

TRINITY COLLEGE DUBLIN



JOURNAL OF POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH VOLUME XIV 2015

Published by the Graduate Students' Union
of the University of Dublin, Trinity College.

This issue represents submissions
from the 2014-2015 academic year.

Printed in Ireland by Westside Print
Front cover illustration by Shane Finan

Typeset in Palatino and CG Omega using Adobe InDesign

ISSN: 2009-4787

This issue of the TCD Journal of Postgraduate Research may be cited as: (2015)
Journal of Postgraduate Research, Volume XIV

© The contributors and the TCD Journal of Postgraduate Research. No part of this publication may be reproduced without the permission of the author. All rights reserved. All views expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the editorial team or those of the TCD Graduate Students' Union.

Enlightenment and the Republic of Letters at the Dublin Medico-Philosophical Society, 1756-1784

by
Rachael Scally

Abstract

The Dublin Medico-Philosophical Society was established by John Rutty, Charles Smith and others in 1756. It was a small, self-funded and self-selecting learned society, which met on a bi-monthly basis to present and discuss medical and scientific papers on new and improving subjects. This article examines the society and its connection to an Enlightenment and a cosmopolitan Republic of Letters. It investigates the society's inauguration, membership, ideology and aims and considers how information was collected, produced and disseminated by its members. It proposes that the society was an improvement society, that wanted to improve Ireland by advancing organized learning and harnessing practical knowledge for the betterment of the nation. It contends that the society was a band of *virtuosi*, a talented and influential group of surgeons, physicians, apothecaries and clerics, who utilized the methodological and empirical approaches of the Enlightenment. It concludes that the Enlightenment was not only in Ireland but that Ireland, or more correctly Dublin, in the form of the Dublin Medico-Philosophical Society and its Irish scientific Republic of Letters, was also participating in the Enlightenment.

Keywords

The Dublin Medico-Philosophical Society, Enlightenment, the Republic of Letters, science, medicine.

Abbreviations

Bibliothèque des Sciences: Bibliothèque des Sciences et des Beaux Arts.

Medical and Philosophical Commentaries: Medical and Philosophical Commentaries. By a Society in Edinburgh.

Medical Observations and Inquiries: Medical Observations and Inquiries. By a Society of Physicians in London.

Philosophical Transactions: Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London.

RCPI: The Royal College of Physicians Ireland.

RIA: The Royal Irish Academy.

Introduction

While Ireland's more prestigious learned societies, such as the Royal Dublin Society have received a considerable amount of scholarly attention, the literature on its smaller and seemingly less consequential societies is sparse. Similarly, few scholars have considered Ireland's connection to an Enlightenment. This article examines the academically neglected Dublin Medico-Philosophical Society (1756-1784) and its relationship to an Enlightenment and a scientific Republic of Letters.¹ Sections 2-3 investigate the origins of the society, its membership and objectives. Sections 4-5 consider the society's commitment to Bacon's empirical and experimental method and examine how knowledge was acquired, produced and disseminated by its members.

The Inauguration of the Dublin Medico-Philosophical Society and its Preliminary Discourse

The first recorded meeting of the Dublin Medico-Philosophical Society took place on 8 April 1756. Present at this inaugural meeting were John Rutty, Charles Smith, Henry Downing and the Rev. Nathaniel Caldwell.² This small and self-funded society met on a bi-monthly basis at the homes of its members to read and discuss papers on scientific, medical and improving subjects. Membership was regulated by a system of nomination and ballot. Papers delivered before the society were to consist of 'such cases, facts, and experiments as may tend to confirm and explain what was before but imperfectly understood' or 'something new and useful'.³ These papers were to suppress 'all hypothetical disquisitions, controversial points' and 'everything that c(ould) only contribute to display the parts and erudition of the writer'.⁴ Hence, their style emulated the *Philosophical Transactions* and other famous publications, such as the *Medical Observations and Inquiries*, which stressed the limited value of words, theories, and hypotheses and adhered to the Royal Society's policy of not raising socially

1 The Republic of Letters is generally understood as an international community of cultural exchange involving the communication of enlightened ideas via correspondence and publication networks.

2 Royal College of Physicians Ireland, Medical and Philosophical Memoirs of the Dublin Medico-Philosophical Society, MPS, 8 April 1756; Royal Irish Academy, Minutes of the Medico-Philosophical Society, MS.24.K.31, 8 April 1756.

3 RCPI, MPS, 16 June 1757.

4 *Ibid.*

tendentious subjects.⁵ The members were urged to be, as the minutes state, 'disinterested', or in other words, objective observers.⁶

Prefixed to the first volume of the society's minutes, entitled *Medical and Philosophical Memoirs*, is a Preliminary Discourse written by founding member, Charles Smith in 1757, which outlines the scope and intentions of the society. The Discourse states that the society was established in order to carry out 'medical, natural and philosophical inquiries' of an 'improving and entertaining' nature. However, it also laments that Ireland had 'made but few attempts' to join the list of illustrious philosophical societies which flourished throughout Europe in the later half of the seventeenth-century. These bodies, Smith declares, strove to 'improve themselves and to instruct all Europe'. They succeeded, through 'truth and a sound method of reasoning, first introduced by Lord Bacon...to triumph over the errors of former ages and the dark subtleties of the schoolmen'. The Discourse hopes that the Medico-Philosophical Society, 'might serve as a spark to kindle some such design' in Ireland.⁷ Hence, we see how the society was intentionally modelled on the Royal Society and other improving societies, such as the Society of Physicians in London, which adhered to the Baconian programme for the reform of natural inquiry.

However, the Discourse is less than optimistic that such an 'agreeable prospect' will ever be realized. The present times, Smith maintains, are not congenial for fostering such a group of 'capable and ingenious persons who might mutually agree to support each other' in carrying out a scheme of this kind. In the place of true public spirit existed men who display a 'contempt and disregard of every one whose industry or abilities appear superior to their own', while those in power were occupied 'with every method of aggrandizing their families and supporting luxury', which Smith adds, had 'now grown to an immoderate height...even at the expense of all that is dear to the well wishers of his country'.⁸

Improvement, at least in the form of material gain, had brought with it greed, apathy and jealousy. Yet, this was not due to any inherent fault in

5 Palmira Da Costa, 'The Culture of Curiosity at the Royal Society in the First Half of the Eighteenth-Century', in *Notes and Records of the Royal Society of London*, lvi, no.2, (2002), 155; Susan Lawrence, *Charitable Knowledge: Hospital Pupils and Practitioners in Eighteenth-Century London*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 229.

6 *Ibid.*

7 RCPI, MPS, 16 June 1757.

8 RCPI, MPS, 16 June 1757.

the notion of improvement itself. Rather, the problem resided in how the fruits of improvement had been abused by the wealthy and powerful. The Discourse reveals a deep sense of national insecurity. There is an acute awareness that although Ireland was, in material terms, significantly improved compared with the previous century, that much more needed to be done if Ireland was to be an equal footing with her European neighbours. What was needed, according to Smith and the Discourse, was to guard against the perils of luxury and complacency and to rouse public spirit for the purpose of further national improvement. The key to such improvement lay in fostering organized learning and the implementation of the Baconian programme of practical learning by, as Smith terms them, Ireland's 'men of genius'. In other words, Smith and the Medico-Philosophical Society wanted to harness natural and practical knowledge for the betterment of the nation and help foster the Enlightenment in Ireland.

