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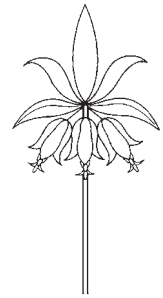

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Patrick Browne (ca. 1720–1790), Irish physician, historian and Caribbean botanist: A brief biography with an account of his lost medical dissertations

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Abstract

Patrick Browne (ca. 1720–1790), a native of County Mayo, Ireland, studied medicine in Paris, graduated from the University of Rheims in 1742, and briefly continued his studies at Leiden before practising as a doctor at St Thomas's Hospital, London. Subsequently, he lived for many years in the Caribbean, in Antigua, Jamaica, Saint Croix and Montserrat, but retired to County Mayo in 1771. Browne published *The Civil and Natural History of Jamaica* in 1756, a most significant work in terms of botanical nomenclature, which included new names for 104 genera, and he promised also a volume of medical essays, but this was never printed. Fragments of his essays on venereal disease and yaws have been traced among his correspondence with Carl Linnaeus.

Apology

I disobeyed my own firm advice — always consult original manuscripts before accepting printed statements as fact (Nelson 1990, 1993a). Since 1793 numerous authors, myself included (Nelson 1982, 1993b), have stated that Patrick Browne was a graduate of the University of Leiden. We all blithely followed the "memorial" of Dr Browne by R. O., which was published in the January 1793 issue of *Anthologia Hibernica.* That author, whose initials I cannot expand, reported that Browne, after studying in Paris for five years, "removed to Leyden, where he studied near two years more, and from that university obtained his degree of M.D." (R. O. 1793, 1795).

Patrick Browne was a graduate of the University of Rheims,[1] not of Leiden, and while this was clearly stated by Innes Smith (1932), we sheepishly followed a less reliable source.

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Patrick Browne: A précis of his life

Irish historiography is peopled by romantic patriots and their demonized opponents, by heroes and demigods, by saints and not a few sinners, and by the literati and their fictional characters. Rarely do scientists, doctors of medicine, explorers and innovators receive their due. Unless they have champions to bring them back from oblivion for a well-deserved moment of fame, those who have followed such vocations are either forgotten quickly or become an entry in some arcane dictionary of biography.

Dr Patrick Browne is not ranked among the great men of County Mayo, let alone Ireland, because he was not a romantic patriot, a hero, a saint or an author of fiction or verse. He was merely an intelligent doctor who cared for the slaves of the Caribbean and had innovative ideas about the treatment of diseases that are now largely things-of-the-past, and a botanist who was so highly regarded in the mid-1700s that at least one of his contemporaries, Carl Linnaeus (1702–1778), reckoned that a golden statue should be erected in his honour. The Austrian botanist, Nikolaus Joseph von Jacquin (1727–1817) did honour Browne by coining the generic name Brownea (Fabaceae), and a number of other tropical plant species bear his name as a specific epithet (Nelson 1995).

Two centuries ago things were different. Browne's book, *The Civil and Natural History of Jamaica,* originally published by the author himself in 1756, was acclaimed and subsequently deemed so important it was reissued by a

commercial publisher in 1789. Browne died during 1790, and three years afterwards R. O's lengthy biographical notice about him was published in *Anthologia Hibernica*; this was re-published two years later in *Walker's Hibernian Magazine* (R. O. 1793, 1795). The same year as the biography was reprinted, on 1 December 1795, Aylmer Bourke Lambert (1761–1842) read an encomium of Browne to the recently established Linnean Society of London (Lambert 1798).

Patrick Browne was born about 1720 in Woodstock, a townland near Ballindine to the east of Claremorris in southern Mayo, the fourth son of Edward Browne, "a gentleman of respectable family and handsome estate." Little is recorded about his childhood. He received "the best [education] that country could afford," and when he was about 16 years old, in 1737, he was sent to live with a close relative in Antigua, one of the English islands in the Caribbean, which then had a substantial community of Irish-born landowners. Young Browne stayed in the West Indies for about a year, but the climate disagreed "very much with his constitution," and he returned to Europe, going directly to Paris, where he speedily recovered his health and with the approval of his parents "applied himself closely to the study of physic, and particularly to the science of botany" (R. O. 1793). Browne studied medicine for the next four years, presumably in Paris, but, like many men of this period, he obtained his qualifications from a different university — he was granted the degree of doctor of medicine by the University of Rheims on 1 December 1742.[1]

Browne did not immediately begin a career in medicine but decided to continue studying and proceeded to matriculate at the University of Leiden on 21 February 1743.[2] He stayed in Leiden for an undetermined period, perhaps as short as a few months, following which he moved to London and practised medicine for a few years, mainly at St Thomas's Hospital.

By 1746 Browne had returned to the Caribbean. For about one year he lived on Antigua and "some others of the sugar islands" before settling in Jamaica at Kingston where he practised as a physician, using his botanical knowledge to harvest plants from the wild for use in medicines, but he also had time to spare.

