

Elizabeth Blackwell—the forgotten herbalist?

Bruce Madge, Head of the Health Care Information Service, The British Library, 96 Euston Road, London NW1 2DB, UK

Abstract

This article looks at the work of Elizabeth Blackwell (1707–1758), by all accounts the first British female herbalist. To raise funds to free her husband from debtors prison, she produced her hand drawn, engraved and coloured ‘*Curious Herbal*’ in 1735. Using the copies of the herbal in the British Library, the article will look at the circumstances surrounding production of the herbal, her influences and sources used, including the people who recommended production of the book to the Society of Apothecaries and some of the current projects to put her name back on the map.

Introduction

Elizabeth Blackwell’s name is not well known in the history of medicine. Although a review of the literature shows that she was the first woman to produce a herbal, she has nonetheless largely been forgotten. Her name is known in the field of botanical illustration. Many histories of botany make reference to her work although she appears to receive scant attention from the Society of Apothecaries who owned the Chelsea Physic Garden where she undertook her work on the herbal. The more scholarly works on botany, particularly that of Wilfrid Blunt,¹ dismiss her contribution to botany as not particularly scientific. However her achievement is in making an illustrated list of medicinal plants available to the medical profession and the more enlightened public of the time. In preparing her work she managed to enlist the help of noteworthy patrons such as Sir Hans Sloane and Dr Richard Mead as well as Dr James Douglas (1675–1742), the obstetrician, who considered her to be one of the hundred most famous women of history.² The skill and diligence she displayed in engraving and hand

painting all the plates herself should also be remembered as should her dedication to freeing her husband from debtors prison.

Family and early years

Elizabeth was born into the wealthy Blachrie family in Aberdeen. Her father, William Blachrie, a merchant and burgess of trade had amassed a fortune in the stocking trade, which in Aberdeen at that time was a lucrative business.³ He married Isobel Fordyce about 1690, who was a sister of Gordon Fordyce, Provost of Aberdeen from 1717 to 1719. The family was already linked to the Blackwells by marriage.⁴

Elizabeth Blachrie’s birth date was contested. Most of the books in which she is mentioned do not agree on her actual date of birth. The International Genealogical Index collected by the Church of the Latter Day Saints, has two christening dates, one in 1707 and the other in 1713. This can be explained by the fact that Elizabeth may have had an older sibling Elizabeth, born in 1707, who died in infancy. But if we take her elopement as about 1730⁵ and the publication of the ‘*Curious Herbal*’ as 1737, then a date of 1707 would seem to be the more likely. Aveling⁶ suggest a birth date of 1712

Correspondence e-mail: bruce.madge@bl.uk

which would correspond to the 1713 christening date and also mentions that Elizabeth died in 1770 aged 58, although other sources point to her death as being in 1758.

Her father's wealth meant that the children of the Blachrie family received a good education and his daughters a substantial dowry. Her education in the early eighteenth century would have certainly included art, music and languages which Elizabeth was later to use to great effect in her herbal.

Alexander Blackwell

Alexander Blackwell, Elizabeth's second cousin, was born in 1709 in Aberdeen. His father Thomas Blackwell (1660–1728) was born in Paisley but moved to Aberdeen where, after being Professor of Divinity at Marischal College, he eventually became Principal to the University. Alexander's brother, Thomas, became Professor of Greek at the Marischal College. Alexander was something of an enigma. As a youth he conformed to the family's rigid academic pattern but had inherited from his grandfather, a Covenanter, a love of freedom and independence.

Consequently, before completing his studies at Marischal College (where he is recorded as a student between 1722 and 1726), Alexander eloped with his second cousin Elizabeth Blachrie and they were married and moved to London. This must have caused great consternation amongst Aberdeen's dour and puritanical populace. An article in *The Bath Journal* of 1747 describes Elizabeth as 'a virtuous gentlewoman, the daughter of a worthy merchant' who gave his daughter a 'handsome portion'.⁵

Wyness⁴ suggests that Alexander and Elizabeth moved to Leiden, the centre of medical education at that time, where Alexander studied with the great Herman Boerhaave. According to Blackwell himself, he graduated in medicine from Leiden and moved back to London. However this account is not corroborated by the article in *The Bath Journal* of 1747 written by one 'G.J.'⁵ a friend of the Blackwells who presumably knew the story firsthand.