The Members

The society contained a number of eminent and powerful individuals. Many were educated at Trinity College Dublin and no less than eight were appointed as lecturers or professors at the university: Nathaniel Barry, George Cleghorn, John Charles Fleury, Edward Hill, Robert Scott, James Span, Robert Perceval and the Rev. Matthew Young.⁹ Additionally, Samuel Clossy, David MacBride and Clement Archer all held academic posts at other institutions.¹⁰ Hence we can see that the society was strongly affiliated with academia and Trinity College Dublin in particular. Yet, this does not exhaust the list of influential positions held by the members of the Dublin Medico-philosophical Society. Both Croker-King and Frederick Jebb were elected president of the Royal College of Surgeons and an impressive six members became president of the Royal College of

⁹ Nathaniel Barry was elected Professor of Chirurgery and Midwifery in 1749; George Cleghorn Professor of Anatomy in 1761; John Charles Fleury the first systematic Lecturer in Midwifery and Diseases of Women in 1762; Edward Hill Lecturer in Botany in 1773, Professor of Botany in 1785 and Regius Professor of Physic in 1811; Robert Scott succeeded Hill as Professor of Botany in 1800; James Span was appointed as Lecturer in Botany and Chair of Chemistry simultaneously in 1763 and The Rev. Matthew Young became Donegal Lecturer in 1782.

¹⁰ Following his move to New York, Samuel Clossy was elected Professor of Anatomy and Natural Philosophy at King's College, which is now the University of Colombia in 1762; David MacBride was appointed as Lecturer on the Diseases of Women and Children at the Rotunda Hospital in 1770 and Clement Archer held the Chair of Surgical Pharmacy at the Royal College of Surgeons Ireland from 1789-1803.

Physicians: Barry, Archer, Hill, Saunders, Harvey and Perceval.¹¹ Clement Archer also occupied the post of State Surgeon from 1791-1806.¹²

Besides practicing as physicians, surgeons, clerics, professors, lecturers, man-midwives and apothecaries, some members held posts at hospitals and charitable institutions. Croker-King began his career as assistant surgeon at Steevens' Hospital and later held the post of surgeon at the Foundling Hospital in Dublin.¹³ In addition, Archer and Clossy held surgical posts at Steevens',¹⁴ Daniel Rainy at the House of Industry and George Doyle at the Lock Hospital.¹⁵ Furthermore, members held posts as physicians at various hospitals. For example, Archibald Hamilton was visiting physician at St. Nicholas' Hospital in Francis Street, Nathaniel Barry at the Lock Hospital and both Charles Fleury and Daniel Cooke were attending physicians at the Meath Hospital.¹⁶ Holding hospital positions such as the above meant that members had the opportunity to observe and treat many diverse illnesses and also, in the case of surgeons, to perform dissections.

Many members of the society had studied abroad, either on the continent or in London and Edinburgh. For example, Frederick Jebb studied in Paris, Ritty graduated from Leiden University, where he studied under the renowned physician and botanist Herman Boerhaave and Nathaniel Barry qualified from Rheims.¹⁷ David MacBride also studied anatomy in London with William Hunter, the Scottish physician, anatomist and leading obstetrician and Clossy studied anatomy under Hunter's brother, John, the distinguished and pioneering surgeon.¹⁸ The society had an especially strong connection with Scotland. George Cleghorn, Robert Perceval, and

11 John Widdess, *A History of the Royal College of Physicians Ireland, 1654-1963*, (Edinburgh: Livingstone, 1963), 240; John Lyons, *Brief Lives of Irish Doctors*, (Dublin: Blackwater, 1978), 19; Eoin O'Brien, Anne Crookshank and Gordon Wolstenholme (eds.), *A Portrait of Irish Medicine: An Illustrated History of Medicine in Ireland*, (Dublin: Ward River Press, 1984), 94.

12 John Fleetwood, *The History of Medicine in Ireland*, (Dublin: Skellig Press, 1983), 56-57.

13 RCPI, MPS, 4 February 1773.

14 Thomas Kirkpatrick, *The History of Doctor Steevens' Hospital, Dublin, 1720-1920*, (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 1924), 117, 124; Widdess, *College of Physicians*, 108.

15 RCPI, MPS, 7 December 1775; Samuel Watson, *The Gentleman and Citizen's Almanack*, (Dublin: John Watson, 1772), 74.

16 Watson, *Citizen's Almanack*, 74-75.

17 Widdess, *College of Physicians*, 73; John Lyons, *A Pride of Professors: the Professors of Medicine at the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland 1813*, (Dublin: A. & A. Farmer, 1999), 6; Fleetwood, *Medicine in Ireland*, p.38, 118.

18 Widdess, *College of Physicians*, 108; Davis Coakley, *Irish Masters of Medicine*, (Dublin: Town House, 1992), 35.

Edward Foster all qualified M.D from the University of Edinburgh and MacBride studied under both Alexander Monro (primus), founder of the Edinburgh Medical School and William Smellie, the famous obstetrician and inventor of the forceps.¹⁹ They were, therefore, exposed to many different influences and cultures and would certainly have encountered enlightenment ideals and practices.

The society also had a strong connection to the British Army. Both William Harvey and Nathaniel Barry served as Physician Generals to the army in Ireland and Cleghorn had served as surgeon to the 22nd Regiment of Foot, in Minorca in 1736.²⁰ Additionally, both Thomas Witherell and David MacBride served as surgeons in the army and navy.²¹ The armed forces, like hospitals, presented opportunities for the mass observation and treatment of illness and disease.²²

A number of the members were, or would later become, members of other learned societies. George Cleghorn, Harvey, Hill, Perceval, and Purcell are all listed as members of the Medical Society of London and an impressive twelve members of the society are listed as ordinary members, as opposed to corresponding members, of the Medical Society of Edinburgh between 1750 and 1782.²³ This suggests that these men had studied in Edinburgh for a time and reveals an even stronger connection with Edinburgh than first supposed. In addition, Cleghorn was nominated as a Fellow of the Royal Medical Society of Paris in 1772 and James Span is listed as a European member of the American Philosophical Society.²⁴

Although other medical associations existed contemporaneously with the Medico-Philosophical Society, such as the College of Physicians and various trade guilds for apothecaries and surgeons, the society was unique in that

19 Fleetwood, *Medicine in Ireland*, 41, 86; O'Brien and Crookshank, *Irish Medicine*, 79; Fleetwood, *Medicine in Ireland*, 39; Margaret Preston, *Gender and Medicine in Ireland, 1700-1950*, (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2012), 133.

20 Fleetwood, *Medicine in Ireland*, 39; Widdess, *College of Physicians*, 79, 119.

21 Aquila Smith, 'Illustrious Physicians and Surgeons in Ireland, No.III, David McBride M.D', in *Dublin Quarterly Journal of Medical Science*, iii, no.2, (1847), 281; RCPI, MPS, 22 July 1756.

