

# Illustrations from the Wellcome Library

## Wellcome and “The Great Past”

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In 1928 Henry Solomon Wellcome, facing the Royal Commission on National Museums and Galleries, elaborated on his deep fascination with “the great past”.<sup>1</sup> The passion of this remarkable American-born entrepreneur, co-founder of the pharmaceutical company Burroughs Wellcome & Co and “obsessive collector of medical artefacts, instruments and books”,<sup>2</sup> is amply evident in the Wellcome Archive, which is held by the Wellcome Trust in the Contemporary Medical Archives Centre (CMAC), London.

The Wellcome Archive comprises the personal papers of Henry Wellcome and records of his various research laboratories and museums. It is one of the largest collections administered by the CMAC, second only in size to the mammoth archive of the Family Planning Association.<sup>3</sup> Stored in nearly 700 archive boxes and described in a 4 volume, 728 page catalogue, it contains a staggering 6436 item references.<sup>4</sup> In addition to hard copy format, the collection is also accessible electronically on a database. This database has an excellent search facility which acts effectively as an index to the entire archive, and is a most welcome feature to those seeking a first point of entry into the multi-volume catalogue. The database is currently only in the public searchroom of the Wellcome Library, although there are plans to make it available via the Wellcome Trust Library Website<sup>5</sup> in the next few years.

The project to assemble, arrange, catalogue and make available to the public the body of collections now known as the Wellcome Archive was funded by the Trust in 1996, and completed in three years thanks to the sterling work of two CMAC archivists, Jennifer Haynes and Isobel Hunter. The result is a rich, wide-ranging

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For reading and commenting on this paper and supplying information I should like to thank Julia Sheppard, Dr Lesley Hall, John Symons and Isobel Hunter.

<sup>1</sup> CMAC/WA/HSW/OR/L.1 p. 38. Evidence to the Royal Commission on National Museums and Galleries 1928–1929. Typescript of written answers by Henry Wellcome who was quoting from the Museum Handbook. See also the

introduction by Wellcome in brochures for the Historical Medical Exhibition 1913, in which he begins “with the object of stimulating the study of the great past, I am organising an Exhibition in connection with the history of medicine, chemistry, pharmacy and the allied sciences”, CMAC/WA/HMM/PB/1 and 5.

<sup>2</sup> Robert Rhodes James, *Henry Wellcome*, London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1994. Front sleeve notes.

<sup>3</sup> CMAC/SA/FPA.

<sup>4</sup> The Wellcome Archive database contains 6436 records on Level 6, which is record type “Item”.

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.wellcome.ac.uk>.

resource which will open up potentialities for research in a number of areas. It reveals a great deal about Henry Wellcome's personal life, his scientific, cultural and historical enterprises and contains much of relevance to his commercial operations, which were often closely related. (The records of Burroughs Wellcome & Co and The Wellcome Foundation Ltd are currently held in the archive of Glaxo-Wellcome plc in Greenford, Middlesex.) The catalogue provides an invaluable means of access to this very complex and often chaotic archive, reflecting the many interests of Henry Wellcome, the complicated structure of his businesses and the convoluted custodial history of the records up to 1996. Identifying the provenance and original order of every part of the collection was an archivist's ultimate nightmare. From as early as the 1930s, archives had been arranged and re-arranged; extracted from and to the business archives; stored in different locations; listed and held by different departments of the Wellcome Institute; expanded by additional "new" papers, the provenance of which was not recorded; damaged or destroyed; and distributed to other institutions, most significantly Wellcome's correspondence with Sir Henry and Lady Stanley, given to the Royal Geographical Society in 1936. Those researchers brave enough to take the plunge will see that there are some structured filing series, but for the majority of material an arrangement has been devised from sketchy provenance information, evidence contained in the archives themselves and a good deal of archival logic and common sense.

Although not immediately obvious from a quick perusal of the catalogues, this archive covers a quite extraordinary range of topics. It is divided into eight distinct collections. The largest comprises records of the Wellcome Historical Medical Museum (513 boxes), followed by the Personal Papers of Henry Solomon Wellcome (110 boxes) and the Wellcome Bureau of Scientific Research (55 boxes). Four smaller collections of records are those of the Chemical, Physiological and Tropical Research Laboratories and the Museum of Medical Science. There is also a collection of photographs and slides generated by the various Wellcome institutions.

### **The Personal Papers of Henry Solomon Wellcome (1853–1936)**

The Personal Papers of Henry Solomon Wellcome (CMAC/WA/HSW) provide an intriguing insight into the man's multi-faceted and unusual life from his late teenage years up to his death in 1936 aged eighty-three. They cover his pharmaceutical education and early career in the USA, the establishment of Burroughs Wellcome & Co in London in 1880, family relationships, personal financial and legal affairs, marriage and his only son, and his wide-ranging social, intellectual, cultural and historical activities.

An extensive series of 'General Correspondence'<sup>6</sup> spanning 1881–1903 covers the period when he was first in London establishing the business with Silas Mainville Burroughs and living a very flamboyant lifestyle. Most notably represented are his involvement in freemasonry, yachting and the American Society. Since Henry Wellcome drew no boundaries between business and private life, these papers also

<sup>6</sup> CMAC/WA/HSW/CO/Gen.