> Happy in a large share of health and strength; enured to the Climate; and with a mind strongly disposed to the cultivation of Natural Knowledge; I saw with regret, how greatly the History of this Island was neglected; and determined to lose no opportunity to inform myself of every particular, that might enable me to give the most satisfactory Account, both of the past and present State of the Island; and during several years residence upon the spot, it was the employment of every leisure hour to collect the most authentic Materials for this purpose. As a Physician, the nature of the Diseases that appear there, drew my principal attention: As a Naturalist, the various productions of the Earth claimed my particular care; and as a Member of the Community, and a Subject of Great Britain, I took the liberty to enquire into the nature of its government, and whatever else respecting it, might tend to afford satisfaction to mankind in general. (Browne 1756, p. vi).

R. O. (1793) reported that Browne was also a competent astronomer and mathematician; after retiring to Mayo, he was "always, when in health, doing something in Natural History or Mathematics." His mathematical skills, about which nothing has been discovered, were apparently put to good use in Jamaica where Browne gathered topographic data for a "new" map of the island. Browne sold enough copies of his *A New Map of Jamaica* … to realize a profit of four hundred guineas.

While he lived in Jamaica, Browne collected fossils, insects, fishes and other animals, as well as plants. He preserved his specimens as carefully as circumstances permitted — the insects, birds and larger land animals must have been kept in spirits, and many of the plant specimens were pressed and dried. By his own account, Browne used a method devised by Dr Johan Frederik

Gronovius (1686–1762) to preserve the fish — in essence the fish were treated in the same way as the plants, their skins being dried flat like herbarium specimens.[3]

Browne also spent time in the field, observing and describing plants in their natural habitats. His methods are hinted at in his letters to Linnaeus. For example, Browne told Linnaeus that

> Before I say anything about plants, it is to be noted that all the characters given by me (with a single exception) were observed either from plants still growing in the fields or — when a great many were discovered — within 24 hours from their picking, and with the aid of a lens, even for the very big ones.[4]

And regarding one of his genera, *Sarcomphalus,* "a tall tree with blackish-brown hard wood," Browne wrote that the flowers were "quite accurately described, selected from a fresh specimen at the foot of the tree."[4] Of the plant that he named *Cominia,* Browne (1756, p. 205) noted that he had "described the characters exactly as I have observed them in fresh specimens," adding that the floral parts were "very small, and not easily observed, even by the help of glasses."

When Browne returned to Europe in 1754, he brought his substantial collections of dried and pressed plants, fossils, preserved fishes, shells and insects with him to London; the plants were contained in individual volumes that were later dismantled and then acquired by Linnaeus (see below).

No contemporary account is extant of the genesis of Patrick Browne's book *The Civil and Natural History of Jamaica,* which he published himself during the spring of 1756 (Nelson 1997). In this substantial tome Browne catalogued Jamaican plants and animals, classified the rocks and soils, and recounted briefly the history of the island and its government. The most remarkable features of the book's botanical contents are the use of a new system for classifying plants, and the series of uncoloured illustrations by Georg Ehret (1708–1770). *The Civil and Natural History of Jamaica* evidently took more than 18 months to complete and was published on 10 March 1756.[5]

The Civil and Natural History of Jamaica is now considered one of the most significant natural history books of the mid-eighteenth century, indeed second only to the earliest works of Linnaeus. Browne was the first English-speaking author to use Linnaeus' system of classifying plants in a published work, although he did not follow Linnaeus exactly and, crucially from a historical perspective, did not adopt the method of giving binary names to plants and animals in his Jamaican book (see e.g., Stearn 1957, p. 76; Stafleu 1971, p. 203). Instead, Linnaeus himself produced two dissertations based on Browne's *The Civil and Natural History of Jamaica* and in these (Linnaeus 1759a, 1759b), and in the tenth edition of *Systema Naturae* (Linnaeus 1759c), provided binary names, according to his own system, for the many plants Browne had described and named only at generic level (see Oswald and Nelson 2000).

When *The Civil and Natural History of Jamaica* eventually appeared Browne sought to ensure that a copy was made ready for Linnaeus. One was specially set aside, as indicated by Browne in a letter to Linnaeus dated 11 March 1756, but this copy cannot have reached its destination or was otherwise delayed because Linnaeus wrote to Browne, via Peter Collinson (1694–1768), on 19 October 1756 recounting how he had been able to borrow a copy:

> I never coveted any Book, I know not by what Instinct, with more ardour than yours; at length I understood that an English Gentleman residing at Stockholm had got it; I intreated him to lend it me for a fortnight, and obtained it. I spent day and night in reading it through, I read it over, but never enough; and returnd it. Good God how was I transported with desire of a book infinetly [*sic*] to be commended.[6]

Linnaeus was greatly impressed by Browne's book, telling Peter Collinson that "No author did I ever quit more instructed." Asking Collinson to pass on a letter to Browne, Linnaeus added: "Pray be so kind to … Seal it and send to the worthy Author who has deserved so much of Botanic Science beyond all others."[7] And, to Browne himself, Linnaeus exclaimed that "you ough[t] to be honoured with a Golden Statue."[6]

There followed an exchange of letters in which Linnaeus commented on some of Browne's Jamaican plant genera, and Browne responded. Linnaeus sought information about the whereabouts of Browne's plant specimens. Browne had left these in London with Millan, a bookseller in Whitehall. Linnaeus wanted the specimens. Collinson bargained for them and eventually purchased the collection for eight guineas, packed the specimens and sent them to Linnaeus (Smith 1832, pp. 42–44). Thus, Browne's herbarium specimens are now in the herbarium of the Linnean Society of London (LINN).

