



Curriculum Vitae Christoph Jacob Trew (Treu)

Name: Christoph Jacob Trew (Treu)

Lived: 26 April 1695 - 18 July 1769

Christoph Jacob Trew (also Treu) was a German physician, botanist and natural scientist. His library is considered one of the largest collections of natural scientific works of its time and one of the most important private collections of 18th century natural scientific literature in the German-speaking world. Trew also gives his name to the East Indian plant genus “Trewia” from the Euphorbiaceae family.

Academic and Professional Career

Christoph Jacob Trew studied medicine at the University of Altdorf near Nuremberg from 1711 to 1717. In 1717, he was awarded a doctorate for his work entitled “De chylosi foetus in utero” (most likely) under the supervision of his mentor, the German surgeon Lorenz Heister. He then embarked on an educational journey, taking in Würzburg, Strasbourg, Basel, Geneva and Lyon among others, before electing to spend 13 months in Paris. From there, he continued on to several destinations in Belgium, the Netherlands and northern Germany, culminating his trip with a 15-month stay in Gdańsk.

In 1720, he returned to his home town of Lauf an der Pegnitz, where he was invited to join the Collegium medicum in Nuremberg. Despite later offers of professorships (from the University of Altdorf in 1732 and Göttingen in 1734), he continued to work as a physician in Nuremberg, where he pursued his scientific work and teaching in the city’s institutions. He taught aspiring midwives, surgeons and taxidermists, and was also charged with tending the medicinal gardens.

Alongside his professional commitments as Nuremberg city physician and, from 1736, as court physician at the Ansbach Residence, he dedicated much of his time to pursuing his wide-ranging scientific interests. He was also a university lecturer and made a name for himself as a publisher and collector of books.

In 1731, he and some of his colleagues founded a weekly periodical entitled “Commercium litterarium ad rei medicinae et scientiae naturalis”, which is regarded as one of the first medical journals ever published. After the publisher’s death, Trew continued to preside over the publication until 1745. In producing the periodical, he corresponded with many overseas colleagues and built close ties with a network of academics across Europe. The publication included pieces about his own observations, as well as contributions from prominent academics such as the Swedish natural scientist Carl von Linné.

In 1743, Trew was appointed Director Ephemeridum at the German National Academy of Sciences Leopoldina. Following his appointment, he stood down as publisher of his weekly “Commercium” medical periodical and in his new role began publishing the “Acta Physioco-Medica” journal for the aspiring academic community. The position also increased his standing and reputation and saw him appointed court physician and Count Palatine of the Holy Roman Empire. As Director Ephemeridum, Trew was responsible for overseeing the printing of the “Acta”. His first edition of the journal was volume 8. It was also the first that he worked on in collaboration with the VI. President of the Leopoldina, Andreas Elias von Büchner.

Since the president resided some distance away in Erfurt, and only later in Halle, much of the work to produce the “Acta Physioco-Medica” was conducted through an exchange of letters between Büchner and Trew. A large proportion of this correspondence still survives, meaning we have a detailed record of the collaboration between the two men. As well as being an active researcher and natural scientist, Trew was a prolific letter writer. Through his correspondence with fellow academics he learned of the latest findings and discoveries, and he then edited these for the wider scientific community. His work had a lasting impact on the emergence of medical journalism and also increased the standing of the German National Academy of Sciences Leopoldina.

Through his publication work, Trew established ties with many academics, including overseas, and he used these connections to amass several scientific collections. One of his legacies is the largest known collection of letters on the topics of medicine and natural sciences in the German-speaking world. The collection includes more than 19,000 letters from leading physicians and scientists, including Swiss anatomist and physiologist, Albrecht von Haller, and German physician and botanist, Lorenz Heister, who is considered the founder of scientific surgery in Germany. With its wealth of historically significant contemporary documents, it is one of the largest collections of letters from the early modern period.

Trew’s library is also one of the largest of its kind and one of the most important private collections of 18th century natural scientific literature in the German-speaking world. It includes around 34,000 titles, including many unique copies of natural science publications not found anywhere else.

With no heir, Trew bequeathed his complete collection to the University of Altdorf in 1768. When the university was dissolved, the collection was moved to the university library in Erlangen, where it is still housed today. Included among the collection are five of Trew’s registers which he kept between 1713 and 1769. These contain entries from prominent European intellectuals as well as

feedback from people that used Trew's extensive library of scientific knowledge. On 4 June 1765 one visitor wrote: "The name Trew will live on through the ages ..."

Honours and Awarded Memberships

Trew was awarded membership of numerous academies in recognition of his scientific achievements. On 27 January 1727, he became a member of the Leopoldina and was given the academic epithet Heraclianus. Later, in 1745, he was accepted as Corresponding Member of the Prussian Academy of Sciences in Berlin. He was also a Fellow of the Royal Society in London (from 17 April 1746), a member of the Società botanica fiorentina in Florence (from 1754) and Senior Primarius at the Collegium medicum in Nuremberg (from 1761).

About Christoph Jacob Trew

Christoph Jacob Trew was born on 26 April 1695 in Lauf an der Pegnitz. His father, also Christoph Trew, was a pharmacist and he taught his son botany and herbal medicine alongside his school education. Financial difficulties at his father's pharmacy meant that Trew's studies in medicine at the University of Altdorf were delayed and also suffered subsequent set-backs.

In 1721, Trew moved to Nuremberg. He died there on 18 July 1769 and his grave can be found in the city's Johannisfriedhof cemetery.

In 1965, the grammar school in Trew's home town of Lauf an der Pegnitz was named the Christoph-Jacob-Treu-Gymnasium in his honour. There is also a street in the town that bears his name, just as there is in Nuremberg.