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contain a great deal about the commercial side of his activities.<sup>7</sup> As a whole, the series paints a vivid picture of London society in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and reads like a *Who's Who* of people, companies, clubs, charities, societies and associations. Although much of the correspondence is of an ephemeral nature, it does show that Wellcome was a compulsive and successful networker. His connections were impressive and varied: Andrew Balfour, Henry Stanley, May French Sheldon, Lord Kitchener, Joseph Chamberlain, Roger Casement, Marie Corelli, Geneviève Ward, Oscar Wilde, J Passmore Edwards, Lady Randolph Churchill, Hiram Maxim, W M Flinders Petrie, E A Wallis Budge, Florence K Upton, the Carlyle House Memorial Trust, National Association for Employment of Epileptics and the Savage Club are but a few names which appear in the correspondence series.

Sadly, Wellcome's relationship with and marriage to Syrie Barnardo, daughter of the celebrated philanthropist Thomas Barnardo, are poorly documented. Their marriage in 1901, when Syrie was only 21 years old and Wellcome in his late forties, was troubled from early on. A legal separation was agreed in 1910 following Wellcome's accusations of infidelity against his wife during their stay in Ecuador in 1909. Syrie vehemently denied her husband's claims, but it had nevertheless become clear to her that she and Wellcome had "virtually nothing in common".<sup>8</sup> Divorce was granted to Wellcome in 1916, shortly after the birth of Syrie's illegitimate daughter by the writer Somerset Maugham. After the breakdown of their marriage, Wellcome destroyed all Syrie's correspondence with him and little evidence remains of their early relationship. An intimate side of Henry Wellcome and possibly his attitudes to love, marriage and women, is lost for ever. Surviving documentation in the collection covering his marriage and divorce is on a mainly superficial and legal level. That Wellcome's two most important loves were his business empire and collecting interests can only be speculation.

Happily, the archive does include papers relating to Henry and Syrie's son Mounteney.<sup>9</sup> These cover his birth and christening in 1903, education, health, holidays, life as a young man living on a farm in Sussex and the settlement fund made by his father and administered by the Wellcome Trustees. In particular, material shows that the young Mounteney was at the centre of a tug of war between his estranged parents. Each employed medical and educational experts to support their views on how he should be brought up. While Wellcome favoured a strict regime of exercise, fresh air and instruction, Syrie advocated a governess, afternoon naps and smothering affection. Despite the wrangling which took place during his childhood, Mounteney's life was evidently a happy one.

Wellcome's personal life, family, relatives, friends, and childhood and adult homes are illustrated by a substantial number of photographs.<sup>10</sup> The portraits of a sombre and dignified man are complemented by a series of "costume" photographs taken during his early years in London in the 1880s. These show him dressed up as a monk, a warrior, sailor and a Hamlet type character, and reveal the lighter side of Henry Wellcome. Syrie's beauty is splendidly captured in a series of studio portraits

<sup>7</sup> Conversely, material relating to Henry Wellcome's private life can be found in the commercial archives held by Glaxo-Wellcome.

<sup>8</sup> Rhodes James, *op. cit.*, note 2 above, p. 299.

<sup>9</sup> CMAC/WA/HSW/MO.

<sup>10</sup> CMAC/WA/HSW/PH.

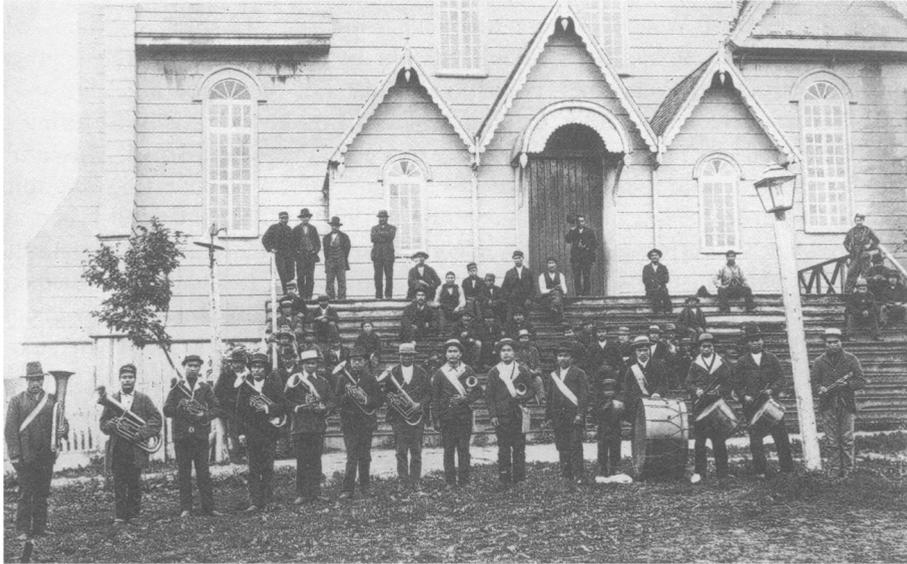


*Figure 1:* The Wellcome family outside their home, The Nest, Hayes, Kent, c.1908. Syrie front left, Mounteney front middle, Henry front right, with an unknown woman and a nanny. (CMAC/WA/HSW/PHO/D.13, Wellcome Library, London.)

by Lafayette Ltd, the noted society photographers, and G Nitsche of Lausanne. There are also a good many photographs taken on the Wellcome family's travels around Europe between 1905 and 1910, many of which include Syrie and Mounteney. Only one family portrait is held, which is a rarity including Henry, Syrie and Mounteney all together outside their home in Hayes, Kent (Figure 1). Mounteney's childhood is gaily illustrated. An album of photographs, evidently compiled for presentation to friends and relatives, shows Mounteney leaping and running freely in the grounds and resting on the arm of his father's chair. There are also photographs of him with his mother and even playing in a wigwam in the garden.