By June 1757, Browne was back in the Caribbean, on St Croix (Nelson, in press), which was then a Danish colony — R. O. (1793) stated that Browne made six separate visits to the West Indies, but only four periods of residence can be deduced from extant sources (Table 1). Browne lived in Christiansted, St Croix, at least in 1758, and in 1763 he acquired a 150-acre sugar plantation named Mount Eagle — he sold this to Robert Browne of Antigua in 1766.[8]

Table 1. Years of Patrick Browne's known visits to the West Indies, and other events in his life

Years	Resident in West Indies	Resident in Europe
ca. 1720–1737		Ireland, childhood
1737–1738	Antigua (for about 12 months)	
1738–1742		Paris, studying medicine
1742		Rheims, graduated 1 December
1743		Leiden, matriculated 24 February
ca. 1743–ca. 1746		London, St Thomas's Hospital as practising doctor
1746–1754	Antigua and Jamaica	
1754–1756		London, publishing *The Civil and Natural History of Jamaica*
1756–1765	St Croix	
1765–1770	Montserrat	
1770		retired to Ireland
1781–1782	Antigua (for about 12 months)	
1783–1790		Ireland

Table 2. Abbreviations in Browne's manuscripts

y^e — the
y^t — that
w^t — what
w^h, $w^{\underline{h}}$ — which

Sometime between 1757 and 1765 Browne married. The couple had no children, and their marriage ended abruptly in a scandal that caused Browne to leave St Croix. He briefly recounted the events to Linnaeus in a letter written from Montserrat on 24 May 1765 (Table 2).

> The Pleasure I formerly enjoyed in a Correspondance with you has been for a series of years past interrupted … in a word I mar[r]ied & y^e^ cares of life grew so strong upon me that I could not spare time for any researches in natural history … alas y^e^ best projected schemes sometimes abort & a villain has disconcerted mine. I liv'd many years happily at St Croix in as much business as I could go thro[ugh] & seldom laid by less than 3, or, 4 thous[an]d p[ound]s p[e]r annum untill one Juhl a Villain under y^e^ title of Judge had under y^e^ cloak of friendship gott acquainted with my wife & debauched her, as well as some others of different families. This obliged me to leave that country & her together; the Danes there are y^e^ most vile wreaches I have ever known & generally combine to keep every foreigner from justice.[9]

Browne moved to Montserrat, an active volcano and one of the English possessions in the West Indies, where he had some leisure and was able to resume his natural history observations. He wrote accounts of the volcanic vents and hot water springs,[10] rich in sulphur, that existed on the island (Nelson, in press). In 1768, he treated his brother's slaves for yaws, a contagious disease characterized by raspberry-like tubercles on the skin, that particularly affected people of African origin.[11]

Dr Patrick Browne retired from his medical duties in the West Indies about 1769; by 7 September 1770 he was in Dublin whence he wrote to Linnaeus (Fig. 1).

> It is now some years since I had y^e^ pleasure of hearing from you. I have been of late years much afflicted with y^e^ Gout & since then I have been busey in making some provision for y^e^ Latter part of life, untill then unthought of, & some other incidents have also helpt to engage

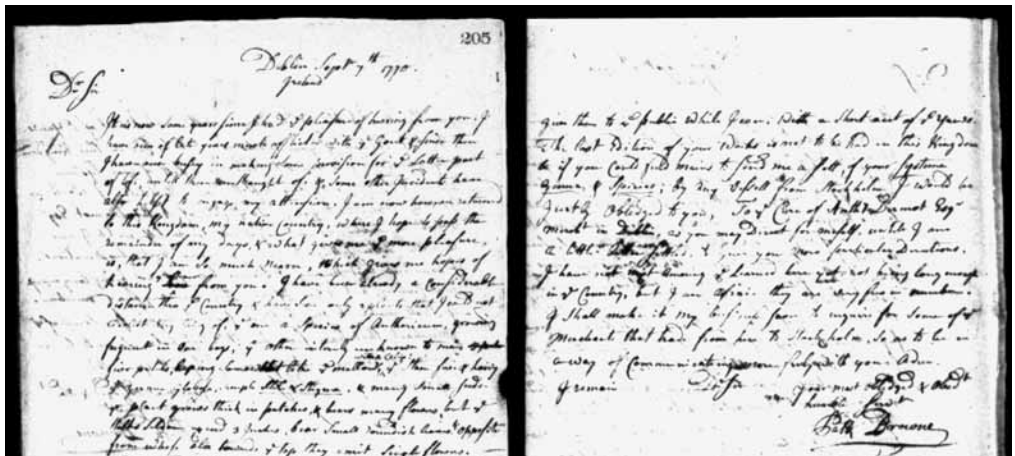


Figure 1. Patrick Browne letter to Linnaeus, 7 September 1770, folios 205 and 206 in Vol. 2 of the *Correspondence of Linnaeus*. Photo by permission of the Linnean Society of London and the Inter-Documentation Company (IDC).

