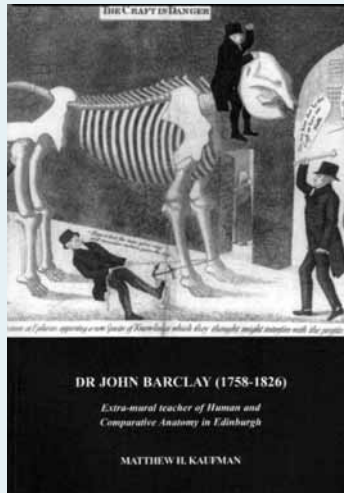


DR JOHN BARCLAY (1758–1826)

By *Matthew H Kaufman* (*The Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh*, 175 pp, £25)

This scholarly and authoritative account of the life and times of a great Edinburgh anatomist further enhances Professor Matthew Kaufman's reputation as a medical historian and complements his magisterial study of medical teaching in Edinburgh in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

From 1797 to 1825, Dr John Barclay had his own extramural medical school in Edinburgh, at which he taught anatomy, comparative anatomy, physiology and surgery. The school was located first in High School Yards and later at 10 Surgeon's Square. Barclay was an inspiring lecturer who, through the quality of his teaching, made an important contribution to the international fame of the Edinburgh Medical School.



Professor Kaufman has produced an impressive chronicle of Barclay's career and achievements. This is more than a conventional biography, however, since it includes material of wider significance, such as the reasons for the pre-eminence of the Edinburgh Medical School in Barclay's time, the provenance of cadavers for dissection before 1832 and the evolution of rational anatomical nomenclature.

The various scientific and academic controversies in which Barclay was

involved are fully described, as are his relationships with his illustrious Edinburgh medical contemporaries and the development of his famous museum of comparative anatomy, which he bequeathed to the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh.

Barclay's publications are critically assessed, in particular his magnum opus, *Life and Organisation*, in which the philosophical basis of his concept of the vital principle is expounded.

Professor Kaufman's book is not lavishly illustrated and there are no pictures in colour, but all illustrations are well chosen and reproduced.

This brief review can only convey a faint flavour of the fascinating material presented, in what has clearly been a labour of love. It is enthusiastically recommended to medical historians, to anatomists, to all who value anatomy as an intellectual discipline and to all who deplore the current status of anatomy in the undergraduate medical curriculum.

IF MacLaren