In addition there are records to interest those not specifically concerned with Henry Wellcome's personal life. For example, there is a good deal of material relating to native Americans. Wellcome's long-term charitable involvement with the controversial Father William Duncan and his Christian missionary work among the Tsimshian Indians of British Columbia is documented in a series of correspondence,

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*Figure 2: The Metlakahtla brass band outside the church building, Metlakahtla, Alaska, taken during Wellcome’s visit 1916–1917. (CMAC/WA/HSW/PHO/B.3, Wellcome Library, London.)*

reports and other papers<sup>11</sup> (which is supplemented by material in the Wellcome Library American Collections). Wellcome extolled Duncan’s Christian settlements for the Indians, known as Metlakahtla and New Metlakahtla, in Alaska, in *The Story of Metlakahtla*, which he published privately in 1887 (Figure 2). Brought up in the American Mid-West, Wellcome was interested in native American culture from an early age. A number of references to native Americans can be found by searching the database, for example, a search on ‘Pocahontas’ will bring up a list of four items. Archaeology was another of Wellcome’s principal interests. Excavations in Jebel Moya in southern Sudan, 1910–1914, and Lachish, or Tell Duweir, in Palestine, 1932–1938, financed by Wellcome (he was personally involved in the former), are well represented.<sup>12</sup> As well as material on important finds, there is much recording the philanthropic treatment of the native work force and for those with more gory tastes a report on the murder of the archaeologist J L Starkey by Arab bandits in 1938. A further series of correspondence relating to staff recruitment and management and the excavations at Jebel Moya can be found in the archive of the Wellcome Historical Medical Museum.<sup>13</sup>

### The Wellcome Historical Medical Museum

The largest and most complex section in the Wellcome Archive is that of the Wellcome Historical Medical Museum (CMAC/WA/HMM). The Museum was

<sup>11</sup> CMAC/WA/HSW/ME.

<sup>12</sup> CMAC/WA/HSW/AR/Jeb and AR/Lac.

<sup>13</sup> CMAC/WA/HMM/CO/Ear/303-321.

undoubtedly one of Wellcome's greatest achievements.<sup>14</sup> Its sheer size and scope almost defies belief. It has been calculated that by the early 1930s the aggregate number of objects in Wellcome's collection (whilst not of comparable dimensions and value) was five times larger than that of the Louvre in Paris and during the 1920s "its annual expenditure on acquisitions exceeded that of the British Museum".<sup>15</sup> In all, he spent a total £400,000 on it. Wellcome's hobby of collecting antiquities and curios began in the late nineteenth century. In 1903, utilizing the wealth generated from his business enterprises, he began in earnest to collect material for an exhibition to illustrate man's history and life with special reference to health and medicine. Originally planned to mark the twenty-fifth year of trading by Burroughs Wellcome & Co in 1904, the Museum did not begin to be arranged until 1911. A selection of the collected artefacts together with material borrowed from other sources were first put on display in 1913 at 54a Wigmore Street, at the 17th International Medical Congress, London.<sup>16</sup> The Museum was reopened as the Wellcome Historical Medical Museum in 1914 and functioned successfully through the 1920s. By this time Wellcome had developed a much grander scheme for a permanent museum; however, this plan never came to fruition during his lifetime. In 1932 the Museum closed and was moved from Wigmore Street to the new Wellcome Building in the Euston Road, but was still undergoing rearrangement when Wellcome died in 1936 and did not reopen until after the Second World War.<sup>17</sup> Transfer of objects to other institutions began soon after Wellcome's death and continued until 1985. The Wellcome Galleries at the Science Museum, London, hold by far the largest portion of the collections, which were transferred on a permanent loan basis in 1977.

Despite being best known as a historical medical collection, in scope it was much wider. The Museum took shape according to the development of Wellcome's wide-ranging interests and those of key staff members over the years. It embraced not only the history of medicine but also anthropology, archaeology, art and folklore among other things. The clearest expression of Wellcome's vision for the Museum is provided in his evidence to the Royal Commission on National Museums and Galleries, 1928–1929. He revealed that his interest in "the great past" dated from when, aged four, he found a Neolithic stone implement and his father told him about the Stone Age and Neolithic periods: "that excited my imagination and was never forgotten."<sup>18</sup> He regarded the Museum as a place for serious academic research and study and an important anthropological institution, believing the history of medicine from prehistoric times onwards to be an important part of anthropology. Its famous 'Hall of Primitive Medicine' formed an obligatory introduction to the

<sup>14</sup> For an account of the development and dispersal of the Wellcome Historical Medical Museum, see John Symons, *Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine: a short history*, London, The Wellcome Trust, 1993.

<sup>15</sup> See Ghislaine M Skinner, 'Sir Henry Wellcome's Museum for the Science of History', *Med. Hist.*, 1986, 4: 383–418, p. 383.