Background to the 'Curious Herbal'

During the return journey to London Alexander made the acquaintance of the Swedish Ambassador,

at the Hague, who was later to play an important part in his life. Both Aveling and Delacoux record that, in order to assist her husband in his medical practice, Elizabeth Blackwell started studying as a midwife with William Smellie.^{6,7} Later in her life she decided to give this up due to 'the ignorance and low character of the women who at that time followed the same calling'.⁶ However, it is possible that there were two Elizabeth Blackwells in London at the time, one of whom was our herbalist and the other the midwife referred to by William Smellie in a letter to Alexander Munro at Edinburgh.⁸

Although it has been stated that Alexander had studied medicine in Leiden, this is called into question by the fact that on their return to London, Alexander set up as a proof reader in the printing house of William Wilkins, a well known printer. Later, in 1730, Alexander set up as a printer in his own right in the Strand but met with hostile opposition from a group of rival printers, who considered that he had not had a proper apprenticeship. He fell into debt and was committed for 2 years to Highgate Prison.

At this point his wife, Elizabeth, who was described as an 'ingenious lady' decided to pay off his debts and secure his release. Elizabeth had received some training in drawing and painting, whilst living with her family in Aberdeen. She had excelled in this, and she had also shared her brother Alexander's love of botany. She now put her undoubted talents to use.

Influences and sources used by Elizabeth Blackwell

Sir Hans Sloane (1660–1753)

Sir Hans Sloane was a British physician and botanist, born in Ireland of Scottish descent. He trained in medicine in London and also went abroad to study chemistry. He studied botany at the Chelsea Physic Garden in 1679 with John Ray. He was elected as a fellow of the Royal Society in 1684 and succeeded Sir Isaac Newton as president in 1712. He travelled to Jamaica with the Duke of Albemarle and accumulated much botanical material, bringing back about 800 specimens to London. In 1694 he was made Physician to



Figure 1 View of Chelsea Physic Garden from the River Thames 1795

Christ's Hospital, a post which he held for 30 years. He published a catalogue of his Jamaican plants in 1696 and this was later incorporated into Ray's *Historia* with Sloane's blessing. In 1712, Sloane purchased the Manor of Chelsea from Lord Cheyne and after several years of protracted negotiations, the freehold was transferred to the Society of Apothecaries in 1722. He became a baronet in 1716 and in 1727 was appointed George II's physician. After his death in 1753, his private collections and library provided the foundation of the British Museum.

The Chelsea Physic Garden (see Figure 1)

Since 1673, the Society of Apothecaries had rented four acres of Chelsea waterside from Lord Cheyne. A gardener had been appointed and plants transferred from the Westminster herb garden of William Gape, a Past Master of the Society. In 1676 a wall was built around the property, which still survives today, and four Cedars of Lebanon were planted flanking the river gate. The last of these magnificent trees died in 1904 and was made into chairs for the Master and Wardens. John Watts was appointed gardener in 1675 and, according to John Evelyn, may have erected the first English greenhouse. However financial problems meant that the Society was unable to pay for the freehold of the land (about £400) which is when Sir Hans Sloane stepped in to save the Garden. A grateful Society erected a statue

to Sir Hans, sculpted by Rysbrack in 1738, which still stands in the centre of the Garden.⁹

Dr Richard Mead (1673–1754)

