The Quatercentenary of the Lumleian Lecture

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The genesis of the Lumleian Lecture, the first of the College’s named lectures and formal educational endeavours, remains obscure, as it occurred before Michaelmas 1581 while the Annals were suspended.

The project is first mentioned in the Annals at a Comitia on 7th February 1582 when a draft statute of the lectures was considered and it was decided that £100 out of the College’s total funds of £108 18s. 6d. should be spent on enlarging the College house to provide more spacious rooms for meetings and lectures; it was also agreed that the President should send personal letters of gratitude to Lord Lumley and Dr Caldwell, which were approved and sealed on February 9th.

The letter to Lord Lumley, while expressing the College’s gratitude for his part in providing the surgical lectures, explained that all their small stock of money ‘shall altogether be employed in the building of a more convenient place for the lectures. Trusting that it will, please God, to raise someone or other, to put to their furthering help, for the finishing of that which we find ourselves very weak and insufficient to perfurm...’

The second letter is much more informative, as it is clear that it was Caldwell’s idea to establish a surgical lectureship and that he had drawn up the statutes, which Comitia approved, ‘saving that we have here and there inserted a word or two, for the plainer explication of your intent’. It also becomes apparent that it was Caldwell’s idea to enlarge the College house and that he had offered to be solely responsible for the supervision of the alterations, but Dr Giffard suggested that ‘in so great a matter you would joyn unto you, some one or two of the company, who might ease your labor therein, as well with their advice and counsel...’

John, sixth Baron Lumley (1533-1609)[1], came of a north country Catholic family. His father had been beheaded for his involvement in Aske’s insurrection. Young Lord Lumley had the good fortune to join the royal nursery school where selected noble children were taught with Prince Edward and the Lady Elizabeth by able scholars such as John Cheke and William Grindal.

At Easter 1549 Lord Lumley entered Queens’ College, Cambridge, as did another Catholic Fordling, Henry Fitzalan, Lord Maltravers (ob. 1556), only son of the Earl of Arundel; they became firm friends, sharing common intellectual interests—book collecting and membership of the Society of Antiquaries—and Lumley married Lord Maltravers’ sister, Jane (ob. 1576). The Earl of Arundel, who was acquired and devious, recognised that he would not, in the future, have the influence that he had enjoyed with Queen Mary, so welcomed as a son-in-law this intelligent but not over-ambitious young man who had already created a good impression at court. The Countess of Arundel died in 1557 and the Earl, who was in financial difficulties, invited Lord and Lady Lumley to make Nonesuch Palace their main residence rather than Lumley Castle in Durham, as it was the Earl’s intention, which he fulfilled, to make Lord Lumley his principal legatee, towards which the first step was the combination of their considerable libraries[2].

One of the offices which the Earl of Arundel enjoyed was the High Stewardship of the University of Oxford, but when the Chancellor, Cardinal de la Pole, died in November 1558, Fitzalan was elected as his successor; however, the atmosphere of an Elizabethan Oxford was very different from a Marian one for a Catholic nobleman, so he resigned the office in less than six months, but did not leave Oxford empty-handed. Lord Lumley succeeded him in 1559 as High Steward, carrying out his duties with skill and assiduity until his death in 1609. Meanwhile, Earl Fitzalan had appointed an Oxford graduate, Humphrey Llwyd (1527-1568)[3] as his personal physician. Llwyd came from near Denbigh and was at Brasenose College, reading medicine. As was quite common, he did not proceed to the BM, but left the university after graduating in arts in 1551. While in the Earl’s service, Llwyd translated a number of medical books into English, but he is best remembered as a cartographer, antiquarian and book-collector, and it was in these spheres that he had a considerable influence on Lord Lumley, whose sister Barbara he had married. Llwyd encouraged Lumley’s intellectual pursuits while dissuading him from participating in the political manoeuvrings that Fitzalan enjoyed. Lord Lumley managed to avoid involvement in the Earl’s plots until September 1569, when he was arrested on suspicion of complicity in the Ridolfi conspiracy. He was imprisoned in the Tower until April 1573, though he was never convicted of recusancy. Queen Elizabeth, recognising Lumley’s integrity and nobility of purpose, overlooked his Catholic sympathies. He subsequently served on many state trials and commissions.