22 Ulrich Tröhler, *To Improve the Evidence of Medicine: The Eighteenth-Century British Origins of a Critical Approach*, (Edinburgh: Royal College of Physicians Edinburgh, 2000), 19.

23 The Medical Society of London, *A List of the Members of the Medical Society of London for the Year MDCCLXXXIX*, (London: Cicero Press, 1789); The Royal Medical Society of Edinburgh, *A List of the Members of the Medical Society of Edinburgh, Instituted 1737 – Incorporated by Royal Charter 1778*, (Edinburgh: 1796).

24 Jan Hallenbeck and Benjamin Franklin (eds.), *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, Held at Philadelphia for Promoting Useful Knowledge*, i, (1789), 8; Coakley, *Masters of Medicine*, 37.

it was, in theory at least, open to all suitably qualified professionals from any of the three branches of medicine. Moreover, it helped to strengthen the professional bonds and networks between these medical men. For example, the minutes reveal that it was common practice for members to call on the expertise of other members when faced with a crisis or a case of particular difficulty.²⁵

The society was also a sphere of intellectual sociability and a space where likeminded medical men could meet on a regular basis to share their expertise, discuss problematic or uncommon cases and communicate new improvements and theories from Ireland and the wider world.

Like the Royal Society and other medical societies such as the Philosophical Society of Edinburgh and the Society of Physicians in London, the Medico-Philosophical Society encouraged the exchange of ideas, information and skills. It was a place where men learned how to communicate their work to a wider audience, how to select unusual or interesting cases, how to prepare experiments, how to formulate their observations and how to successfully present them to their peers. The members, as we will presently discuss, read widely, published on a variety of medical and other subjects and had extensive correspondence networks. Hence, the society was a place into which new knowledge flowed, was discussed, criticised, filtered and then disseminated back out into the wider world via the members' letters, publications, lectures, and wider circles of sociability.

The Commitment to Baconianism

The society was truly Baconian.²⁶ In short, Bacon was the driving force behind experimental science and argued that all scientific truth originated from the real world, as 'neither the naked hand nor the understanding left to itself, c(ould) do much'.²⁷ He advocated the philosophy of continuous inquiry into and observation of natural phenomena. The natural world was to be tested by experimentation, which would yield practical benefits for mankind. Bacon's new science, or natural philosophy, as it was then more

25 RCPI, MPS, 2 February 1775, 1 February 1776.

26 John Helibron (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to the History of Modern Science*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p.75.

27 Francis Bacon, *Collected Works of Francis Bacon*, Volume 7, Part 1, Robert Ellis (ed.), (London: Routledge Press, 1996), 47.

commonly known, was easily incorporated into enlightened discourse and the two came to form an alliance. Baconianism quickly became a vital enlightenment resource, which opposed both scholasticism and superstition.²⁸ The society was devoted to Baconian practical learning and wanted to employ Bacon's empirical and experimental method to further practical knowledge for the improvement of Ireland. They were concerned with the collection of 'matters of fact' and gathering observations from direct experience and experiment, rather than relying on the knowledge of received wisdom.²⁹ Experience, observation, and experiment were the watchwords of the society.

Cleghorn, for example, clearly believed that observation was the key to medical improvement. In a paper delivered to the society in 1758 he lamented that it was 'alleged that Ireland contributes to promote medical knowledge less than her neighbours'.³⁰ Cleghorn, stressed the need for the dissemination of knowledge and therefore, proposed to affect 'a Reformation' of the society which would enable its members 'to furnish (their) quota to the Republic of Letters'.³¹ A large part of this reformation concerned the need for observation. What was required, according to Cleghorn, was (i) greater access to clinical cases and (ii) the detailed recording of clinical observations. He argued that hospitals and large practices were 'inexhaustible fund(s) of valuable observation' and as such needed to be utilized.³² Therefore, he recommended that medical men 'who ha(d) the care of hospitals' or who 'ha(d) an extensive practice were to be preferred to others as members.'³³ The message is clear and thoroughly Baconian: the improvement of medicine necessitated the detailed recording of multiple observations; this came from experience and the treatment of the sick, not textbooks.

In a subsequent article, which appears to have been written by Rutty, instructions are given to the members on how best to keep a medical

28 Roy Porter, *Enlightenment: Britain and the Creation of the Modern World*, (London: Penguin Books, 2001), 132.

29 For a discussion of 'matters of fact' as a category of natural philosophical knowledge at the Royal Society see, Steven Shapin and Simon Shaffer, *Leviathan and the Air-Pump: Hobbes, Boyle and the Experimental Life*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 22-30.

30 RCPI, MPS, 6 July 1758.

31 *Ibid.*

32 *Ibid.*

33 *Ibid.*

journal.³⁴ The great Boerhaave, Rutty's former Professor at Leiden, is criticized for claiming that the writing of medical observations was 'a thing very trifling'. By contrast, Rutty believed that it was 'to the advantage of the publick' that the good physician would observe and carefully record everything material that occurred in the course of his practice. Rutty urged that medical observations should be written down 'upon the spot', hence avoiding any distortion by memory, and 'arranged so as to afford an easy opportunity of tracing its progress from day to day'.³⁵ He believed that if a man formed a habit of recording 'what ha(d) happened, he w(ould) soon find himself able to give a pretty sure guess at what w(ould) happen'.³⁶ Hence, consistent observation would enable the improvement of medicine by allowing a physician to better trace the progress of an illness and save lives. Furthermore, the case history featured strongly in the minutes of the society. The case history was an important medical genre as it 'provided a way to encapsulate a diverse range of experiences and insights' and hence celebrated 'the primacy of...direct clinical observation'.³⁷

The society was highly experimental. However, by far the most experimental members were Rutty and MacBride. Rutty performed numerous experiments on minerals, mineral waters and plants in order to determine their chemical properties and medicinal or economic value.³⁸ Additionally, he maintained a monthly record of the weather and diseases in Dublin, which he reported to the society. MacBride likewise performed a plethora of experiments on fixed air, putrefaction, quick lime and fermentation.³⁹ Besides chemical experiments, members such as the Rev. Jones performed magnetical experiments before the society and exhibited the results of his experiments on various saline solutions using a microscope.⁴⁰

There was a strong visual element to the society's experiments and its proceedings in general. Experiments were not only performed before the members but their results displayed. Specimens exhibited include the volatile salt of vinegar, refined nitre, a separation of lime and water and some bottles of water impregnated with fixed air in the manner