> my attension. I am now however returned to this Kingdom, my native country, where I hope to pass the remainder of my days. I have been already a considerable distance thro ye country & have seen only 2 plants that I could not recolect any thing of … I do intend this winter to write a small tract on ye venereal Disease … [12]

At first Browne lived in Dublin but removed permanently to Mayo sometime in the middle of 1771. His retirement was interrupted in 1780–1781 because he was obliged to return to the West Indies; the reason is not recorded.

Little else is known about the last two decades of his life apart from the basic facts that he lived in the townland of Rushbrook, southwest of Claremorris, that while he suffered from gout he was still able to climb Croagh Patrick (one of Ireland's higher peaks, situated on the west of County Mayo), and that he noted the local flora and fauna, compiling lists of native birds (Browne 1774a), fishes (Browne 1774b), and plants. The catalogues of birds and fishes are largely based on published sources, in particular on *Essay towards a Natural History of the County of Dublin* by Dr John Rutty (1698–1775),[13] published in 1772, the year after Browne returned to Ireland. On the other hand his cadastre of the Irish flora, Fa[s]ciculus Plantarum Hiberniae or A Catalogue of such plants as y^{e} author observed chiefly in y^{e} county's of Mayo & Galway,[14] contains a substantial number of personal observations and also records of habitats, as well as records derived from published sources. Browne also prepared at least two manuscript catalogues of the flora of the Caribbean islands during his retirement.[15]

When the English (Anglo-Irish) botanist, Aylmer Bourke Lambert (1761–1842) travelled to Ireland in 1790 to visit his maternal relations (Nelson 1996), he met Patrick Browne:

> I first heard of [Dr Browne] by the country people in the neighbourhood of Ballinrobe in the county of Mayo, at which place he lived. I sent him a message that I would wait on him. I paid him a visit one morning, & found him in bed quite a cripple with old age & the gout he shewed me a copy of a Flora Hibernica which seemed not much more than a catalogue & very imperfect.[16]

Lambert (1798) was able to tell Browne that a new issue of *The Civil and Natural History of Jamaica* had been released in London on 16 November 1789; this extraordinary edition was made up from pages left over from the original edition of 1756, with newly printed, re-engraved illustrations, and new indexes (Browne 1789; Nelson 1997).

Like other collectors with Irish, medical connections in other places and at other times — Revd Dr Caleb Threlkeld (1676–1728), Dr Thomas Coulter (1793–1843), or Dr Augustine Henry (1857–1930) to name just three — botany was a hobby for Dr Patrick Browne. His Jamaican book remains a classic of natural history, one of very few works of the kind produced by Irish authors — *The Civil and Natural History of Jamaica* can be compared favourably with Dr John White's splendid *Journal of a Voyage to New South Wales,* published in London during 1790 and likewise illustrated by some of the finest botanical artists then active (Nelson 1998). The comparison is felicitous, for like Surgeon-General John White (ca. 1756–1832) from Drumaran near Belcoo in County Fermanagh, Patrick Browne from the hinterland of Claremorris in County Mayo remains a bit of an enigma and is scarcely celebrated in his native land.

There is no known portrait of Browne and certainly no one ever sculpted a golden statue of him as suggested by Linnaeus. This word-picture is the only description that can be traced: "The Doctor was a tall, comely man, of good address and gentle manners, naturally cheerful, very temperate, and in general healthy …" (R. O. 1793).

Patrick Browne died at his home in Rushbrook townland on Sunday 29 August 1790. He was buried in the family burial place in Crossboyne,

beside his parents and his brothers. In his will he requested that a Latin inscription be placed on their grave (R. O. 1793):

> *Hanc opponi jussit Patri Matri Fratribusque Piissimis & sibi; Patricius Browne olim Medicus Jamaicensis, qui, nunc insita humiliter pro tum inter mortuos enumerandum deprecetur praecis fidelium pro se illisque offerri; ut cum Domino Deo Requiescant in pace. Amen.*

This may never have been done for there is no trace of such a gravestone in Crossboyne.

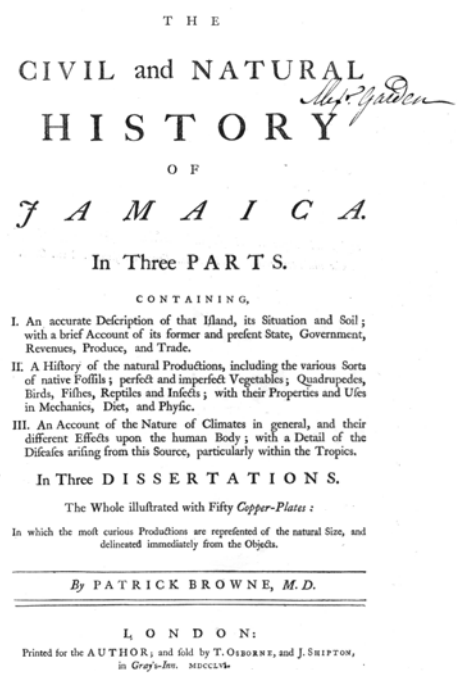
Browne's medical dissertations

On the title-page of *The Civil and Natural History of Jamaica,* Browne (1756) announced that the book would comprise three parts, and that part III would include three medical dissertations on various topics, among them, according to Browne's preface, "the yellow and remittent Fevers" (Fig. 2). The third part was not published. Browne was obliged to note at the end of the book (1756, p. 490) that