In addition to his benefaction to the College of Physicians, Lord Lumley supported Sir Thomas Smith’s (1556?-1609) short-lived course of public lectures in mathematics and gave books to Cambridge University and the Bodleian Library, though it is not entirely clear how the major portion of his library was incorporated into King James’s collection.
Dr Edward Caldwell (1513-1584) was born at Upper Hulme near Leek in Staffordshire and entered Brasenose College, Oxford, in 1530, proceeding to BA in 1533 and MA in 1538, when he became a Founder’s Fellow. He was bursar from 1540 to 1542. In 1547 Caldwell was elected a senior student (Fellow) of Christ Church and in 1552 he supplicated for his DM, declaring that he had studied medicine for 16 years—that is from 1536, just before he took his MA.

There is confirmatory evidence of this. In 1550, a Swiss Protestant was enquiring from colleagues in England whether he should send his nephew to Oxford or Cambridge to study medicine; the advice given was that Oxford was preferable for several reasons; in discussion of the various teachers, it was said of Caldwell that he was a staunch Protestant and ‘a man exceedingly distinguished for his learning and knowledge of medicine’. Caldwell was admitted to the BM with a licence to practice in March 1555 and received the DM five months later. There is little information about Caldwell’s activities while he was a medical Fellow at Oxford but he conformed to the normal pattern, combining teaching with local practice until he received his DM. Shortly after this he moved to London. In December 1559, at the age of 46, he was examined and admitted to the Fellowship of the College of Physicians and on the same day became a Censor. His clinical skill was already appreciated, for he had been appointed to take care of Sir William Petre[4], Queen Elizabeth’s ailing Secretary of State, had consulted the leading physicians and advised surgeons of eminence such as Thomas Vicary and Robert Balthrop. In the College over the succeeding decade Caldwell was re-elected Censor and held the offices of Councillor and Elect before becoming President in 1570, just before John Caius’ election for the ninth and last time. It was in November 1572 that Dr Caius and Dr Caldwell were excused from attendance at Comitia, but it is uncertain whether Dr Caldwell was in poor health or merely absent from London, for his major educational endeavour was still to come.

In the latter part of the sixteenth century there was considerable criticism of the training of surgeons; Sir Humphrey Gilbert (1539-1583)[5] in his project for ‘Queene Elisabethes Acahademy’ suggested that ‘The physician shall practice to read surgery because through want of learning therein we have very few good surgeons if any at all by reason that surgery is not learnt in any other place than in a barbers shop’. Thomas Gale (1507-1586), royal Sergeant-Surgeon and Master of the Barber-Surgeons’ Company, wrote in his Certaine Workes of Chirurgerie (1563): ‘Two Thingys there are (sore to be lamented), which chieflye have brought the most noble and ancient arte of chirurgerie to extreme decaye and ruine; one is that every person, good and badde, learned and unlearned, chirurgian or no chirurgian, doe without penaltie and correction of lawes frelye take on them the practice of chirurgerie: the other thyng is that the chirurgins themselves (I speke for the greater number) are unworthy professors.’ The background to this has been well discussed by Copeman[6] and Roberts[7].

Since the foundation of the Barber-Surgeons’ Company in 1540, the College of Physicians had been responsible for their anatomical demonstrations, but the situation with regard to surgical teaching was very different; the United Company had instituted a compulsory surgical lecture every Tuesday but attendance proved difficult to enforce, as the surgical members preferred to pay a fine and evade their responsibilities. These deficiencies must have struck Dr Caldwell forcibly, for in Oxford in the sixteenth century there was a lively interest in surgical teaching. Thomas Byrd, who held the University licence and was Master of the Oxford Barber-Surgeons’ Guild, was a well-known teacher. College Fellows such as Robert Recorde and Nicholas Udall were writing in English for surgeons and in 1566 the United Company provided a bursary so that Thomas Hall[8] could study at Oxford... ‘surgery anexinge physycke thereunto and thereby hereafter to perfect the other brethren beyng of this mystery... by readynge lectures unto them... and otherwise by his counsell, conyng and knowledge’. Hall in due course became examiner and lecturer for the Company.

Fig. 1. John, sixth Baron Lumley. (From an engraving in the Royal College of Physicians.)

This was the background to Dr Caldwell’s offer to the Barber-Surgeons’ Company in 1579 of an annuity of £10 to provide an annual lecture on surgery, but the members of the court of the Company could not reach a decision so nothing came of the offer. Three years later, Dr Caldwell, supported by Lord Lumley, submitted his much more ambitious scheme for surgical teaching to the College of Physicians, where it was received with gratitude. This action was in no way irregular, for the Physicians’ Act of 1540 stated that ‘as the science of physick doth comprehend, include and contain the knowledge of surgery, any of the company of physicians might exercise the science of physic in all and every his members and parts’.