<sup>16</sup> See CMAC/WA/HMM/CO/Hme, HMM/RE/A, and HMM/PB/Han/1-14.

<sup>17</sup> The Museum initially re-opened to visitors at 28 Portman Square in 1948. At the end of 1954 it was returned to the Wellcome Building at 183 Euston Road where it functioned until the transfer decision by the Wellcome Trustees in the 1970s.

<sup>18</sup> CMAC/WA/HSW/OR/L.5 p.105. Royal Commission on National Museums and Galleries, *Oral evidence, memoranda and appendices to the final report*, London, HMSO, 1929.

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Figure 3: The Hall of Primitive Medicine, Wellcome Historical Medical Museum, 54 Wigmore Street, c.1928. (CMAC/WA/PHO/Kel/B.3, Wellcome Library, London.)

displays (Figure 3). Wellcome’s Museum was for “intellectual people”, “those genuinely concerned and interested in the subjects represented there who attend and study for beneficial information”, academics, scientists, “colonial and military officials, explorers, colonisers, planters, missionaries” would find it useful. And it was not for “stragglers”, or “to gratify those who wish to view strange and curious objects”.<sup>19</sup> This was confirmed by the fact that, except for the medical profession, entrance to the Museum was through prior written application only.

Wellcome’s loose and broad profile for his Museum and the amount of money he was prepared to spend on it resulted in the amassing of about one million objects by the time of his death. As well as containing all sorts of artefacts, books and paintings relating to the history of medicine from many diverse cultures, it also included large quantities of weapons, model ships, bales of fabric, furniture, ancient cooking implements, porcelain, glassware, spectacles, statuary, coins, medals, oriental and western antiquities, *objets d’art*, potsherds, torture instruments, human remains and “ethnographical” items.<sup>20</sup>

The Historical Medical Museum archive is fairly comprehensive, containing records from its genesis in 1903 to final dispersal in 1985, and is much more than a resource for those studying simply the history of medicine. The activities of the Museum as a whole and the collecting role of senior staff and curators are detailed in a series of reports to Henry Wellcome or the Wellcome Foundation and Trust bodies,

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., OR/L.5, and OR/L.1.

<sup>20</sup> Skinner, op. cit., note 15 above, p. 383.

1915–1968.<sup>21</sup> These include reports by Wellcome's Curator C J S Thompson and his successor Dr L W G Malcolm, detailing visits to dealers, auction houses, private vendors, museums and libraries in Britain and abroad. Also retained are the travel diaries, or daily logs, of Captain P Johnston-Saint, the Museum's 'Foreign Secretary' who toured Europe, the Middle East and India collecting objects and establishing international contacts. Throughout, Wellcome kept close control over the collecting, marking up sale catalogues and deciding purchasing prices.

Details of day-to-day and longer-term activities of the Museum and its staff, notably acquisition, accession and transfer of materials, arrangements of exhibitions (including the Historical Medical Exhibition of 1913), researcher and visitor feedback, internal administration and publicity, are also extremely well represented. A massive series of correspondence,<sup>22</sup> covering over 300 pages in the catalogue, reads like a directory of persons and organizations, containing something for everyone. Organizations, national and overseas, range from the well known, e.g. the Royal College of Physicians and the American Museum of Natural History, to the more obscure, e.g. the Society for Training Serbian Women and the London Rambling Society. There is correspondence with Margaret Murray, Sir Ronald Ross, Rafael Sabatini, Sir Aurel Stein, Louisa Aldrich-Blake, Hilary Jenkinson, Professor Bronislaw Malinowski, Sir James Frazer, Eric Gill, Sir George Newman, Jacob Epstein, Sir Alexander Fleming, Cecil Sharp and Sir Robert Baden-Powell. To give an idea of the vast and diverse range of subjects covered in the correspondence, a random selection produced files on the following: gift of an old enema syringe, acquisition of Egyptian antiquities, women's work in the First World War, collection of Jenner items and the history of vaccination, Arabic tradition of the affliction of Job [syphilis], Arab silver charm and opium pipe, drawings illustrating the mental development of the blind, native Persian dental instruments and cupping glasses, cast of Roman votive offering, gift of witchdoctor's kit from East Africa, purchase of microscopes, Egyptian, Bolivian, Peruvian mummies, prehistoric implements, loan of objects for film *Lady Jane Grey* to Gainsborough Pictures, portrait of Sir Charles Bell, Sherlock Holmes Exhibition, purchase of African and Japanese musical instruments, herbs for exhibition, and David Livingstone's instruments and Bible. The correspondence also includes a series of files on excavations carried out in Caldey Island, South Wales, in the 1950s, in which the Museum employee A D Lacaille was involved.

Also to be found in the archive are records relating to major exhibitions mounted by the Museum,<sup>23</sup> most notably the Lister Exhibition of 1927, which marked the centenary of the birth of Lord Lister. The centrepiece of this event was Lister's Ward from the Glasgow Royal Infirmary, which had been transferred to the Museum after demolition of the hospital in 1924. In 1930 the tercentenary of the first recognized use of cinchona bark by Europeans was marked, and in 1937 the Museum participated in the famous Paris Exhibition which celebrated the arts, industry and science. As well as files of correspondence relating to the loan of materials, there are photographs, invitations, souvenir guides and handbooks produced for exhibitions held by the

<sup>21</sup> CMAC/WA/HMM/RP.