> I would willingly have added the Three Dissertations I proposed to publish with this work; but as it has already swelled to the limits I designed, and that the season is too far advanced to finish the whole this year, I determined to publish the Civil and Natural History alone; leaving those [Three Dissertations], with another on Worm-fevers, &c., which will make a small volume in 8vo, to be printed the ensuing season.

More details of the dissertations can be gleaned from Browne's correspondence with Linnaeus. On 24 February 1771, almost 15 years after the publication of *The Civil and Natural History of Jamaica,* in a letter to Linnaeus, Browne listed the medical tracts that he still intended to publish:

> I have just now finished a Dissertation on y^e^ yellow fever of Americ [illegible] … or y^e^ Siam fever, one on y^e^ nervous fevers of america. Another on worm fevers. Another on y^e^ venereal malady & 2 short tracts on y^e^ yaws & inoculation all together will make but a small volume 8^vo^. but I do not yet know when they will be printed.[17]



THE

CIVIL and NATURAL

HISTORY

OF

JAMAICA.

In Three PARTS.

CONTAINING,

I. An accurate Defcription of that Iſland, its Situation and Soil; with a brief Account of its former and preſent State, Government, Revenues, Produce, and Trade.

II. A Hiſtory of the natural Productions, including the various Sorts of native Foſſils; perfect and imperfect Vegetables; Quadrupedes, Birds, Fiſhes, Reptiles and Inſects; with their Properties and Uſes in Mechanics, Diet, and Phyſic.

III. An Account of the Nature of Climates in general, and their different Effects upon the human Body; with a Detail of the Diſeaſes ariſing from this Source, particularly within the Tropics.

In Three DISSERTATIONS.

The Whole illuſtrated with Fifty *Copper-Plates:*

In which the moſt curious Productions are repreſented of the natural Size, and delineated immediately from the Objects.

By PATRICK BROWNE, *M. D.*

LONDON:

Printed for the AUTHOR; and ſold by T. OSBORNE, and J. SHIPTON, in *Gray's-Inn.* MDCCLVI.

Figure 2. Title page of the 1756 edition of Patrick Browne's *The Civil and Natural History of Jamaica.* Photo courtesy of Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation.

And Browne repeated the list, in slightly different form, in a subsequent undated letter to Linnaeus.

> In y^e^ little pieces I intend for y^e^ press there will be the following Dissertations viz. 1, on y^e^ yellow fever or fever of Syam, one on y^e^ remittent fevers of America with a short ac[coun]t of y^e^ Dry belly ach & a worm fever that raged there in 1748. a small one on y^e^ yaws, one on inoculation for y^e^ benefit of y^e^ poor, …[18]

The proposed octavo volume was never printed, and Browne's dissertations on yellow fever, remittent fever, worm fever and inoculation have been lost. However, I have traced a fragment of the manuscript essay on yaws, and his letters to Linnaeus contain the substance of his treatment for venereal disease, a potentially lethal concoction of mercury and rhubarb.

As noted above, Browne wrote to Linnaeus from Dublin on 7 September 1770 saying that he intended to write a small tract on venereal disease during the winter and he reported that

> I have on repeated tryals found that Crude mercury mixes with rubarb perfectly (the true belost's pill) & many other vegetable substances, with y^e^ admixture only of a little water which laid [sic] me to some discoveries that may be very usefull to man kind, & therefore intend give them to y^e^ public while I can; with a short acct of y^e^ Yaws.[19]

In his letter of 24 February 1771, Browne gave more details of his treatment of venereal disease.

> … In my last I think I mentioned to you some thing of a new method of treating y^e^ pox, I have used y^e^ method with extra success & I do think it bids fair for extirpating y^t^ disease from y^e^ numbers of our miseries. I have found y^t^ Crude mercury joyns perfectly with rubarb by trituration & a little water, this undoubtedly was belost^s^ jenuin pills. I have also tryed it with other vegetable substances & among others with Sarsaparilla in powder mercur pars, 1. pulv. partes tres which triturated with a little water extinguishes y^e^ mercury admirably & this given in a moderate dose bis die soon roots out every symptom of that disease without salivation or purgation, the patient in mild weather walking y^e^ street. however I think it necessary to assist it where there are local complaints, obstructions of y^e^ urethra with budgies Chankers by warm water to every ounce of w^t^ I order 7, to 10 drops of a solution of one drachm of Corrosive sublimate in an ounce of Spir. vini rectific. & a little lint dipt in this cleanses this in 3 or 4 days & soon after hails [heals] them. the same used as a lotion & Injection after Suspitious Commerce often prevents infection & y^e^ least touch of aquafortis in w^h^ mercury is disolved ad saturationem wartees or carries of warts & ficus^s^. The same method cures y^e^ yaws[20] effectually, but no other mercurial comp does y^e^ same.[21]

Browne repeated the treatment in much more detail in an undated letter that he wrote in reply to one Linnaeus had sent on 15 April 1771.