34 RCPI, MPS, 4 Jan 1759.

35 *Ibid.*

36 *Ibid.*

37 Lawrence, *Charitable Knowledge*, 276.

38 RCPI, MPS, 21 February 1765.

39 RCPI, MPS, 21 April 1762, 4 August, 18 August 1763, 1 March 1764, 15 September 1763.

40 RCPI, MPS, 18 January 1759.

directed by the chemist Joseph Priestly.⁴¹ Experiments and the exhibition of experimental specimens functioned, like natural curiosities, not only to educate but also entertain the members.⁴² They may also have aided group sociability as the exhibition of experiments and specimens could be visually appreciated by all without necessitating, like some of the more specialized medical papers, any theoretical or specialized knowledge. Furthermore, the strong visual element to the society's proceedings demonstrated its adherence to enlightened vitalism. Vitalism attempted to view nature from within and saw it as an animated and autonomous creating agency. It rejected the mental and theoretical approach to learning advocated by the ancients and instead emphasised the importance of the visual and physical. During the Enlightenment the explosion in experimental science stressed the importance of sight and touch and the need for actual physical experimentation, rather than purely speculative theory.⁴³

The society was also a keen proponent of both self-experimentation and experimentation on patients. Rutty, for example, not only tasted and smelled many of his mineral water and botanical samples but also tasted his own urine and, on at least one occasion, the urine of a patient, a diabetic man, noting its sugary smell and sweet taste.⁴⁴ Patients were often used for experimental purposes, especially for the trial of new medicines. For example, on one occasion Rutty and Caldwell reported that an unspecified type of powder sent to the society by a correspondent had 'been given by them to two different persons separately but had had little or no effect'. It is then recommended that the powder should 'be again given in a larger dose'.⁴⁵ Croker-King also trialled hemlock pills on one of his patients at Steevens' Hospital and in one paper Rutty urged members who held hospital posts to trial wort, a malt preparation, as a cure for ulcers.⁴⁶ Wort, which had originally been proposed by member David MacBride as a cure for sea scurvy or explorers sickness, was itself trialled successfully by the

41 RCPI, MPS, 16 April 1767.

42 Palmira Da Costa, *The Singular and the Making of Knowledge at the Royal Society of London in the Eighteenth-Century*, (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), 49; Patricia Fara, *Sympathetic Attractions: Magnetic Practices, Beliefs, and Symbolism in Eighteenth-Century England*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 46-65.

43 Laurence Brockliss, *Calvet's Web: Enlightenment and the Republic of Letters in Eighteenth-Century France*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 11; Barbara Stafford, *Body Criticism: Imaging the Unseen in Enlightenment Art and Medicine*, (Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1991), 43.

44 RCPI, MPS, 18 April 1765.

45 RCPI, MPS, 5 May 1757.

46 RCPI, MPS, 6 August 1761, 7 January 1773.

British Navy on board Captain Cook's ship the Endeavour in 1768 and Resolution in 1775.⁴⁷

Yet, it is important to note that experimentation on patients was common in this era. Practitioners in fact believed that it was their moral and professional duty to discover new treatments.⁴⁸ As John Aiken, a dissenter and surgeon at Chester commented in 1771, the 'vulgar' may protest about medical experimentation but the 'improvement of medical knowledge (was) greatly indebted to hospitals for the opportunities they afford for experimental practice'.⁴⁹ Therefore, we can see how improvement and experiment were intimately connected during this period.

The Diffusion of Knowledge

Communication across national borders 'effectively closed geography' and helped to shape the Enlightenment's public sphere.⁵⁰ One of the Medico-Philosophical Society's strengths was its extensive correspondence network. The society received, collected and recorded natural knowledge or 'matters of fact' from their correspondents and disseminated this knowledge back out into the world, via their letters, books, and articles.⁵¹

Like the meetings of the Royal Society of London, the communication and discussion of correspondence formed a significant part of the society's business.⁵² From the minutes we can tell that the society elected a number of corresponding members.⁵³ However, these names were rarely recorded and it is often impossible to tell whether the letters read came from elected correspondents or belonged to the personal correspondence of the members themselves. The correspondence often contained information from other letters sent to the correspondent. Hence, even a letter from an

47 Peter Elmer, *The Healing Arts: Health, Disease and Society in Europe, 1500-1800*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), 276; RCPI, MPS, 7 September 1775.

48 Gunter Risse, *New Medical Challenges During the Scottish Enlightenment*, (New York: Rodopi, 2005), 48-49.

49 John Aikin, *Thoughts on Hospitals; With a Letter to the Author by Thomas Percival*, (London: Joseph Johnson, 1771), 76.

50 Charles Withers, *Placing the Enlightenment: Thinking Geographically About the Age of Reason*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 43.

51 Marie Hall, 'The Royal Society's Role in the Diffusion of Information in the Seventeenth-Century (1)', in *Notes and Records of the Royal Society of London*, xxix, no.2, (1975), 175.

52 Andrea Rusnock, 'Correspondence Networks and the Royal Society, 1700-1750', in *British Journal for the History of Science*, xxxii, no.2, (1999), 156.

53 RCPI, MPS, 1 August 1761.

Irish correspondent could contain news from much further afield. What is evident is that this correspondence was the lifeblood of the society. They connected the society to a cosmopolitan republic of scholars which kept them informed about medical and scientific developments in the rest of the world.

The society received a vast amount of correspondence from within Ireland itself and had numerous contacts throughout Scotland and England.⁵⁴ Letters read before the members came from as far afield as Leiden, Bombay, New York and the Southern Ocean.⁵⁵ Correspondence came mainly from physicians and surgeons and hence dealt overwhelmingly with matters of a medical nature. As 'what travelled was a reputation' the epistemic value of knowledge or personal testimony depended to a large extent on the social standing of the correspondent.⁵⁶ Social status was regarded as a guarantor of credibility and as the society's correspondence came overwhelmingly from eminent medical men their testimony was deemed to be reliable.⁵⁷ Letters typically relayed news of new medical books and treatise, new treatments and procedures and often described uncommon, remarkable or unusually difficult cases. Some correspondence also communicated scientific news and discoveries, such as the letter received by the Rev. Jones, describing the appearance of a comet in Bombay and the letter to Dr. Deane from Mr Walker, Lecturer in Natural Philosophy at Eton, giving an account of Mr. Herschel's improvement of the telescope.⁵⁸ However, improvements in agriculture, manufacturing and trade were rarely reported.

The society had a number of important Scottish correspondents.⁵⁹ Letters received by Cleghorn, Rutty and Span kept the society informed about medical progress in Enlightenment Edinburgh.⁶⁰ The most common type of development communicated was news of new treatments. For example, the society received up to date reports regarding the success of medical

54 RCPI, MPS, 7 May 1761, 16 October 1760, 7 July 1774, 3 February 1763.

55 RCPI, MPS, 2 April 1761, 20 May 1762, 7 September 1775, RCPI, MPS, Accompanying Folder, Letter to Mr. Cleghorn from New York, 1 August 1764.

56 Withers, *Placing Enlightenment*, 44, 47.

57 Shapin and Schaffer, *Leviathan and the Air-Pump*, 39, 58-59; Steven Shapin, 'The Man of Science', in *The Cambridge History of Science*, vol. 3, R. Porter, K. Park and L. Daston (eds.), (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 187.