<sup>22</sup> CMAC/WA/HMM/CO.

<sup>23</sup> CMAC/WA/HMM/EX and HMM/PB/Han.

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**Figure 4:** A selection of printed ephemera advertising various Wellcome events and institutions, 1913–1931. (CMAC/WA/PB/Han/1, 5 and 10 and WA/PB/Sam 1, 4 and 5, Wellcome Library, London.)

Museum when it was located at Wigmore Street, Portman Square and Euston Road (Figure 4).

In addition to the routine activities of acquiring and displaying artefacts, there is a wealth of information relating to the technical management of the Museum collections, including accession registers, notebooks, cataloguing slips, inventory cards, files on major individual collections, diaries and financial records. There are also records of the transfer and disposal of objects from the 1930s onwards. The bulk of the collection was transferred to museums both in the UK and abroad, most notably the British Museum, Science Museum and the Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford.<sup>24</sup> A great deal was separately disposed of via auction houses and dealers. With the records it is possible to trace the origins and final destinations of most parts of the collection. Using a specially prepared guidance leaflet,<sup>25</sup> available in the Wellcome Library, coupled with patience, it may be possible to locate records relating to the transfer of a specific object. However, this can be a complicated business and there is no guarantee that records exist for every item.

The Wellcome Archive is an important resource for a study on the development of museums in the twentieth century. It provides information on collecting policies and methods, practical museum management, the professionalization of museum curators and other staff, philosophy behind museums and their purpose, theory and explanation of arrangement of exhibits and displays, and their perception by visitors, researchers and learned societies. The evolution of the displays, room design and exhibition layouts are also photographically illustrated (Figure 5).<sup>26</sup> In many ways Henry Wellcome's Museum was a very personal collection. The design was dominated by his preoccupation with primitive origins and the idea of the history of medicine as an extension of man's instinct for self-preservation. This evolutionist school of thought was also characterized by attitudes to non-white races made popular by African explorer-missionaries in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, with whom Wellcome was closely associated (see correspondence with Henry Stanley,<sup>27</sup> May French Sheldon,<sup>28</sup> the African Society<sup>29</sup> and Anthropological Society<sup>30</sup>). Wellcome intended his Museum to illustrate the development of medicine from the "primitive" to the modern within an anthropological framework based on a model developed in the 1880s. The Museum Handbook of 1920 stated that "one of the chief aims of the Museum is to connect the links in the chain of human experience

<sup>24</sup> For a summary of the accession and transfer of objects see Georgina Russell, 'The Wellcome non-medical material', *Museums Journal*, 1986, 86, Supplement.

<sup>25</sup> 'WA/HMM Wellcome Historical Medical Museum Archives. Museum Objects: accession and transfer records. A guide for researchers' issued by the Wellcome Library, 2000.

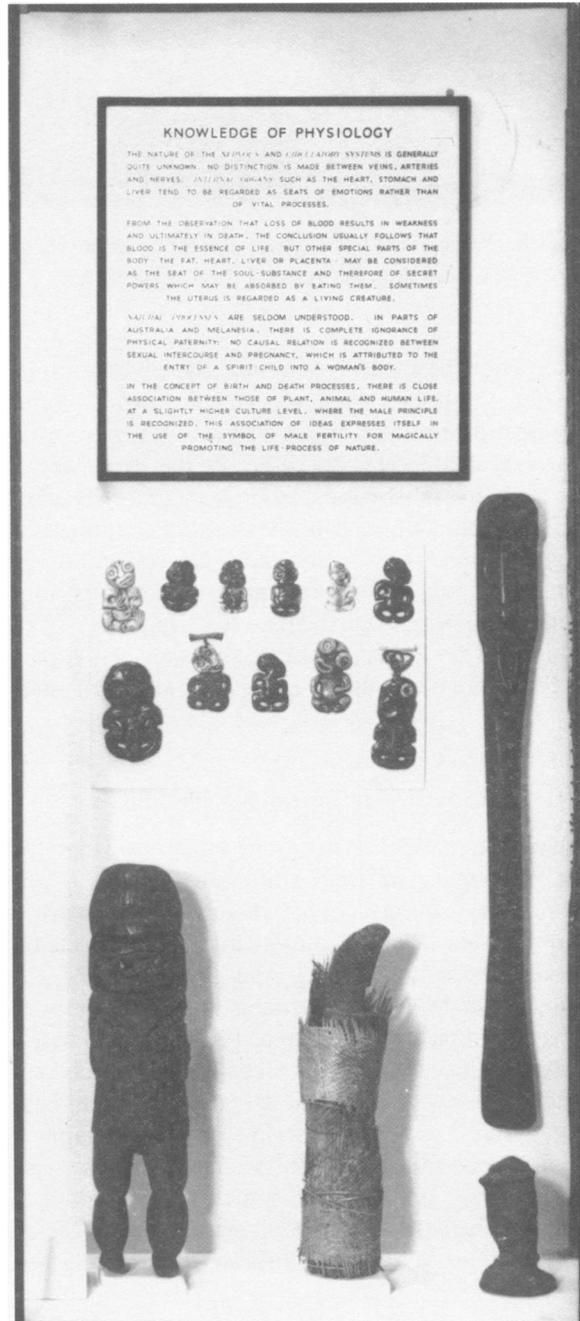
<sup>26</sup> See CMAC/WA/PHO/Hmm, PHO/Mms and PHO/Kel.