Lord Lumley’s motive in proposing or taking part in
this project has often been questioned. On the evidence of his library and the wording of the tripartite indenture some have suggested that he had a personal interest in surgery. It is true that his library [2] contained a large number of medical books, but the majority were fine editions of the classical and Arabic physicians and there were few ‘modern’ or surgical works, while the preamble to the indenture gives no indication that it was prepared by Lumley. Sir George Clark [9] suggested that both Lumley and Caldwell were suspected of complicity in Catholic political activity, but the evidence against Caldwell, based on an unsigned document in the British Library, is tenuous to a degree and in Oxford he was considered a staunch Protestant. Indeed, Oxford would seem to be a much more plausible link. Dr Humphrey Lluyd had been an undergraduate at Brasenose, where Caldwell was a Fellow and perhaps his tutor, and Lluyd became Lumley’s brother-in-law; furthermore, Caldwell was a senior student of Christ Church when Lord Lumley became High Steward of the university and it was Christ Church that was responsible for the hospitality to the senior university officials; Lord Lumley’s inheritance of the Arundel estates on the Earl’s death in February 1580 provided a convenient source for his share of the annuity which came from rent charges on Sussex property. One would not question Lord Lumley’s generous intentions, which were, perhaps, associated with a desire to eradicate memories of his indiscretions.

To return to the history of the Lumleian lectureship, following the President’s letter of gratitude to the donors on 9th February 1582, there was a meeting in July in Dr Syminges’ house—he was acting for the President, Dr Giffard who was away for the whole year—to discuss details of the lectureship. The College officers were present, as were Dr Caldwell and Dr Richard Forster, who, it is clear, had already been selected as the first Lumleian lecturer. Dr Forster (ob. 1616) was an Oxford medical graduate and a Fellow of All Souls College before 1562, who gained his MA in 1567 and was given a dispensation in 1573 which allowed him to proceed to the DM immediately after the BM so that he might be admitted as a Fellow of the College of Physicians. At Oxford Forster was known as a skilled mathematician and a physician with astrological interests, who was commended by Richard Harvey, the Cambridge astrologer, as ‘one of our chief doctors in physick’, while Forster’s first book Ephemerides Meteorologicae (1573), dedicated to the Chancellor, the Earl of Leicester, who was his patron and his patient, praises John Dee’s achievements in reviving mathematical enthusiasm and for his advocacy of the Copernican system. At the College Forster’s talents were fully appreciated and he was appointed to most of the official posts, being President on five occasions.

In July 1582 the College received the letters-patent [10] granted to Lord Lumley and Dr Caldwell, giving them authority to establish the lectureship, and on 3rd August 1582 a massive tripartite indenture dated 3rd July 1582 [11] arrived, setting out the details of the benefaction. Two copies, for retention by Lord Lumley and Dr Caldwell, were sealed at the College and attested by the attorney, while the College retained the third copy, which was signed and sealed by the two benefactors; this involved sending a deputation to Nonesuch Palace consisting of Dr Roger Marbeck, the Registrar, Dr Forster and Mr Norrice, the attorney.

The preamble to the deed deplores the lack of learned and skilful surgeons so that ‘many wise men choose to commit themselves into the hands of olde doting women having no skill at all but a little blinde experience’, and this is contrasted with the respect and high repute that surgery had in ancient times. Accordingly, the donors hoped to restore surgery to its proper eminence by providing a reader (in the first instance Richard Forster, but the deed sets out the procedure for selecting the reader) who would lecture in the College of Physicians; he should first spend two years in Germany, France and Italy learning how surgery was taught in those countries, while receiving £40 each year from Dr Caldwell. The appointment at the College was for life, with a yearly salary of £40 jointly from the estates of Lord Lumley and Dr Caldwell. This stipend was generous, twice that paid to the physicians of St Bartholomew’s Hospital, but the duties of the reader were onerous. The course of surgical lectures, with suitable intervals for vacations, was to extend over six years. Lectures were to be given every Wednesday and Friday from 10-11 a.m., the first three-quarters of an hour in Latin, the last quarter in English. The first year’s lectures were to be an epitome of the whole of surgery based on Horatius Morus’ Tables and were to conclude in the winter with a dissection and demonstration of the internal organs lasting five days ‘if the body may so last without annoce’.