> I am sorry y^e^ dissertations are not printed yet to send you a copy of them, you may be assured on one so soon as they are, In y^e^ interim I shall give you what satisfaction I can in y^e^ treatment of y^e^ venereal disease — when there is only some remains of y^e^ virus after a salivation or other ineffectual course y^e^ following pills given twice a week is often times suff[icien]^t^. viz Take of best rubarb in powder 91 of good & pure quicksilver 3 p. put them into a marble or glass morter & ad as much water gradually as will bring y^e^ rubarb to y^e^ consistinces of pills rubing them very well with a pestil. the mercury will be soon incorporated & extinguished very perfectly very soon & then it may be given in pills or a bolus. The quantity of mercury here may be varied as well as y^e^ quantity of Rubarb, & y^e^ dose made smaller or larger as you please, likeways, when you chuse to purge, some [? del] more active purgative may be interposed, or joyned with y^e^ pills (, after incorporating y^e^ mercury) this sir you see is only an occasional medicine & I do realy believe y^e^ real composition of Belost's pills, for it has much better effects thus than when mixt with any other compositions but for y^e^ cure of y^e^ rooted Disorder my method was as follows. after useing a few warm baths for 3 or 4 days perhaps a week I ordered y^e^ following pills, w^h^ cure with out much confinement in fine weather & requires only to be regular & moderate in y^e^ Diet. but observe that y^e^ drinking of Lignum vitae Decoctions or using y^e^ gums of it prevent all y^e^ effects of mercury for a considerable time so that giving these medicines to such for a Considerable time after y^e^ use of Lignum vitae will be ineffectual, & to such as have been lately salivated they must be given with ye greatest caution, for in such any preparation of mercury is apt to renew y^e^ spiting. The medicine is this. viz. Take Nine, 9, drachm of Sarsaparilla reduced to a fine powder, four drachms of y^e^ purest crude mercury, put them into a marble mortar & ad as much water gradually as will [?] brink the powder into y^e^ consistance of pills boluss, or Electuary, rubing it at y^e^ same time very well. In this like y^e^ other y^e^ mercury will be soon incorporated & perfectly extinguished & then it may be given to on scruple one a day [~~for~~] or half a Scruple twice a day for 3 or four days, then you augment y^e^ dose to half a drachm p^r^ Diem for 4 days after w^h^ you may augment it to, 50, gr. or one drachm to be used for a continuance, with a little light Decoction of Sarsaparilla, until y^e^

cure is perfect. Observe, dureing this course it is not uncommon to feel a soreness in y^e^ mouth & troath, then you are to drop y^e^ medicine for one 2, or, 3 days & y^e^ Symptom will vanish without purge or any other medicine after which you proceed again with ye mercurial medecine & So (totie quoties) untill y^e^ cure is perfect, w^h^ is generally performed in about, 5, or, 6, weeks often in one month, but in this also, y^e^ quantity of y^e^ Dose may be varied some, require larger doses; tender persons, & those used to y^e^ taking of mercury, or such as have been salivated must not have y^t^. proportion of mercury, they must have smaller doses & those more seldom & always used with y^e^ Decoction of Sarsaparilla, w^h^ other ways is not always, no, nor often necessary. Would you, sir, expect y^e^ sarsaparilla could have so powerfull an effect of carring many by y^e^ skin, I confess I only hoped some assistance from it in y^e^ cure of y^e^ Yaws but the effects of the composition have been so extraordinary, that I have afterwards ordered it for some hundreds with perfect success, both in that disease, for w^h^ before there was no perfect cure & in all appearances of y^e^ venereal disease. N. B. in incipient bubois I have intermixt y^e^ use of y^e^ first pills with rubarb, & Chankres are made perfectly easy by y^e^ following wash viz R. mercurii Conosivi Sublim. 31 Sp. vini. rectificati 31. fiat salutio perfecta in mortaria vitrieo: 8, or 10 drops of this in 2 table spoonfulls of warm water, serves not only as a wash but dipt in y^e^ water also & layed to those burning sores bis die soon chars them, takes away y^e^ inflamation, & leaves them ready for [f 2] ready for healing. Caruncles in y^e^ passage must be assisted by bugers in w^h^ I always ordered a small admixture of Calomel with success, & a slight touch with aqua fortis in w^h^ you disolve mercury ad saturationem with carry off soft venerial warts, often so as not to leave a trace behind in 24 hours. As to y^e^ Inward use of y^e^ common solution of Corrosium sublimate a dose once or twice a week wonderfully promote y^e^ cure of gonorrhoea when no other medicine is given besides mucilagenous infusions with mitre & manna.————[22]

Although Browne gave his method to Linnaeus, evidently he was not prepared to make it generally available without receiving some financial recompense. This is revealed in a letter he wrote on 8 September 1787 to Sir Joseph Banks (1743–1820). Browne hoped Banks could secure publication of a flora of some Caribbean islands ("the Sugar Colonies"), to which he had added an account of volcanic springs on Montserrat and an advertisement for a treatise on yaws.