<sup>27</sup> See *Special Collections* at the Royal Geographical Society, London.

<sup>28</sup> See CMAC/WA/HSW/CO/Gen and WA/HMM/CO/Chr, or via database search on 'Sheldon'.

<sup>29</sup> See particularly CMAC/WA/HMM/CO/Alp/6.

<sup>30</sup> See particularly CMAC/WA/HMM/CO/Chr, or via database search on 'anthropological'. Of particular interest is HMM/CO/Sub/2 containing an 'Anthropological Questionnaire' distributed by the Royal Empire Society. In the 1920s, this involved the museum in the collection of data on "the races of the Empire" including photographs, measurements and "food of natives" in Africa. Also HMM/PB/Pub/27, a memoranda notebook "concerning the collection of information and material among primitive peoples" issued by the Museum c.1927, with sections on deities, native medicine men or witch doctors, disease, surgery, medical treatment, poisons, superstitions, family life and customs, childbirth, burial, astrology, weapons, currency, weighing and artistic workmanship.



**Figure 5: Material illustrating primitive knowledge of physiology, in the Hall of Primitive Medicine, Wellcome Historical Medical Museum, Wellcome Building, Euston Road, 1947. (CMAC/WA/PHO/Hmm/4, Wellcome Library, London.)**



Figure 6: Drawing of the Wellcome Physiological Research Laboratories, Brockwell Hall, 1898–1922. (CMAC/WA/PHO/Kel/A.1, Wellcome Library, London.)

which stretches back from the present time into the prehistoric period of the early ages”.<sup>31</sup> Artefacts were often displayed out of all cultural context, with modern materials representing the primitive or prehistoric: “in many of the practices and customs common among primitive races today, in the treatment of disease, we find a reflection of what medicine must have been in very early times in Europe”.<sup>32</sup> These ideas were fast becoming unfashionable in the twentieth century and were not shared by many of those given the task of maintaining the collections. Between 1936 and 1976 many ethnographic and prehistoric items which seemed more appropriate to other disciplines than the history of medicine were dispersed.<sup>33</sup> In this dispersal some material which would now be deemed cultural property was returned to its country of origin, making the Wellcome Trustees some way ahead of their time in political correctness.

### The Wellcome Research Laboratories

Records of the scientific research institutions set up by Henry Wellcome form an integral part of the Wellcome Archive.<sup>34</sup> Unfortunately this is one of the archive’s weakest areas for primary sources. Some details of the work of the Wellcome Physiological Research Laboratories (Figures 6 and 7), established in 1894 (originally set up to produce diphtheria anti-toxin), and the Wellcome Chemical Research Laboratories, established in 1896, can be found in monthly reports to the Director of the Wellcome Bureau of Scientific Research, 1914–1922.<sup>35</sup> These are supplemented by a handful of correspondence files in the Chemical Research Laboratories section covering subjects such as the production of ephedrine hypochloride, sulphonamides and East African cinchona;<sup>36</sup> a series of reprints of articles published by staff of the Physiological Research Laboratories,<sup>37</sup> particularly eminent researchers such as George Barger, Henry Dale and Arthur James Ewins; and general guides and historical publications.<sup>38</sup> The work of the Wellcome Tropical Research Laboratories, Khartoum (Figure 8), set up in 1903 by Andrew Balfour and equipped by Henry

<sup>31</sup> CMAC/WA/HMM/PB/Han/17 p. 6.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>33</sup> Skinner, *op. cit.*, note 15 above, p. 418.

<sup>34</sup> CMAC/WA/CRL, WA/PRL, WA/TRL and WA/BSR.

<sup>35</sup> CMAC/WA/BSR/BA/CrI and BA/PrI.

<sup>36</sup> CMAC/WA/CRL/CO.

<sup>37</sup> CMAC/WA/PRL/PB/Sta.

<sup>38</sup> CMAC/WA/CRL/PB, CRL/Hi and WA/PRL/PB/Gen.

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Figure 7: Pharmacological Laboratory, Wellcome Physiological Research Laboratories, Brockwell Hall, c.1940s. (CMAC/WA/PHO/Kel/A.2, Wellcome Library, London.)

Wellcome,<sup>39</sup> is mainly represented in the laboratories’ annual reports,<sup>40</sup> which contain illustrations, scholarly articles and contributions by staff on their research, and reports of the Entomological and Chemical sections.<sup>41</sup> Originals of photographs used in the annual reports and images of the innovatory “floating laboratory”, towed by a tug called *The Culex*, which carried research to the river settlements are also held.<sup>42</sup> Files generated internally, or on site, and revealing the day-to-day administration and scientific experimental methods of the three major Wellcome laboratories do not appear to have survived. This is a great shame and goes some way towards limiting the usefulness of the resource for those studying tropical diseases and medicine, methods used in isolation and production of new chemical substances, pharmacological testing, the development of physiological research, vivisection and government policy on animal experimentation (Burroughs Wellcome was the first commercial manufacturer to register with the Home Office under the Cruelty to Animals Act 1876).