Dr Richard Mead was a physician known for his suavity who, according to Dr Johnson 'lived more in the broad sunshine of life than almost any other man'. He is best known for his work on the plague in London, speaking out against the abolition of quarantine, and supporting Lady Mary Wortley Montague and her demand for inoculation for smallpox. As with many eighteenth century physicians he was a great collector of art and had a large library; he also wrote a book on medical practice in the Bible. He tried to diffuse the antagonism between the apothecaries and the physicians by arranging meetings between the two groups at Tom's, a coffee house near Covent Garden, where he discussed cases and saw patients, all of which added to his fame and fortune.¹⁰

The Gardeners—Isaac Rand and Philip Miller

Isaac Rand was a member of the Society of Apothecaries and was employed as 'Praefectus horti and Demonstrator of Plants' at Chelsea. He was one of the people who recommended Elizabeth's book and gave her great assistance and encouragement when she was producing her work.



Figure 2 The Wood Strawberry

Sir Hans Sloane introduced Philip Miller (1691–1771) as gardener to the Society. He was the first to suggest the part played by insects in the fertilization of plants and was the author of *The Gardener's Dictionary*.¹¹ He busied himself with introducing rare plants into the garden and wrote to many botanists around the world to obtain specimens. He also suggested that cotton might be grown in the new American colony of Georgia which led to the cotton trade in the United States. Linnaeus himself visited Miller at the Garden and collected many specimens and, although they quarrelled at one point, the Garden was rearranged along lines corresponding to Linnaeus's classification scheme.

Production and publication of the 'Curious Herbal'

Natural history in the eighteenth century was seen as a suitable occupation for a lady. Maria Sibylla Merian, who was born in Frankfurt in 1647, had published her *Neues Blumen Buch* in 1680, a

catalogue of her hand-painted engravings of garden flowers intended as models for embroidery and silk painting.¹² It is likely that Elizabeth Blackwell saw this book.

Botany in particular was recommended for ladies although the Reverend Richard Polwhele in his 'poetic' diatribe against the feminist Mary Wollstonecraft, was less sure:

'Botany has lately become a fashionable amusement with the ladies. But how the study of the sexual system of plants can accord with female modesty, I am not able to comprehend ... I have, several times, seen boys and girls botanizing together'.¹³

Elizabeth set to work making some preliminary drawings of medicinal herbs which she submitted to Sir Hans Sloane and Dr Richard Mead. Both were impressed with her work and urged her to continue with a view to publication.

Having gained the approval of these famous medical men, Elizabeth Blackwell took lodgings at Swan Walk, next to the Chelsea Physic Garden, so that she might be close to the subjects of her work. A rate list of the time assigns no. 4, Swan Walk to Alexander Blackwell from 1736 to 1739.¹⁴ The proximity of the Garden where 'she had an opportunity of receiving the plants, flowers, etc. fresh out of the garden, from time to time, as she wanted them' was obviously a bonus for a botanical artist.

However, the task was enormous and became a labour of many years, as she drew the plants, engraved them and coloured them by hand (Fig. 2). She also engraved the text. The scientific nomenclature and foreign names were supplied by her husband from his prison cell. Some of the plants were copied from H.A. van Rheedee tot Draakestein's *Hortus indicus malabaricus*, although Elizabeth was very careful to assign these plates to him.

'A Curious Herbal, containing five hundred cuts of the most useful plants which are now used in the Practise of Physick, to which is added a short description of ye plants and their common uses in Physick'¹⁵ was issued in weekly parts, each containing four plates and accompanying text over 125 weeks between 1737 and 1739. The first volume contained 250 plates and was published in 1737. The imprint read 'London printed for



*Dat. Comitūs Conforūs ex Aditūs Collegū nostri
Die primō Julii 1737.*

*Imagines hæc Plantarū Officināliū per Dominam
ELISABETHAM BLACKWELL delineatās, æri
incisās & depictās, iis qui Medicinæ Operam
dant, peritiles fore iudicamus.*

THOMAS PELLET, *Præs.*

HENRICUS PLUMPTRE,	} <i>Conforēs.</i>
RICHARDUS TYSON,	
PEIRCIVS DOD,	
GULIELMUS WASEY,	

Figure 3 Frontispiece to *A Curious Herbal*

Samuel Harding in St Martin's Lane' and the new publication was announced in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for July 1737.