I have also mentioned by way of Advertisement a method of curing y^e^ yaws; a Disease amoung y^e^ negroes very prejudicial to their owners. that, if you think proper, may be left out, or if you advise it, may be left. I have had many cured effectually by that method under my Directions abroad, & Indeed, 2, in this Country even in Winter, w^h^ have assured me of Its efficacy, as none, Either at home or abroad, that have gone thro this course, have ever after had any returns.[23]

The advertisement is indeed in the manuscript flora that Browne sent to Banks;[24] the final part (ff 6 and 7) comprises this postscript.

P.S. I designed to have aded a brief account of y^e^ yaws with a perfectly succesfull method of cure, a method experiencd ~~successfully~~ both in Europe & y^e^ Colonies, on white & on blacks without either y^e^ returns or bad consequences so common after salivations &c.

The method as well as medicines are mostly new, and as the number of Experiments used to bring y^e^ medicines to perfection have cost y^e^ author much pains & trouble, he intends therefore to wait for a subscription that may prove some recompence for his Labour ~~&~~ trouble, & Expences.

N.B. The method may be put in practice by any surgeon, apothecary, or other Intelligent person, the patient not requiring any strict confinement, and they are generally allowed nourishing food during y^e^ ~~whole~~ course & ~~they~~ are much better able to labour Immediatly after a course than before it. y^e^ cure is performed in about 6 weeks in y^e^ Sugar Colonies & ~~even~~ in Europe y^e^ patient is generally cured ~~well~~, even in winter, in about 8 weeks.

If a Subscription be made up at a 1[?] Each, the author will publish this little piece, with some other curious experiments tending to render the materia medica much more perfect, when 200 gentlemen have subscribed & paid in the money which is to be returned at any time within 3 months after y^e^ publication if any 3 physicians joyntly give it under their hands

that they have known y^e^ medicines used in y^e^ manner mentioned & y^e^ method duly followed without success, but it is to be observed that person lately from a salivation or persons using Lignum vitae are not to be put under this mathod for a considerable time after. y^e^ reasons will be given in y^e^ piece itself.
Subscriptions to be taken in by Doct^r^ Broadbelt in Jamaica or by any deputed by him
by Isaac Eccleston or any deputed by him in Antigua
& by Mess^rs^ Bodingtons in London or any deputed by them.

A similar, unpublished, manuscript flora, given by Browne to A. B. Lambert,[25] includes a single page with the beginning and end of the yaws essay.

Of y^e^ Yaws, called *frambesia* by our Moderns This is a Disease [~~Subject~~] I would not have wrote upon had not y^e^ Multitude of people Labouring with these Complaints, & y^e^ Loss Sustained by time & health rendered y^e^ Subject very Interesting. I have formerly Seen many patients [~~of them~~] Labouring with this disorder put under a Salivation to no effect. The disease returned in a few days, & when it did not return, It generally attacked y^e^ Bone's & life Ever after was a burthen from what they called y^e^ Bone ache.
In y^e^ year 1768, my Brother had some negroes with this Disorder & requested My Directions, w^h^ Induced me to try y^e^ following method, w^h^ I also tryed in Ireland on 2 / patients / Subjects since with certain Success & with Either a return, or any bad consequence from whence arose y^e^ Confidence y^t^ Induced me to published it for y^e^ good of Mankind: But it[26] … [verso] that y^e^ Medicine used immethodically or in part is not sufficient, Every part is necessary, and, any neglected may be y^e^ Occasion [of] a Miscarriage. So that I think y^e^ process will be best conducted in a regular hospital or place where there may be a number, together with good & punctual care.[25]

Conclusion

Dr Patrick Browne's contribution to botanical studies in the Caribbean, as published in his book *The Civil and Natural History of Jamaica,* remains of outstanding importance. He published the first lists of Irish birds and fishes using modern nomenclature. Browne's records of the Irish flora, and his medical essays were not published in his lifetime, and the medical essays are now almost entirely lost. In retrospect, Carl Linnaeus' acclamation of this Irish doctor was exaggerated, but that does not mean that his modest contributions to Caribbean and Irish botany and medicine should be forgotten.

