Finally, the two members who cannot be identified:

MR. BEDFORD

From his general background this could well have been William Bedford (b. 1700 or 1701), eldest son of the Rev. Hilkiah Bedford, an eminent Quaker antiquary who after being deprived of his Fellowship at St. John's College, Cambridge, ran a boarding-house for boys attending Westminster School. William Bedford went up to St. John's in May 1722 (and so would have known Thomas Richmond), but left without taking a degree, insisting, although brought up in the Church of England, on being a non-juror like his father. He went to Leyden to study medicine in September 1727—which would accord well with membership of the Botanical Society in the autumn of 1726—but family difficulties prevented his finishing the course. He eventually acquired a Cambridge M.D. by royal mandate, was elected to the Royal Society and became Registrar of the College of Physicians and Physician to Christ's Hospital. He had an extensive knowledge of languages and was sufficiently reputable a scholar to be left a vast collection of valuable books and manuscripts by the great antiquary Thomas Hearne.

DR. HALL

This might be Abraham Hall, who graduated M.B. at Cambridge in 1725 and M.D. in 1728. He was later appointed Physician to both St. Thomas's Hospital (like Letherland) and the Charterhouse, dying in 1751.

Another possibility is Francis Hall, a physician who went out to Buenos Aires about 1728 to treat the negro slaves on their disembarkation from Africa. From here he sent back botanical specimens to both Sherard and Sloane.

Thomas Martyn (1763) also lists a Henry Hall as one of the botanists of this period who left no published work to their name.

The surname is unfortunately so common that identification is unlikely in the absence of additional details.

We cannot be sure that this was, in fact, the sum total of the members. Certainly there were other botanists in London in these years who might well have been expected to belong. Most notable absentees are the two apothecaries, Joseph Miller (d. 1748), whose *Botanicum Officinale* was indeed published at this very time, in 1722, and Robert Nicholls (fl. 1713-1750), whose appearance as a

subscriber to Albin's *Natural History of English Insects* (1720) shows his interest in natural history had already begun. The two famous horticulturalists Thomas Fairchild (1667?-1729), a particular friend of Martyn and Wilmer, and Thomas Knowlton (1692-1782) perhaps regarded the Society as too learned and medical in its leanings. And doubtless Dr. James Douglas (1675-1742), the eminent anatomist, was altogether too busy to manage to attend the meetings.

SOCIAL COMPOSITION

From an analysis of the members' biographies a considerably fuller picture of the Society's general character can now be discerned.

First of all, it was an extremely youthful body. Of those whose age can be established with more or less precision, all but six were under twenty-five in 1721. Even Miller was only thirty, and the only two verging on middle age, Rand and Withers, evidently preferred to remain in the background.

Secondly, it was very much a medico-botanical society, with a strongly vocational impetus. Of the members identified, one-third were apothecaries, one-third physicians, and most of the rest surgeons or surgeon-apothecaries.

The social backgrounds of the members, in so far as these are known, strengthen this professional flavour. Wilmer, Chandler, Letherland and perhaps also Bacon and Bedford were sons of clergymen—significantly Dissenters as often as Anglican priests, presaging the vital role in higher education soon to be played by the dissenting academies. Dale, Rand and the Harris brothers followed fathers who were medical men already, Fysher and Horsman both had uncles at the Bar, while Richmond and Fysher exemplified the growing tradition for the landed gentry to place their younger sons in the learned professions. If we exclude Miller, the gardener son of a gardener, only Martyn himself, as the son of a wealthy merchant, stands out as a social oddity—and even he had a great-grandfather who had been at Cambridge. All in all, the members and their immediate families form a fine cross-section of the intellectual middle class at this period, the teaching profession alone being under-represented—though Deering had lately been a tutor and Tullideph's brother was to become a professor.

With few exceptions, as their subsequent careers show, the members were far above average in intellectual vigour; and the vague image of a bunch of enthusiastic but probably semi-lettered youths, which up to now is what, by default, we have been led to form, is clearly a long way from the true reality. Moreover, their social standing was for the most part considerable—well above that of the contemporary Society of Gardeners (1730) or of the entomologists who apparently constituted the Aurelian Society (Allen, 1966A), with neither of which, apart from Miller, did the Botanical Society share any members in common. The leavening

of physicians, in particular, underlines this, for their university education carried them into higher reaches of society than could normally be achieved by the relatively unglamorous apothecaries. And at least four of them, it is worth noting, studied under Boerhaave at Leyden, which was the most fashionable start to a medical career then obtainable.