58 RCPI, MPS, 20 May 1762, 2 Jan 1783.

59 These included Dr. Donald Monro, Dr. Robert Whytt, Dr. Cullen and Sir John Pringle.

60 RCPI, MPS, 6 May 1762, 5 August 1762, 16 October 1760, 7 July 1774, 3 October 1765.

trials in Edinburgh with new drugs such as Uva Ursi, which was used to treat calculus disorders, and Cicuta, which was believed to be effective against tumours.⁶¹ The society also had several correspondents in the British army. Letters received from correspondents in the military discussed subjects ranging from the outbreak of fevers and venereal diseases within the armed forces in Ireland, to the trial of wort as a cure for sea scurvy on board Captain Cooke's ship, HMS Resolution, in the Southern Ocean.⁶²

However, the society not only gathered and reported natural knowledge, they also disseminated it. On numerous occasions the letters received by the society thanked the members for their correspondence.⁶³ Cleghorn especially, as we discussed, stressed the need for the dissemination of knowledge and frequently urged the members to keep detailed records of all their medical cases so that new and useful medical knowledge could be disseminated to the wider medical and scientific community.⁶⁴ In 1761 he proposed the publication of a medical journal which was to contain not only papers written by the members but also those of medical men from 'the numerous hospitals lately erected not only in Dublin, but diverse other parts of the kingdom'. However, this plan never came to fruition and the minutes leave no record of why.

The society's work on the subject of smallpox is an excellent example of how correspondence networks could play a vital role in the dissemination of medical knowledge. In February 1761 the society received a letter from Dr. William Hunter in London inquiring about the present state of inoculation in Ireland.⁶⁵ Hunter was writing on behalf of the Society of Physicians who wished to publish an account of the subject in their next volume of *Medical Observations and Inquiries*. In order to answer Hunter's inquiry Cleghorn wrote to a number of physicians from within his network of correspondents and replies were sent to the society from all over Ireland. Letters describing the practice of inoculation in Ireland were received from Cork, Coleraine, Downpatrick, Londonderry, Waterford and Armagh.⁶⁶ The replies were then sent by the society to Hunter and the Society of

61 RCPI, MPS, 5 August 1762, 16 October 1760.

62 RCPI, MPS, 5 September 1782, 7 September 1775, 15 December 1763, 5 July 1756.

63 RCPI, MPS, 15 December 1767.

64 RCPI, MPS, 4 June 1761.

65 RCPI, MPS, 7 May 1761.

66 *Ibid.* Extended extracts from Hunter's letter and the replies gathered by the society from around Ireland are included in a lengthy entry in the minutes for the 7 May 1761.

Physicians in London. Therefore, we can see that besides gathering and recording information from their correspondents, the society also diffused this knowledge.

The members also obtained information from a plentiful supply of newspapers, which carried news from Ireland and the rest of the world. By 1760 over 160 different newspapers had begun publication in Dublin, with over a third continuing after the first year.⁶⁷ The society, particularly in the early years of its existence, was an avid collector of curious and improving articles from the national papers. In May of 1756 the society issued a directive stating that 'every member who (met) with anything in the public papers, monthly productions or other periodical works relative to natural history, natural philosophy, medicine, or anything curious or useful in nature or art sh(ould) transcribe or preserve the same in order to communicate them to other members'.⁶⁸

The members obliged and numerous newspaper and periodical articles were collected and in some instances pasted into the minutes themselves. The articles typically came from the *Universal Advertiser* and *Faulkner's Dublin Journal*, but the members had access to many other titles.⁶⁹ While these publications did occasionally carry medical news from Ireland and Europe, the articles collected by the society focused overwhelmingly on improving topics, such as reports of new inventions and accounts of extraordinary natural phenomena, like the Lisbon earthquake.⁷⁰ However, the society did have access to medical and scientific journals and the list of publications mentioned in the minutes is extensive. Perhaps the best well know titles are the *Philosophical Transactions*, *Memoirs of the Royal Academy of Surgery at Paris*, *Medical Observations and Inquiries*, *Medical Essays and Observations*, *Bibliothèque des Sciences* and *Memoirs of the Royal Academy of Sciences at Paris*.⁷¹

Like the Dublin Society, the Medico-Philosophical Society utilized

67 Robert Munter, *The History of the Irish Newspaper 1685-1760*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967); Robert McDowell, 'Irish Newspapers in the Eighteenth-Century', in *The Crane Bag*, viii, no.2, (1984), 40-43.

68 RCPI, MPS, 13 May 1756.

69 RIA, MS, 24.K.31, 5 April 1756, 22 July 1756, 7 April 1760.

70 Graham Gargett and Geraldine Sheridan, *Ireland and the French Enlightenment, 1700-1800*, (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), 33.

71 RIA, MS, 24.K.31, 17 June 1766; Royal Irish Academy, Repository of the Dublin Medico-Philosophical Society, MS, 24.E.5, no.93; RCPI, MPS, 15 November 1759, 3 June 1762.

newspapers papers and journals to actively promote the work of its members. For example, Rutty wrote an article for the *Annual Register* in 1764 recommending that MacBride's discovery of the effectiveness of wort in the treatment of sea scurvy be trialled. Rutty stated that 'the humanity, the importance, and usefulness' of the treatment merited its communication to the public.⁷² Smith's *Ancient and Present State of the County of Kerry*, published in 1756 was also publicized by the society. The article, which appeared in Dublin's *Universal Advertiser*, applauded Smith's book for its valuable contribution towards the improvement of Ireland.⁷³

Rutty, MacBride, Cleghorn, Croker-King, and Purcell all made valuable contributions to the famous London *Medical Observations and Inquiries* and the *Philosophical Transactions*, which, with its international readership, remained for men of science in the eighteenth-century the place to publish their research.⁷⁴ Cases by Purcell, Cleghorn, MacBride and Croker-King are also discussed in the *Edinburgh Medical and Philosophical Commentaries*.⁷⁵ Furthermore, the society proposed to publish the fruits of their work in a literary journal. The journal, unlike the medical journal proposed in 1761, was to contain essays not only on medical topics, but also essays discussing new and useful discoveries in natural history and natural philosophy. In 1781 a committee was organized to review the society's papers and 'report such as they judge(d) fit for publication'.⁷⁶ In 1783 the committee determined that a large number of the papers 'would be very proper to

⁷² Robert Dodsley, *The Annual Register, or a View of the History, Politics, and Literature, for the Year 1764*, (London: 1764), 128-130.

⁷³ RIA, MS, 24.K.31, 22 July 1756.

⁷⁴ See for example: John Rutty, 'An Account of the Copper-Springs Lately Discovered in Pennsylvania. By John Rutty M.D. of Dublin. Communicated by Mr. Collinson, F.R.S', in *Philosophical Transactions*, il, (1755-1756), 648-651; David MacBride, 'An Improved Method of Tanning Leather. By David MacBride, M.D. Communicated by Sir John Pringle, Bart, P.R.S', in *Philosophical Transactions*, lxviii, (1778), 111-130; John Purcell, 'Description of a Double Uterus and Vagina. By John Purcell, M.D, Professor of Anatomy in the College of Dublin. Communicated by Dr. Morton, in *Philosophical Transactions*, liv, (1774), 478-480; David MacBride, 'History of an Angina Pectoris, Successfully Treated by Dr. David MacBride. Communicated by Dr. John Fothergill', in *Medical Observations and Inquiries*, vi, (1784), 9-18; George Cleghorn, 'The Case of an Aneurysm Varix, Related and Described in Two Letters From George Cleghorn, M.D Lecturer of Anatomy, in Dublin, to Dr. William Hunter', in *Medical Observations and Inquiries*, iii, (1764), 110-117; John Rutty, 'Some Observations Concerning the Various Success of the Circuta in Ireland', in *Medical Observations and Inquiries*, iii, (1764), 229-240; Samuel Croker-King, 'Case of a Feather or Pen, Twelve Inches Long, Which was Fortunately Extracted from the Oesophagus of a Man who had put it Into his Throat to Excite Vomiting, and had let it Slip Down', in *Medical Observations and Inquiries*, vi, (1784), 231-235.