Elizabeth Blackwell herself was allowed to present a copy to the College of Physicians who 'so greatly approved of it that they not only made her a handsome present, but also gave her an ample testimonial, in writing, of their approbation of her work' (Fig. 3). Although no account of the 'handsome present' can be found in the accounts of the College of Physicians,¹⁴ it is assumed that this is the commendation dated 1st July 1737, which is found in most copies of the work with the names of the President of the Royal College of Physicians, Thomas Pellet and the four censors—Henry Plumptre, Richard Tyson, Pierce Dod and William Wasey. The commendation has an engraving of Theophrastus and Dioscorides (Fig. 3), considered to be the fathers of botany, seated with a coat of arms between them. The arms, intended to be those of the Royal College of Physicians, are encircled by a Greek motto which translates as: 'Medicine while these (i.e. herbs) flourish, flourishes



Figure 4 Elizabeth Blackwell, c. 1737 (from a print in the British Museum)

with them'. In a scroll below the arms is a Greek motto signifying that 'Drugs are the hands of God'. The motto, legend and the arms of the College of Physicians are to be found in the first edition of the *Pharmacopoeia Londinensis* of 1618.¹⁶ Although the arms are meant to be those of the College, there are in fact two mistakes—the arm is reversed and a pomegranate is represented as a thistle.

The second volume appeared in 1739, although no contemporary advertisement for it exists. *The Country Journal: or the Craftsman* for 6th May 1738 records the publication of the first volume of 252 plates of plants. It noted further that 'a further 132 plates of plants for the second volume' had been published and that 'the whole 500 will be finished in eight months'; a dedication to Dr John Johnstoun is dated the 17th January 1739. The advertisement in *The Country Journal* closes with a warning against 'a spurious and base copy' of the work sold by Samuel Harding, one of which had been sold by the print sellers and engravers: George Bickham Jnr, Philip Overton, John King, Thomas Bakewell, John Tinney, Samuel Simpson, Stephen Lye and Thomas Harper. They had apparently copied some of Elizabeth Blackwell's plates and Alexander Blackwell took great delight in prosecuting them as they had prosecuted him!¹⁷

Elizabeth's plan worked and, using the proceeds from the sales of the herbal, she freed her husband from prison by paying his debtors. Between 1737

and 1747, Alexander Blackwell and his wife made several transactions with John Nourse, a bookseller near Temple Bar in London, which are preserved in the manuscript collections of the British Library. Briefly they were as follows:

1 On 28th September 1737 'Alexander Blackwell of Chelsea' with the consent of his wife Elizabeth, sold a third share of the herbal, which was to contain figures of plants engraved on 500 copperplates and engraved descriptive text on a further 125 copper plates to Nourse for the sum of £150, and in order that Blackwell could not produce a copy of the work without Nourse's consent, he, Blackwell, had to give Nourse a third of the plates. Nourse paid Blackwell with two notes for £75, 'each payable 12 months after date' one of which was dated 28th September 1737 and the other 8th February 1738.

2 In a deed of 19th February 1739 'Alexander Blackwell of Stanmore in the county of Middlesex' assigned to Nourse the entire copyright of the herbal for £150 and a mortgage for £169. 4 s 1d (which Blackwell owed to Nourse). Nourse was then to recover the £169. 4 s 1d out of publishing the work and when fully repaid, Nourse would reconvey two-thirds of the copyright to Blackwell.

3 On 2nd October 1740, the Blackwells sold a further sixth share of the copyright to Nourse for £75. 0 s 0d. making Nourse the copyright holder of half of the work.