The Ending

Why and when the Society came to an end remains obscure. The surviving minute-book shows it still in an apparently flourishing state at the end of 1726, and we have only Thomas Martyn's unreliable assertion that it continued no longer. Several of the original members, it is true, had left London by then and others must have found themselves too preoccupied with the working up of businesses or practices. But the gaps they left could surely have been filled without much difficulty from each year's new crop of apprentices.

The real destroyer of the Society was, quite possibly—and paradoxically—its creator: John Martyn himself. Shortly after its birth he had delivered a series of lectures to the members, explaining the technical words used in botanical science. Having thus uncovered an unsuspected didactic vein, he went on to give private courses in botany in 1725 and 1726, evidently as a kind of crammer for students of physic, there being hardly any regular medical schools in London at this period. These courses appear to have included field classes in the summer, and the excursion to Sheppey by Martyn, Bacon, Thomas Harris and Bedford in September 1726, of which an account was given to the Society, may well have been one of them. It is hard to escape the impression that Martyn regarded the Society as very much his personal fief and fell into the not uncommon trap of identifying its activities too closely with his own. Perhaps, therefore, the pangs of resentment that his lecturing seems to have aroused are no great cause for surprise. In May 1725, having evidently complained to Blair of attempts to hinder his teaching, he received a soothing letter back: "I'm not much surprised but heartily regret the malice and envy you have so innocently drawn upon you . . . .'—and was urged to go ahead regardless. It was shortly after this that a successor to Dillenius was being sought for the Presidency. He, for one, might well have been irritated by Martyn's presumption in teaching botany professionally without qualifications of any kind.

Nevertheless Martyn's teaching must have been lively and effective, for in 1727 he was invited to Cambridge 'by above twenty scholars' (Turner, 1835, p. 269) to give a series of lectures in the anatomy school. Possibly his friend Richmond, of St. John's College, was one of the inviters. He was officially recommended by Sloane and Sherard, but this was doubtless a mere formality.

The then Professor of Botany at Cambridge was Richard Bradley, a leading horticultural journalist, who owed his appointment to the egregious Dr. Bentley, the Master of Trinity and the most detested man in the University. It could well have been a faction of Bentley's enemies who arranged the invitation to Martyn, as a roundabout way of scoring a useful point politically. Bradley himself has been much vilified, mainly by the Martyns, whose motives must be suspect (Williamson, 1961); and certainly his numerous writings show considerable knowledge and ability (Roberts, 1939). By 1720, well before his appointment to the Chair, his reputation was sufficiently impressive for news of it to have reached Boerhaave in Holland, one of his admirers being no less capable a judge than Rand (Lindeboom, 1962). A manuscript volume containing twelve of Bradley's original lectures, evidently delivered early in 1725, still survives at the Botany School, Cambridge. They deal with the principles on which the arts of husbandry and gardening ought to be based—not, as one might perhaps have expected, with methods for identifying *materia medica*. Bradley, it seems, was an ardent experimentalist, way before his time: he had little inclination for, or learning in, the classical taxonomy which at that period formed the staple for students of medicine and which, we may suppose, was the particular *forte* of John Martyn (Hamshaw Thomas, 1937). Starved of the facts they had doubtless come along to gather purely in order to pass their exams, his audiences must have grown, at the least, a trifle restive. As a platform personality, too, he may have been at best uninspiring—at least in comparison with Martyn, to whose powers of wit and gusto the pages of the scurrilous *Grub-street Journal,* which (for some mysterious reason) he helped to edit, bear ample testimony.

On Bradley's death in 1732 Martyn obtained his title of Professor—but not without some effort behind the scenes, for although there were no official emoluments the post conferred great prestige and afforded its holder the chance of a substantial income from addressing the public. In later years he even introduced the novelty of taking his botany students on field excursions, 'shewing them the Cambridgeshire plants where Mr. Ray had described them to grow' (Walker, 1763).

Thus, although the Botanical Society, with the transfer of Martyn's energies elsewhere, now apparently came to an end, it can be said to have fertilised the first teaching of botany at Cambridge, in several valuable ways. Without its existence Martyn might never have found his interest in lecturing, or even attracted attention. And without his experience of the field tradition of the Apothecaries and the enormous value of their Chelsea Garden in giving practical instruction, he might never have pressed so hard for a similar garden at Cambridge. Although he failed in this aim himself, in 1731, others were to succeed some thirty years later—securing as first Curator the son of Philip Miller. Thus, in the course of time, Cambridge botany became doubly the offspring of Chelsea.

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