⁷⁵ *Medical and Philosophical Commentaries*, (Edinburgh: J. Murray, 1774), 171, (1775), 444, (1777), 114, (1779), 350.

⁷⁶ RCPI, MPS, 4 October 1781.

communicate to the public'.⁷⁷ In May of that year the society ruled that the selected papers were to 'be given to be transcribed for printing' and Purcell was appointed to write a preface for the journal.⁷⁸ Hence, we see that the society's ambitious project was not merely to produce an Irish version of the London *Medical Observations and Inquiries* or the Edinburgh *Medical and Philosophical Commentaries* but to produce an Irish version of the *Philosophical Transactions*. This was a truly historic undertaking which, if successful, would have realized Smith's dream stated in the Discourse of 1757, namely to create an Irish learned society with its own *Transactions* and place Ireland on an equal footing with the rest of the learned world.⁷⁹

Unfortunately, Smith's dream was never realized and shortly after Purcell had written the preface the society came to an abrupt and unexplained end on October 7, 1784. The reason for the society's demise has never been adequately accounted for and the minutes leave no record of why the society disbanded. However, it has been suggested that Robert Perceval, who became a member in October 1783, joined the society with the specific intention of bringing its business to an end.⁸⁰ Perceval, who was Lecturer in Chemistry at Trinity College Dublin, established his own society, the Neosophers, just a few weeks after joining the Medico-Philosophical Society.⁸¹ The Neosophers were concerned with the study of science and literature and had suspiciously similar interests to those of the Medico-Philosophical Society.⁸² Perceval's Neosophers subsequently united with another society at Trinity College, the Paleosophers, in 1785 to form the Irish Academy, which would receive its Royal Charter just a few months later.

This may seem far too conspiratorial and cunning but from the little we know about Perceval the man, such a hypothesis is not entirely improbable. Perceval was not only a brilliant academic but was also ambitious and calculating.⁸³ Perhaps Perceval saw how close the Medico-Philosophical

77 RCPI, MPS, 6 February 1783.

78 RCPI, MPS, 1 May 1783.

79 RCPI, MPS, 16 June 1757.

80 Darcy Power, *British Medical Societies*, (London: Medical Press and Circular, 1939), 199.

81 RCPI, MPS, 2 October 1783.

82 Widdess, *College of Physicians*, 87; Thomas Kirkpatrick, 'The Periodical Publications of Science in Ireland', in *The Bibliographical Society of Ireland*, ii, no.4, (1922), 40.

83 See Widdess, *College of Physicians*, 91. However, an alternative explanation for the society's abrupt end is that 1784 was a period of great change for Irish medicine. At this time surgery was striving to establish itself as a respectable branch of medicine and in 1784 the surgeons of Dublin were incorporated and formed into a College by the Kings Charter, of which Croker-

was to becoming the first scientific society in Ireland to publish its own transactions and wanted to claim this honour for himself. If this was his plan he was indeed successful as the Royal Irish Academy, with Perceval as secretary, published its own *Transactions* in 1786.⁸⁴ These *Transactions* became Ireland's first ever scientific periodical publication. Yet, if this version of events is correct, it would appear that Perceval was soon forgiven for his actions, as when the Royal Irish Academy was established in 1785, just under a sixth of the original members were former members of the Medico-Philosophical Society: Cleghorn, Deane, Hamilton, Perceval, Purcell and Young.⁸⁵

The society was also exposed to enlightenment ideas through books. The review of new books on medical and natural philosophical topics was a large part of the society's work. Every month the society drew up a list of lately published titles, many of which were reviewed and critiqued by the members.⁸⁶ They also occasionally issued a 'most wanted' list, ordering 'that as many of the said books as may fall into the hands of any of the members, some account may be delivered in of them'.⁸⁷ The minute book itself served as a useful source of knowledge for the members. Many papers were supplemented by further papers and previous articles were frequently cited in newly delivered ones.⁸⁸ It was not until the 1780s that specialist medical bookshops began to appear in Ireland and medical publications by medical experts were not easily accessible in the mid-eighteenth century.⁸⁹ Therefore, being part of a society was an excellent way to either acquire books or to acquire knowledge of new books and their ideas. By availing of their numerous contacts and pooling their knowledge, the society was able to keep its members up to date with all

King was named the first President. This could have led to an internal dispute between the surgeons and physicians of the society, some of whom may not have welcomed the surgeons rise in status.

84 Kirkpatrick, 'Science in Ireland', 40.

85 The Royal Irish Academy, *The Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy: Index*, (London: W. Bulmer, 1813), 96-97.

86 See for example, RCPI, MPS, 6 October 1757, which contains Cleghorn's account of a treatise published by Alexander Monroe on the lymphatic veins.

87 RCPI, MPS, 5 May 1757.

88 RCPI, MPS, 2 November 1758.

89 Tony Farmar, *Patients, Potions and Physicians: A Social History of Medicine in Ireland*, (Dublin: A. & A. Farmar, 2004), 53; James Kelly, 'Print and the Provision of Medical Knowledge in Eighteenth-Century Ireland', in *Irish Provincial Cultures in the Long Eighteenth-Century: Making the Middle Sort: Essays for Toby Barnard*, R. Gillespie and R. Foster (eds.), (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2012), 34.

new developments in medicine, natural philosophy and natural history.

Many of the members were authors of significant literary publications. Rutty was by far the most productive writer, penning over twenty books and pamphlets on a wide variety of subjects, ranging from mineral waters, to the history of weather and diseases, to the natural history of Dublin and the history of Quakerism.⁹⁰ By contrast Cleghorn only wrote one book, *Observations on the Epidemical Diseases in Minorca*, which, however, was widely acclaimed.⁹¹ MacBride wrote a number of books and pamphlets on different subjects. Yet, the work that brought MacBride and his ideas to the attention of the world was his celebrated *Experimental Essays on Medical and Philosophical Subjects*.⁹² This work was first published in London in 1764, with a second edition following in 1767. It contained his chemical research into fixed air, which extended the work of Joseph Black and made him the most famous Irish scientist since Robert Boyle.⁹³ In 1772 MacBride published *A Methodological Introduction to the Theory and Practice of Physic* in London, with a second edition following in 1777. In 1774 this work was published in Utrecht in Latin translation.⁹⁴ Smith also produced four pioneering books on the county histories of Cork, Waterford, Kerry and Down.⁹⁵ Furthermore, Clossy's *Observations on Some Diseases of the Parts of the Human Body*, which was published in London in 1763, was one of the first attempts to systematically review pathology in the English language.⁹⁶

90 See for example, John Rutty, *A Methodological Synopsis of Mineral Waters Comprehending the Most Celebrated Medicinal Waters, Both Hot and Cold*, (London: William Johnson, 1757); John Rutty, *An Essay Towards a Natural History of the County of Dublin, Accommodated to the Noble Designs of the Dublin Society*, (Dublin: W. Sleater, 1772); John Rutty, *A Chronological History of the Weather and Seasons, and of the Prevailing Diseases in Dublin*, (London: Robinson and Roberts, 1770).