The lectures during the second, third and fourth years were to encompass particular aspects of surgery based on the Chirurgiae Institutiones (Paris 1543) of Jean Tagault (ob. 1545), a well-known Paris surgeon, and there was to be an anatomical demonstration each winter. The fifth year’s lectures, based on the sixth book of Paulus Aeginata and the study of the skeleton, were to explain the use of mechanical devices, such as the Scamnum Hippocrates, in the treatment of fractures and dislocations, while the final year’s lectures concerned the medicines that surgeons might use, following the principles laid down by Jacques Houlier (Hollerius) (ob. 1562) in his De Materia Chirurgica libri tres (Paris 1543).

The details of the lectures had clearly been determined by Doctors Caldwell and Forster with the advice of the College officers but the financing of the College rebuilding continued to be a problem. In November 1582, when the Fellows’ Feast was cancelled, it was suggested that the monies saved might be donated to the building fund but this proposal did not receive any support, though at Dr Caldwell’s Feast in January 1583, when the building was approaching completion, each Fellow gave £2 and Dr Caldwell £5. In November 1583, when the accounts were reviewed, Dr Caldwell had spent £152 and received £121, yet only two months before the inaugural lecture it was suddenly decided to enlarge the lecture theatre and provide a cathedra (professorial chair) for the dissections.

Raphael Holinshed [12] gives a moving account of the first Lumleian lecture on 6th May 1584. There was a great concourse of doctors, masters of surgery and stu-
Dr Caldwell, aged and white-haired, started to deliver an oration but faltered and then broke down, so Dr Giffard, the President, made a short speech and then invited Dr Forster to deliver his lecture, which was universally admired. At the conclusion of the lecture Dr Caldwell was carried the short distance to his house in Doctors' Commons, but he never recovered and died three weeks later at the age of 71. He was buried with full College ceremonial on 6th June 1584 in St Benet's Church, Paul's Wharf, and his tomb was decorated with carvings of surgical instruments, showing their mode of use.

Dr Caldwell, who was unmarried, died a rich man and his will, a lengthy document initially drawn up in August 1582, had four codicils. Having made provision for gowns and a feast for those present at his funeral, there were bequests to his numerous relatives, godchildren and household, both in London and Staffordshire. He also provided benefactions for the poor of Lichfield and Burton-upon-Trent. It would seem that Dr Caldwell had a considerable library and that he was in some doubt as to how to dispose of it, but in the end he decided to give most of the philosophy books to Brasenose College, the theology ones to his brother John Caldwell, a parson, and the rest, including the medical, surgical, and scientific books, to his nephew, Edward Caldwell. To the President and College of Physicians, Dr Caldwell left a set of the great surgical instruments used in the setting of fractures and the reduction of dislocations. Scamnum Hippocratis, Glossocomium Galenis, Nilsei plinthium and the ladder, and Trispastum Apellidis seu Archimedes; there was also 'an image of timber made after the form of a child of eight years old, which being layde upon Scamnum Hippocratis, is fitt to teache the reposing of all manner of bones either broken or out of joynets, whereby also a man maie learn the binding and rollinge of all partes of the body'. Probably the finest illustration of these instruments and their use is to be found in Vidius' De Chirurgica (Paris 1544). The Annals do not record that the College received Dr Caldwell's bequest.

Caldwell had a second set of these surgical instruments, without the Glossocomium, which he left to his cousin, Gilbert Wightman, who was at Cambridge and who, it was hoped, would read medicine; actually he took holy orders and became vicar of Claxby in Lincolnshire. A nephew, Robert Clarke, an apprentice surgeon, inherited the residue of the lease of his house in Doctors' Commons as well as various financial bequests, while 'his old servant Jerome Horobin was to be given all his instruments of surgery as well of silver as of iron and steel and one jar of Salatt oil'. Dr Forster was left a goodly quadrant of geometry hanging in Caldwell's study in London as a token of remembrance, and during his life he was at all times to have access to and use of all the surgical instruments bequeathed to the College of Physicians. Lord Lumley received a gold ring with a diamond as a small souvenir.

Dr Caldwell's will has curious aspects. Why did he own two sets of surgical instruments for the treatment of fractures and dislocations? A single set should have been sufficient if they had been acquired solely for teaching.