Notes

1. O. Guelliot, Liste des médecines reçus à la Faculté de Médecine de Reims de 1550 à 1794 (Ms Guelliot, M. 689, f. 27). Bibliotheque Municipale, Reims. (I am grateful to Nicolas Galaud [in litt. 10 September 1993], Le conservateur-adjoint, Bibliotheque Municipale, Reims, for his assistance.)
2. Dr A. Th. Bouwman (Department of Western Manuscripts, Universiteitbibliotheek, Rijks Universiteit, Leiden; in litt. 15 September 1993); Browne was 22 years old when he matriculated, and he did not renew his matriculation after the first year.
3. P. Browne to J. F. Gronovius, 9 September 1754 (see Appendix in Nelson and Walsh 1995, pp. 213–214). Library of Congress, Washinton D.C. For Gronovius' method of preserving fish, see Wheeler (1958).
4. P. Browne to C. Linnaeus, 24 December 1756. Linnean Society of London.
5. Each bound copy cost one guinea — a "very low price" according to R. O. (1793) — or, in sheets unbound, two guineas, and judging by the list of subscribers, at least 200 copies were printed (see Nelson 1997). It was reviewed by Anonymous (1756) and another reviewer identified as L (1756) (this attribution to "L" is inserted in manuscript in a copy in The British Library).
6. C. Linnaeus to P. Browne, 19 October 1756. Linnean Society of London. (The extant correspondence between Browne and Linnaeus, Johan Frederik Gronovius and Sir Joseph Banks, is fully transcribed and, when the original was in Latin, translated in Nelson and Walsh, 1995, pp. 213–241.)
7. C. Linnaeus to P. Collinson, 19 October 1756. Linnean Society of London.
8. G. Tyson in litt. 23 March 1995. I am most grateful to Mr Tyson for this information which is found in the St Croix Matriklerne, 1755–1924. U.S. National Archives, Washington, D.C.
9. P. Browne to C. Linnaeus, 24 May 1765. Linnean Society of London (see Note 4 above).

10. Two versions of the account of Montserrat are extant; one is in the Botany Library, Natural History Museum, London, and the other is in the Linnean Society of London (see Note 15 below).
11. P. Browne to J. Banks, 8 September 1787. Botany Library, Natural History Museum, London. (Transcription in Nelson and Walsh, 1995, p. 239.)
12. P. Browne to C. Linnaeus, 7 September 1770. Linnean Society of London.
13. In one of the manuscript catalogues of the flora of the Caribbean islands (now in the Linnean Society, London), Browne included two species within a genus that he proposed to name *Ruttia,* undoubtedly to commemorate his fellow naturalist. As this work was never printed, that generic name was not published. Rutty (1697–1775) was subsequently commemorated by another Irish botanist, William Henry Harvey (1811–1866) — *Ruttya* Harvey (Acanthaceae) is native in Africa (see e.g., Nelson and Walsh 1997, pp. 248–251, plate 20 (*Ruttya fruticosa).*
14. This manuscript, preserved in the library of the Linnean Society of London, was transcribed and annotated with modern nomenclature in Nelson and Walsh (1995). It includes about 750 records of plants, some, but not all, of which were native in localities in the southeastern part of County Mayo, especially in the countryside around Claremorris, and between Claremorris and Westport.
15. The two extant manuscripts are:

    1. A Catalogue of the Plants of The English Sugar Colonies To which is aded A, brief acc^{t} of The Sulphur of Mountserat by P. B. m.D. (Botany Library, Natural History Museum, London.)
    2. A Catalogue of the plants of Jamaica & other English Sugar-Colonies ranged & digested according to the Linnaean System. To which is aded A brief Account of y^{e} Sulphur or Sulphurarium of Mountserat. & a Specifick method of Cure for y^{e} Yaws. By P^{k} Browne. MD. (Linnean Society of London.)

    Elsewhere (in Nelson and Walsh, 1995, pp. 243–244), I erroneously described Browne's "A Catalogue of the plants of Jamaica" as a phantom, and I listed as a separate manuscript one titled "Flora Indiae Occidentalis Catalogue of plants of Jamaica" (that being how Lambert (1798) cited it). Both these entries refer to this second manuscript.

16. A. B. Lambert to J. E. Smith undated [ca. end May 1790]. Linnean Society of London.
17. P. Browne to C. Linnaeus 24 February 1771. Linnean Society of London.
18. P. Browne to C. Linnaeus undated [after 15 April 1771]. Linnean Society of London.
19. P. Browne to C. Linnaeus 7 September 1770. Linnean Society of London.
20. Browne was evidently familiar with the use of crude mercury to treat syphilis. He could not have known that yaws, although not a venereal disease, is caused by the same organism, *Treponema pertenue,* and therefore that it would respond to the same treatment. Today yaws is successfully treated by antibiotics such as penicillin and tetracycline.
21. P. Browne to C. Linnaeus 24 February 1771. Linnean Society of London.
22. P. Browne to C. Linnaeus undated [after 15 April 1771]. Linnean Society of London.
23. P. Browne to J. Banks 8 September 1787. Botany Library, Natural History Museum, London. (Transcription in Nelson and Walsh, 1995, p. 239.)
24. A Catalogue of the Plants of The English Sugar Colonies To which is aded A, brief acc^{t} of The Sulphur of Mountserat by P. B. m.D. Botany Library, Natural History Museum, London (see Note 15 above).
25. A Catalogue of the plants of Jamaica & other English Sugar-Colonies ranged & digested according to the Linnaean System. To which is aded A brief Account of y^{e} Sulphur or Sulphurarium of Mountserat. & a Specifick method of Cure for y^{e} Yaws. By P^{k} Browne. MD. Linnean Society of London (see Note 15 above).
26. The text ends abruptly but continues overleaf.

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