4 On 5th December 1745 Alexander Blackwell, then residing in Ållestad near Gothenburg in Sweden granted his wife, who was at that time living 'in the parish of St Paul Covent Garden in the county of Middlesex', power of attorney to act for him in his business dealings with Nourse and others. Subsequently on 28th April 1747, Elizabeth Blackwell, as so empowered, wrote an acknowledgement that she had received £20 from Nourse and that this, with £108. 13 s 0d already owing to Nourse on account of her herbal, was the consideration for transferring to him all her rights in her remaining half share of her work entitled *A curious herbal* (containing 625 plates 'and upwards'), all copies of the said book both coloured and uncoloured then remaining unsold in Nourse's hands, and all the copper plates.¹⁸

There is an entry in Blackwell's account with Nourse which is dated 12th March 1739 and which

refers to £11. 4 s 2d received by Blackwell as the balance from 'Mr Harding' which possibly indicates the date on which the agreement between Blackwell and the bookseller Samuel Harding was ended. It appears that Nourse was more willing than Harding to loan Blackwell money and on 28th April 1747, the remaining half share of the herbal was sold to Nourse as settlement of an outstanding debt.

The success of '*A Curious Herbal*' may be partly due to the fact that there was a need for such a work, which is one of the reasons advanced that Sir Hans Sloane and Richard Mead backed the publication of the work. However, on closer examination, there were two other works that covered very similar ground albeit both were over 10 years old. In 1723, Patrick Blair, a Fellow of the Royal Society, had published '*Pharmaco-Botanologia: or An Alphabetical and Classical Dissertation on all the British Indigenous and Garden Plants of the New London Dispensatory ...*'¹⁹ and a year earlier Joseph Miller, also of the Chelsea Physic Garden, had published '*Botanicum Officinale; or a Compendious Herbal: giving an account of all such plants as are now used in the Practice of Physick*'.²⁰ Joseph Miller's book played a major part in the production of *A Curious Herbal* as many of the descriptions of medical properties are taken from it. The main drawback with these publications was that they were not illustrated, so Sir Hans Sloane may have felt that an illustrated herbal was called for.

It is likely that Sloane supported the publication of Elizabeth Blackwell's book as he wanted to ensure that the plants he had described and brought back from Jamaica were included in any new herbal published and their medicinal properties investigated. It is also true that recommendations from apothecaries, botanists and physicians helped to advance sales of the *Curious Herbal*.

It was re-issued as two folio volumes in 1739, 1751 and 1782. The work is also noteworthy for the number of dedications contained in varying numbers depending on the version of the publication. They are addressed to eminent apothecaries and physicians who gave the author assistance and encouragement. They include not only Richard Mead, Sir Hans Sloane and Isaac Rand but also Thomas Pellett, President of the Royal College of

Physicians; Alexander Stuart, the physician who 'showed some of the first drawings at a public herbarizing of the worshipful Company of apothecaries';¹⁴ the physician and botanist James Douglas and the aforementioned Joseph Miller. There is also a mention of John Johnstoun, Professor of Medicine of the University of Glasgow from 1714 to 1750, who was Elizabeth's uncle. The acknowledgement for him reads:

'As this work has met with a more favourable reception from the publick, both at home and abroad, than I could have expected, knowing my own insufficiency for the undertaking; this success must be ascrib'd in great measure to the prevailing influence of those worthy gentlemen, who kindly honoured it by their recommendation, amongst them, I am in a particular manner indebted to your goodness, in making it acceptable at Glasgow' and is signed 'your much obliged niece. Elizabeth Blackwell'.¹⁴

In 1806, many years later, the botanical writer Richard Weston wrote 'This work still continues in such esteem as to keep up its original price of six or seven guineas, and 10 on large paper, in the modern sale catalogues'.¹⁷

The book itself contained the most comprehensive collection of pictures of medicinal plants available at that time and was only bettered by the publication in 1790–1795, of William Woodville's *Medicinal Botany*. Although there was criticism, by later generations, that the plants seemed stiff and unnatural, had large areas of blank space, and a simplified approach, it was an undertaking of heroic proportions.