Why, too, with an apprentice living in his house did Caldwell leave to his servant all his surgical instruments of silver, iron and steel? Could it have been that he, who was accepted by the College and a one-time President, had practised as a surgeon-physician and hoped that the Lumleian lectures might encourage the development in England of the Italian style of surgeon-physician? Certainly the syllabus of the lectures offered a comprehensive 'postgraduate course' in academic surgery extending over six years, and it might have been that the Company of Surgeons failed to accept Caldwell's earlier offer of an annuity for a surgical lecture because they anticipated the possible consequences. If so, their fears were groundless, for the Lumleian lectures proved to be as unpopular as the weekly surgical lectures in Monkwell Street. In July 1584 there were complaints about poor attendance and it was decided that all Licentiates, Candidates and Fellows in their first year must attend or be fined. This had little effect and in the spring of 1585 it was resolved that no member of the College could call upon a surgeon unless he had attended the lectures as often as his business permitted. There were other problems—Dr Caldwell had intended to provide a set of texts for the lecture course, and a Latin version of Morus' Tables of Surgery had appeared in 1584, but it fell to Dr Forster to complete the English translation after Dr Caldwell's death. This was published in 1583 and was dedicated to the Company of Surgeons. It had a preface by Edward Caldwell, a nephew, deploring the Surgeons' ingratitude and negligence in failing to attend the lectures, and commending Richard Forster's ability. Forster was clearly delivering the statutory course of lectures, for William Clowes (1540-1604), Surgeon to St Bartholomew's Hospital, who attended the lectures, remarked on the value of Forster's exposition on the use of the Glossocomium for fractured femurs, and also on his discussion of the treatment of sword-thrust injuries and gunshot wounds.

Another problem arose in 1590 when Dr Caldwell's godson, William Caldwell, to whom he had left all his land in Staffordshire, was unwilling to provide the annuity for half the lecturer's salary and had to be threatened with a distraint order. Dr Forster completed two six-year cycles of surgical lectures and was proceeding with the third cycle when in 1601 he was elected President of the College and resigned the lectureship. In 1599 it had been decided that the College's anatomical demonstrations, which had been given each winter since 1565, should alternate with the Lumleian anatomical demonstrations, which were required to occupy five days of each year's surgical lectures; compulsory attendance was still enjoined, but without much success.

When Dr Forster resigned, the names of three eligible Fellows, Doctors Dunne, Davies and Giffard, were submitted to Lord Lumley, who selected Dr William Dunne as the second Lumleian lecturer; Dr Dunne died five years later and was succeeded by Thomas Davies, who succumbed in 1615, and nothing is known of the Lumleian lectures they delivered.

In August 1614 the College moved from Linacre's Stone House in Knightrider Street to the new College in Amen Corner, and a year later William Harvey was
appointed by the Elects as the fourth Lumleian lecturer, giving his first lectures on 16th-18th April 1616, and retiring forty years later. Harvey's notes for his original anatomical discourse in 1616, modified as the years went by, have survived. They were believed to have been the vehicle for the first account of his studies on the circulation, but Dr Whitteridge[17,18], who has studied and translated these notes, does not think that this is correct. There is no definite evidence that Harvey gave any surgical lectures or fulfilled the exacting terms of the Lumleian statutes. On the other hand, in 1630, when King Charles I was attempting to arrange that Dr Primrose should give some lectures on medicine, one of the College's counter-arguments was that it had two Lumleian lectures each week, but this might have been special pleading. Harvey's clinical experience was such that he could guide his surgical colleagues in their operations but Keynes[19] and others feel that he did not practise major surgery. The basic problem with Harvey's Lumleian lectures is that the audience was small and the recorded impact of his discourse was negligible—a barrister noted in his diary that he had gained much profitable knowledge from the anatomical lectures, while another member of the audience wrote that in a lecture Harvey had said that bees had hearts. It is worth remembering that when Isaac Newton delivered his Lucasian lectures on heterogeneity of light in 1669, there is no evidence that a single listener understood what was being presented.

Harvey was succeeded as Lumleian lecturer in 1656 by Sir Charles Scarburgh, who had been anatomical lecturer at Surgeons' Hall since 1649, and for the next hundred years there was a tendency to appoint anatomists as Lumleian lecturers, the surgical aspect of the foundation being forgotten. Until 1740 the office could be held for life, but tenure was then restricted to five years, though Switchen Adece (1705-1786) was Lumleian lecturer from 1772 to 1779 and only gave three anatomical lectures each October[20]. The modern custom of a single lecture on a medical theme was inaugurated when Dr Peter Mere Latham spoke on ‘Some Diseases of the Heart’ in 1827.

The attempt to provide a course of surgical lectures in the College of Physicians failed, yet it stimulated the more formal teaching of surgery in the United Company and encouraged other benefactors to follow the example of Lord Lumley and Dr Caldwell and establish educational lectures in the College.

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