91 George Cleghorn, *Observations on the Epidemical Diseases in Minorca From the Year 1744 to 1749*, (London: D. Wilson, 1751).

92 David MacBride, *Experimental Essays on Medical and Philosophical Subjects*, (London: A. Millar and T. Cadell, 1767); David MacBride, *A Methodological Introduction to the Theory and Practice of Physic*, (London: W. Strahan, 1772).

93 Jan Golinski, *Science as Public Culture: Chemistry and Enlightenment in Britain, 1760-1820*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 107; Farmar, *Patients and Physicians*, 53.

94 Smith, 'David MacBride', 287.

95 Charles Smith, *The Ancient and Present State of the County and City of Cork*, in *Four Books*, (Dublin: A. Reilly, 1750); Charles Smith, *The Ancient and Present State of the County and City of Waterford: Being a Natural, Civil, Ecclesiastical, Historical and Topographical Description Thereof*, (Dublin: A. Reilly, 1746); Charles Smith, *The Ancient and Present State of the County of Kerry: Being a Natural, Civil, Ecclesiastical, Historical and Topographical Description Thereof*, (Dublin: C. Smith, 1756); Charles Smith, *The Ancient and Present State of the County Down. Containing a Chorographical Description, With the Natural and Civil History of the Same*, (Dublin: A. Reilly, 1744).

96 Samuel Clossy, *Observations on Some of the Diseases of the Parts of the Human Body. Chiefly Taken from the Dissections of Morbid Bodies*, (London: G. Kearsly, 1763); Coakley, *Irish Masters*, 41.

The society was a valuable space for potential authors as it allowed them to present their research to and receive criticism from their likeminded peers prior to publication. Rutty, for example, presented the prologue to his work on *materia medica* to the society before publication and also presented monthly accounts of the weather and diseases in Dublin, which would later be incorporated into his *Chronological History*.⁹⁷ Moreover, it was to the members of the Medico-Philosophical Society that MacBride first communicated his ideas on the likes of fermentation, scurvy, quick lime, putrefaction and fixed air, which would later be published in his *Experimental Essays*.⁹⁸ Hence, the society was a vehicle by which members could establish themselves as the authors of new and practical knowledge.

However, it was not merely Enlightenment ideas and texts that travelled across national borders - it was Enlightenment artefacts and objects as well. The display of curiosities from around the globe was a significant part of the society's work and the list of exotic natural curiosities exhibited at the society is long. For example, the Rev. Jones exhibited a dried hummingbird and scorpion from North America, a selection of Indian scalps from Quebec and a sea-horse from the West Indies and Dr. Span exhibited a large dried bat from the East Indies and a specimen of gorgonian from the Mediterranean.⁹⁹ Hence, the specimens displayed at the society shared the rare and exotic qualities of the objects typically found in a cabinet of curiosities and revealed the world in miniature.¹⁰⁰ On occasion, man-made artefacts were also displayed, such as Jones's Indian instruments of war and tribal clothing sent from Quebec.¹⁰¹

In addition to being educational, natural curiosities could also be potentially useful. MacBride, for example, exhibited a specimen of gum resin from Cuba, which 'was different from any known in the shops', specimens of aloes from the Cape of Good Hope, and cinnamon from the

97 RIA, MS, 24.K.31, 6 January 1757; John Rutty, *Materia Medica, Antiqua & Nova, Repurgata & Illustrata; Sive de Medicamentorum Simplicium Officinalium Facultatibus Tractus* (Londini: Rotterdami, 1772); Rutty, *Chronological*.

98 MacBride, *Experimental Essays*.

99 RCPI, MPS, 2 February 1764, 7 February 1765, 7 November 1765, 24 April 1763, 8 November 1759, 5 December 1768, 6 November 1766, 6 April 1767.

100 Da Costa, *The Singular*, 48; Lorraine Daston and Katherine Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature, 1150-1750*, (New York: Zone Books, 1998), 255-290; Paula Findlen, *Possessing Nature: Museums, Collections and Scientific Culture in Early Modern Italy*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996); Krzysztof Pomian, *Collectors and Curiosities: Paris and Venice, 1500-1800*, E. Wiles-Portier (trans.), (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005), 45-64.

101 RCPI, MPS, 7 February 1765.

Island of Guadalupe.¹⁰² Other practical, as well as curious, items displayed before the society included rare nuts from America and a coca or chocolate pod from South America.¹⁰³ Furthermore, some exotic rarities could also be medicinally valuable. For example, MacBride presented a specimen of oil, known natively as *bombalolu* from the Coast of Guinea, which was believed to be internally and externally useful 'in almost any disease' and Nathaniel Barry displayed a specimen of the leaves of a plant known as *solanum americanum*, which was native to America and had been 'used in New York with success for the cure of cancers'.¹⁰⁴ Some specimens exhibited by the society were propagated in Ireland, such as the American yam, Indian Pink and the tobacco plant. However, it is unclear if these samples were in fact grown by the members themselves.¹⁰⁵

The specimens were often described in detail, mentioning specifics such as the samples size, height, weight and genus. In an attempt to naturalize these rare and unusual specimens, curiosities were often compared to familiar ones. For example, the cocoa nut tree is described as being like the 'European Walnut Tree' and its smallest size pods as being of a similar size and weight 'to our largest melons'.¹⁰⁶ Furthermore, in keeping with the society's Baconianism, specimens were also sometimes smelled and tasted.¹⁰⁷ Scholars such as Barnard, Hoppen and Magennis have been typically scathing about the display of curiosities within Irish learned societies.¹⁰⁸ Yet, as we have seen, these curiosities were a significant part of the society's work and far more than mere items of wonder and distraction. It was through the report and display of these curiosities that its members gained new knowledge of the world's diversity and otherness. This new knowledge, which was brought back to Europe from far away countries and disseminated by societies such as the Medico-Philosophical Society, also encouraged new ways of thinking about god, nature and the development

102 RCPI, MPS, 24 April 1763, 15 July 1765, 4 September 1760.

103 RIA, MS, 24.E.6, no.223; RCPI, MPS, 15 May 1766

104 RCPI, MPS, 1 December 1757, 5 June 1769.

105 RCPI, MPS, 20 October, 6 September 1781.

106 RIA, MS, 24.E.6, no.223.

107 RCPI, MPS, 24 April 1763, 5 January 1769.

108 Theodore Hoppen, *The Common Scientist in the Seventeenth-Century: A Study of the Dublin Philosophical Society, 1683-1709*, (London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1970), 31; Eoin Magennis, 'A Land of Milk and Honey: The Physico-Historical Society, Improvement and the Surveys of Mid-Eighteenth-Century Ireland, in *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, vol.ciic, (2002), 211; Toby Barnard, 'The Dublin Society and Other Improving Societies, 1731-1785', in *Clubs and Societies in Eighteenth-Century Ireland*, J. Kelly and M. Powell (eds.), (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2010), 74.