It is also interesting to note that a comparison with both Gerard's and Parkinson's herbals from the previous century, indicate St John's Wort as a wound cure whereas by the time of the publication of Miller's book it was being used to treat melancholy, for which purpose it is still used today.

Between 1747 and 1773, an enlarged and improved version of Elizabeth's original 500 plates was published in Latin and English in Nuremberg by Christoph Jacob Trew, with plates redrawn and engraved by N. F. Eisenberger. This was entitled *Herbarium Blackwellianum* and appeared in five volumes, the sixth volume appearing in 1773, after

Trew's death, with the title *Herbarii Blackwelliani auctarium*.²¹ This contained many new plants including ornamental and poisonous species. The preface of the publication points out its superiority to the work of Morandi in its colouring and accuracy and the large amount of exotic plants depicted.

Later life

After his wife had completed her work and obtained his release from prison, Alexander Blackwell became director of improvements to James Brydges, Duke of Chandos who was building his mansion at Canons in Stanmore, Middlesex at the time. However Alexander seems to have left under a cloud as a contemporary account claims the dismissal 'kept him from other employment'.⁵ Whilst in the Duke's service he had written *A new method of improving Cold, Wet and Clayey Grounds*²² which apparently brought him to the notice of the Swedish Ambassador and he was engaged to go to Stockholm in 1742, leaving Elizabeth, with their child, behind in London. In Sweden he called himself a physician and successfully prescribed for King Frederick but was soon accused of quackery and fell back on his 'second' occupation of agriculturist. In 1745 he published *An essay on the Improvement of Swedish Agriculture* and was put in charge of a model farm at Ållestad which he mismanaged and put himself in a precarious position with the King. In an effort to reinstate himself he is alleged to have got involved in a plot to put the Duke of Cumberland on the Swedish throne, although it is thought that this was probably a trumped up charge originating from another minister called Count Tessin, who was jealous of his new found favour and who was subsequently put in charge of Blackwell's arrest and torture. On 9th August 1747, just as Elizabeth was on her way to join him in Sweden, Alexander Blackwell was executed by decapitation. Joking to the last, he apologised for putting his head on the wrong side of the block as, he said, it was the first time that he had been beheaded!²³—although the veracity of this account has been questioned.

Elizabeth now disappears from the history books. It is possible that she fell back on her original training as a midwife. She appears to have had

three children all of whom died young—William on the 3rd May 1736, Blanch Christian on the 11th May 1738 and there is an Anne ‘Blackall’ who also died in 1738. Wallis records an Old Bond Street address for her²⁴ and Hurd-Mead suggest that she went on to become a successful practitioner (Fig. 4) and that the later Doctor Elizabeth Blackwell, her namesake, considered her a ‘physician-accoucheur worthy of all praise’.² She died in 1758 and was buried in the churchyard of Chelsea Old Church near to her old ally Sir Hans Sloane.

The future

Although history has overlooked Elizabeth Blackwell and she never became as famous as her later namesake, she made a great contribution to the area of botanical illustration and medicine. Her devotion to her husband was exemplary, working for 2 years to free him from prison and then giving up the copyright of her work to pay his debts. As James Bruce says of the *Curious Herbal*:

‘at once a noble and marvellous monument of her enthusiastic and untiring conjugal affection, and an interesting evidence of the elegant and truly womanly nature of her own mind’.³

Blackwell’s herbal was reprinted once in the 20th century and, in the 1920s, Constance Smedley, the playwright was so taken with her story when she herself moved to Chelsea, that she wrote a play entitled *The Curious Herbal*.²⁵ Enquiries with the publisher have suggested that the play has not been performed since the 1940s.

However at the start of the 21st century, the British Library and the National Library of Medicine in Washington are beginning a joint project to put into digital format some of the hand coloured plates from her *Curious Herbal* as part of the ‘Turning the Pages’ project. Blackwell’s herbal will sit alongside such gems as the Lindisfarne Gospels, the Leonardo notebook and will be joined next year by Vesalius’s *De Humani Corporis Fabrica*. Elizabeth Blackwell’s labours will perhaps be properly rewarded and she can emerge from undeserved obscurity to hit the headlines once again.