Fortunately, records of Wellcome’s Bureau of Scientific Research<sup>43</sup> are rather more

<sup>39</sup> The Tropical Research Laboratories were largely sustained by the Sudan Government which maintained them and met staffing costs. In 1935 they were taken over by the Sudan Medical Service and three years later the Wellcome Trustees withdrew support for them as the Wellcome name had been dropped. See Ahmed

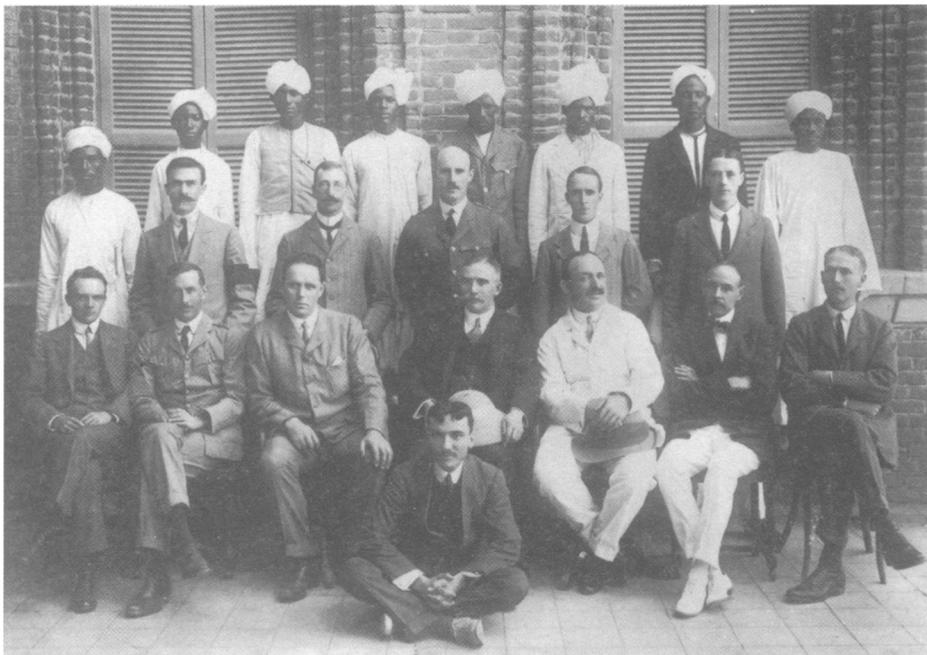
Awad Abdel-Hameed, ‘The Wellcome Tropical Research Laboratories in Khartoum (1903–1934)’, *Med. Hist.*, 1997, 41: 30–58.

<sup>40</sup> CMAC/WA/TRL/Rep.

<sup>41</sup> CMAC/WA/TRL/Pub/A and B.

<sup>42</sup> CMAC/WA/PHO/Trl.

<sup>43</sup> CMAC/WA/BSR.



*Figure 8:* Staff of the Tropical Research Laboratories, Gordon College, Khartoum, c. December 1910. In the front row: Henry Wellcome in the centre, Dr Andrew Balfour, Director of the Laboratories, to the left, and James Currie, Director of Education (Sudan Government) to the right. (CMAC/WA/PHO/Tri/B.4, Wellcome Library, London.)

elaborative and, importantly, fill in some gaps in the papers of the Chemical, Physiological and Tropical Research Laboratories.<sup>44</sup> The Bureau was established in 1913 and was clearly intended by Wellcome to be the hub of his research activities. Andrew Balfour returned from the Sudan, where he had been Chief Health Officer of Khartoum and Director of the Tropical Research Laboratories for the previous ten years, to direct the Bureau and was given general responsibility for all Wellcome's scientific research laboratories and museums. Of particular interest is the large series of records covering his period of directorship, 1913–1923, which relate not only to the work of the Bureau and its constituent departments but also to Balfour's own interests and activities in military and tropical medicine and public health.<sup>45</sup> His travel diaries during expeditions to the West Indies and South America in 1914<sup>46</sup> and Mauritius in 1921 to investigate sanitary conditions are included in this section of the archive. Balfour was involved with various organizations, and his records

<sup>44</sup> For accounts, by former staff, of the development of Wellcome's tropical medicine institutions and the chemical research laboratories, see L G Goodwin and E Beveridge, 'Sir Henry Wellcome and tropical medicine' and J H Gorvin, 'The development of chemical research in the Wellcome Laboratories (UK) 1896–1965' in

*Wellcome's Legacies*, London, The Wellcome Trust, 1998.

<sup>45</sup> CMAC/WA/BSR/BA.

<sup>46</sup> A set of photographs of local people, the environment and diseases taken during the South American expedition are retained in the photographic section, CMAC/WA/PHO/Bsr/1.