of human civilization.¹⁰⁹

Conclusions

The Dublin Medico-Philosophical Society was an improvement society, which emulated the Royal Society of London and wanted to improve Ireland by advancing organized learning and harnessing practical knowledge for the betterment of the nation. The society was a band of *virtuosi*, a talented and influential group of surgeons, physicians, apothecaries, professors and clerics, who had encountered the ideals and practices of the Enlightenment during their education in enlightened capitals such as Leiden, Paris, and Edinburgh. Its members were privileged as many held hospital posts which provided them with valuable opportunities for the mass observation and treatment of sickness and disease, as well as the rare chance to perform dissections.

The society utilized the methodological and empirical approaches of the Enlightenment and adhered to both vitalism and Baconianism. It was concerned with fact gathering, observation and experiment. The members rejected the speculative approach advocated by the scholastics and instead emphasised the importance of the physical, visual and practical. The Medico-Philosophical Society was in no way parochial. Not only did it gather knowledge, it also disseminated it via correspondence, newspapers, journal articles and books. The society was connected to a cosmopolitan scientific and medical community and was home to an Irish Republic of Letters. Hence, it acted as a filter through which new discoveries and improvements in medicine, science and natural history were diffused to a wider intellectual community. It was precisely this need for the dissemination of knowledge from Ireland to the wider world that the society, and Cleghorn in particular, stressed.

This flow of information included not only letters, articles and books but also exotic curiosities from around the globe. These curiosities were not mere novelties or items of wonder, which distracted the members from the more serious business of academic inquiry. The exotic curiosities exhibited at the society could be medicinally and economically valuable. Furthermore, they contributed to the dissemination of knowledge about other cultures and helped to promote new ways of thinking about the

¹⁰⁹ Withers, *Enlightenment*, 8, 57.

world.

The Dublin Medico-Philosophical Society was an institutional manifestation of Enlightenment ideals and practices and was a site of Enlightenment in Ireland. However, the society was not only proof that the ideas and ideals of the Enlightenment had reached Ireland, but that Ireland, or more correctly Dublin, in the form of the Dublin Medico-Philosophical Society and its Irish scientific Republic of Letters, was also participating in the Enlightenment.

Acknowledgements

A number of people have generously given up their time and expertise to help me complete this research. I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Joseph Clarke for his guidance and encouragement. I am also indebted to several libraries and archives who kindly accommodated my numerous visits and made me feel welcome. In particular I would like to thank Simon Lang, Sean Hughes and the library staff at Trinity College Dublin, Harriet Wheelock at the Royal College of Physicians Ireland, Mary O'Doherty at the Royal College of Surgeons Ireland and all the library staff at the Royal Irish Academy.

References

Manuscript Sources

Medical and Philosophical Memoirs, 1756-1758. (RCPI, MPS/3/1).

Medical and Philosophical Memoirs, 1758-1768. (RCPI, MPS/3/2).

Medical and Philosophical Memoirs, 1768-1784. (RCPI, MPS/3/3).

Minutes of the Medico-Philosophical Society, 1756-1757. (RIA, MS, 24.K.31).

Repository of the Dublin Medico-Philosophical Society, 1756-1766. (RIA, MS, 24.E.5).

Repository of the Dublin Medico-Philosophical Society, 1766-1784. (RIA, MS, 24.E.6).

Primary Sources

Bacon, Francis. *Collected Works of Francis Bacon*, vii. Part 1, R. Ellis (ed.). London: Routledge Press, 1996.

Dodsley, Robert. *The Annual Register, or a View of the History, Politics, and Literature, for the Year 1764*, London: 1764.

The Medical Society of London. *A List of the Members of the Medical Society of London for the Year MDCCCLXXXIX*. London: Cicero, 1789.

The Royal Irish Academy. *The Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy: Index*. London: W. Bulmer, 1813.

The Royal Medical Society of Edinburgh, *A List of the Members of the Medical Society of Edinburgh, Instituted 1737 – Incorporated by Royal Charter 1778*. Edinburgh: 1796.

Watson, Samuel. *The Gentleman and Citizen's Almanack*. Dublin: John Watson, 1772.

Secondary Sources

Barnard, Toby. 'The Dublin Society and Other Improving Societies, 1731-1785', in *Clubs and Societies in Eighteenth-Century Ireland*, J. Kelly and M. Powell (eds.). Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2010, 53-88.

Brockliss, Laurence. *Calvet's Web: Enlightenment and the Republic of Letters in Eighteenth-Century France*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Da Costa, Palmira. *The Singular and the Making of Knowledge at the Royal Society of London in the Eighteenth-Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009.

Fleetwood, John. *The History of Medicine in Ireland*. Dublin: Skellig Press, 1983.

Hall, Marie. 'The Royal Society's Role in the Diffusion of Information in the Seventeenth-Century (1)', in *Notes and Records of the Royal Society of London*, xxix, no.2, (1975), 173-192.

Hoppen, Theodore. *The Common Scientist in the Seventeenth-Century: A Study of the Dublin Philosophical Society, 1683-1709*. London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1970.

Kelly, James. 'Print and the Provision of Medical Knowledge in Eighteenth-Century Ireland', in *Irish Provincial Cultures in the Long Eighteenth-Century: Making the Middle Sort: Essays for Toby Barnard*, R. Gillespie and R. Foster (eds.). Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2012, 33-56.

Kirkpatrick, Thomas. 'The Periodical Publications of Science in Ireland', in *The Bibliographical Society of Ireland*, ii, no.4, (1922), 34-43.

Magennis, Eoin. 'A Land of Milk and Honey: The Physico-Historical Society, Improvement and the Surveys of Mid-Eighteenth-Century Ireland', in *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, ciic, (2002), 199-217.

Munter, Robert. *The History of the Irish Newspaper 1685-1760*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967.

Risse, Gunter. *New Medical Challenges During the Scottish Enlightenment*. New York: Rodopi Press, 2005.

Rusnock, Andrea. 'Correspondence Networks and the Royal Society, 1700-1750', in *British Journal for the History of Science*, xxxii, no.2, (1999), 155-169.

Shapin, Steven and Shaffer, Simon. *Leviathan and the Air-Pump: Hobbes, Boyle and the Experimental Life*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985.

Tröhler, Ulrich. *To Improve the Evidence of Medicine: The Eighteenth-Century British Origins of a Critical Approach*. Edinburgh: Royal College of Physicians Edinburgh, 2000.

Widdess, John. *A History of the Royal College of Physicians Ireland, 1654-1963*. Edinburgh: Livingstone, 1963.

Withers, Charles. *Placing the Enlightenment: Thinking Geographically About the Age of Reason*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2007.