Afterword—a comparison of the British Library copies

The British Library has three copies of *A Curious Herbal* in its collection. The first is a two volume set of Samuel Harding’s edition of 1737 (452.F.1–2). This belonged to Sir Joseph Banks (1743–1820) an English botanist, patron of the sciences, President of the Royal Society of London. During his 42 years presidency he was a major influence on European scientific investigation. He was a member of the wealthy landed gentry and was educated at Harrow, Eton and Oxford. His interest in botany and the natural sciences prompted him to make voyages of scientific exploration. From his first, to Labrador and Newfoundland in 1766, he brought back botanical specimens that were the beginning of the Banks Herbarium, a collection which is now in the Natural History Museum. In 1768, at his own expense, he accompanied a botanical expedition to the South Seas with Captain James Cook and collected more than 800 previously unknown specimens. As unofficial director of the Royal Botanical Gardens at Kew he was instrumental in efforts to grow tropical crops throughout the British Empire and it was at Banks’s suggestion that the ship *Bounty* attempted to take breadfruit to the West Indies.

His copy of *A Curious Herbal* is hand coloured and contains his annotations and notes on each illustration with the Linnaean names for the plants depicted.

The second copy in the Library is a particularly finely bound one which belonged to the King George III collection (34.i.12–13). It is a confusing mix of the two volumes with Volume 1 being the later edition published by Nourse in 1739 and Volume 2 the earlier Samuel Harding edition of 1737. The title page of the second volume is printed from the original copper-plate whilst the first has the same plate but with an imprint which reads ‘printed for John Nourse at the Lamb without Temple bar, MDCCXXXIX’. Some of the engraved plate numbers are missing from the first volume and have been pencilled in at some point.

The last copy of *A Curious Herbal* is a 1782 version (445.h.6–7) both volumes published with a new imprint ‘printed for C. Nourse opposite Catherine street in the Strand 1782’ and both uncoloured, although the Chelsea Physic Garden does possess a coloured copy of this version.¹⁴

'New editions' were advertised in 1741 and 1755, but probably never appeared; no copies have been traced.

The Library also possesses a copy of three volumes of the *Herbarium Blackwellianum* published by Trew in Nuremberg which is in bad condition but is also finely coloured.

I have also attempted to trace extant copies of the 'Curious Herbal' through various mailing lists. There are copies in the Royal College of Physicians of London, The Royal Society of Medicine, The Royal Horticultural Society, The Royal Botanical Gardens at Kew, The Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow, The Chelsea Physic Garden, The National Library of Scotland and the Wellcome Library. Copies also exist in the John Rylands University Library in Manchester and the University Libraries of Aberdeen and Glasgow. Many copies are held in University Libraries in the United States and in Europe the Bibliotheque Nationale has a copy as do libraries in Germany. A wider trawl of catalogues will be carried out in the near future.

References

- Blunt, W. *The Art of Botanical Illustration*. London: Collins, 1950.
- Mead, K. C. H. *A History of Women in Medicine* [with plates]. Haddam: Haddam Press, 1938.
- Bruce, J. *Lives of Eminent Men of Aberdeen*. Aberdeen: L. Smith, 1841.
- Wyness, F. A curious herbal. Unusual and romantic story of Elizabeth Blackwell. *The Scotsman*, 11 November 1961 page 7 (magazine section).
- The Bath Journal*, 14 September 1747.
- Aveling, J. H. *English Midwives: their History and Prospects*. Reprint of the 1872 edition with an introduction (including a select bibliography of midwifery) and a biographical sketch of the author, with a list of his writings and portrait, by John L. Thornton. London: Elliott, 1967.
- Delacoux, A. *Biographie des Sages-femmes Célèbres, Anciennes, Modernes et Contemporaines. Avec 20 Portraits*. Paris: Chez Trinquart, Librairie Editeur, 1834.
- Smellie, W. *An Answer to a Late Pamphlet* [by William Douglas]. *Intituled, a Letter to Dr Smellie; Shewing the Impropriety of His New Invented Wooden Forceps*. London: J. Roberts, 1748.
- Hunting, P. *A History of the Society of Apothecaries*. London: The Society, 1998.
- MacMichael, W. (ed.) *The Gold-Headed Cane*. [Biographical sketches of John Radcliffe, Richard & Mead, Antony Askew, David Pitcairn, and Matthew Baillie. With illustrations.] London: Longmans, 1884.
- Miller, P. *The Gardener's and Florist's Dictionary, or a Complete System of Horticulture*. 2 Volume. London: Charles Rivington, 1724.
- Alic, M. *Hypatia's Heritage: a History of Women in Science from Antiquity to the Late Nineteenth Century*. London: Women's Press, 1986.
- Polwhele, R. *The Unsex'd Females; a Poem, Addressed to the Author of the Pursuits of Literature*. London: Cadell and Davies, 1798.
- Henry, B. *British Botanical and Horticultural Literature before 1800 Comprising a History and Bibliography of Botanical and Horticultural Books Printed in England, Scotland, and Ireland from the Earliest Times Until 1800*. London: Oxford University Press, 1975.
- Blackwell, E. *A Curious Herbal Containing Five Hundred Cuts of the Most Useful Plants, which are now Used in the Practice of Physick, to which is Added a Short Description of ye Plants and their Common Uses in Physick*. MS. notes to the plates, 2 Volume. London: Samuel Harding, 1737.
- Pharmacopoeia Londinensis in qua medicamenta antiqua et nova usitatissima, sedulo collecta, accuratissime examinata ... describuntur. Opera Medicorum Collegii Londinensis. Londini, E. Griffin. sumptibus J. Marriot, 1618.
- Weston, R. A review of the principal authors on horticulture and botany, from 1480 to 1750. *The Gentleman's Magazine* 1806, 76(2), 1101.
- British Library Add. Ms. 38729.
- Blair, P. *Pharmaco-botanologia: or, an Alphabetical and Classical Dissertation on all the British Indigenous and Garden Plants of the new London Dispensatory ... With many Curious and Useful Remarks from Proper Observation* [With a plate.] 7 Part. London: G. Strahan: 1723–28.
- Miller, J. *Botanicum Officinale, or a Compendious Herbal, giving an Account of all such Plants as are now used in the Practice of Physick, with their Description and Virtues*. London: E. Bell, J. Senex, W. Taylor, J. Osborn, 1722.
- Blackwell, E. *Herbarium Blackwellianum emendatum et auctum, id est. Elisabethae Blackwell collectio stirpium quae in pharmacopoliis ad medicum usum asservantur, quarum descriptio et vires ex Anglico idiomate in Latino conversae sistuntur ... et probatis botanicorum nominibus illustrantur. Centuria I. (-V.) cum praefatione ... Christoph. Iacobi Trew. (Centuria VI. Cum praefatione D. Christiani Gottlieb Ludwig.) Excudit figuras pinxit atque in aes incidit N. F. Eisenbergerus. Lat. & Ger. 6 Part Norimbergae, 1757, 54, 73.*
- Blackwell, A. *A New Method of Improving Cold, Wet, and Barren Lands, etc*. London: J. Warthoe, 1741. 80.
- An Impartial Account of the Tryal, Life, Character and Behaviour of Doctor Alexander Blackwell, who was Lately Beheaded at Stockholm, for a Treasonable Plot. Also His Remarkable Speech on the Scaffold, etc*. London: A. Moor, 1747.
- Wallis, P. J. *Eighteenth Century Medics*, 2nd improved and enlarged edition. Project for Historical Biobibliography. Newcastle upon Tyne: Project for Historical Biobibliography, 1988.
- Smedley, C. *The Curious Herbal*. London, New York: Samuel French Ltd, 1930.