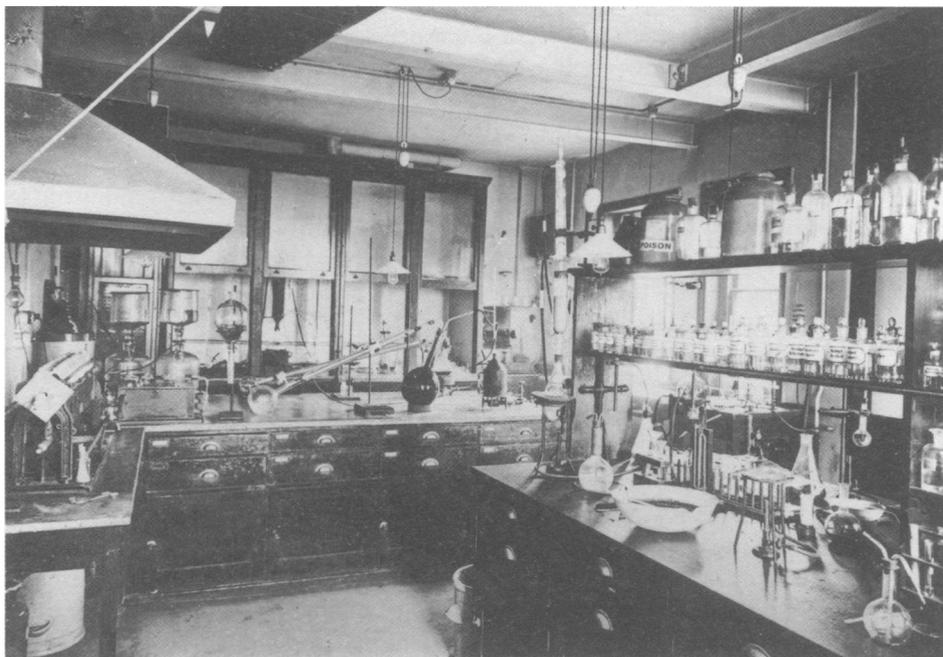


Figure 9: A laboratory, Wellcome Chemical Research Laboratories, 6 King Street, 1899. (CMAC/WA/PHO/Kel/A.6, Wellcome Library, London.)

include correspondence with the Floating School Committee set up by the Royal Society of Medicine, and the Egyptian Health Ministry relating to his work as President of the Public Health Commission on sanitary services in Egypt (The Balfour Commission), covering 1918–1920. There are papers relating to research by Bureau staff on malaria and sleeping sickness, including work done on behalf of the War Office, 1914–1919, and investigations carried out by T A Henry in the Chemical Research Laboratories on the medicinal properties of plants, 1918–1923. Amongst the staff records are files on Dr Louis Sambon, an expert on tropical medicine, and Malcolm E MacGregor, who headed the Wellcome Entomological Field Laboratories.<sup>47</sup> The Bureau archive also contains a large number of reprints of articles written by staff members on their research. These cover topics such as yellow fever, mosquitoes, *Trypanosoma Grayi* parasites in the tsetse fly and Rift Valley Fever.

For a long time Wellcome rebutted accusations concerning the close connection between the scientific and business arms of his "empire", preferring to stress the academic and altruistic aspects of the research laboratories.<sup>48</sup> However, the evidence against this existed from early on. The development of the diphtheria anti-toxin and other preparations clearly contributed to the prestige and success of Burroughs Wellcome & Co. The Chemical Research Laboratories had a close relationship with

<sup>47</sup> For papers on the Entomological Field Laboratories see also CMAC/WA/BSR/Efl and WA/HMM/CO/Wel/B.3.

<sup>48</sup> See Rhodes James, *op. cit.*, note 2 above, p.190.

the firm—processes initiated there were often developed for large-scale production and many staff moved between the labs and manufacturing works. Even Henry Dale, who worked at Wellcome's Physiological Research Laboratories, stated in 1910 that "whilst devoted primarily to original research, . . . the laboratories have . . . also performed much work of a nature more directly applicable to the needs of Mr Wellcome's firm".<sup>49</sup> Papers of the Bureau's Scientific Research Committee, set up in 1925 specifically to advise on areas of research for commercial development, contain the promise of revealing the extent to which the later scientific research was commercially exploited by the firm.

### Conclusion

Considering the amount and range of material it contains, the Wellcome Archive is at present greatly under-used and the full extent of its value cannot be realized until it is more thoroughly researched. Hitherto, access has been limited by lack of finding aids, and some researchers may be deterred by the size and complexity of the catalogue. However, perseverance will bring rich rewards. And one does not have to be interested in Henry Wellcome *per se* to find the records useful. The archive is a primary source for a plethora of topics including animal experimentation, anthropology, archaeology, art, architecture, charity and philanthropy, Dartford local history, the employment of women, entomology, ethnography, London society, missionary explorers, museum management, native Americans, pharmacy, primitive medicine, public health and sanitation, racial theories, photography, Sudan medical services, travel, tropical diseases, weaponry, and welfare schemes for factory workers.

It has been difficult to do justice to the Wellcome Archive in this article. Certain aspects have unavoidably been left out, not least records relating to the Wellcome Library, which existed as a section of the Historical Medical Museum from 1903–1960,<sup>50</sup> the Wellcome Museum of Medical Science (originally the Wellcome Museum of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene)<sup>51</sup> set up by Andrew Balfour in 1914 from material he had collected during his service at the Tropical Research Laboratories; and a collection of glass lantern slides illustrating Wellcome's museums and research institutions, which were unified under the title of the Wellcome Research Institution in 1931.<sup>52</sup> It is hoped that historians will investigate this important archive and if they have any queries contact one of the archivists in the Contemporary Medical Archives Centre at the Wellcome Library for the History and Understanding of Medicine (The Wellcome Trust, 183 Euston Road, London NW1 2BE, Email: [cmac@wellcome.ac.uk](mailto:cmac@wellcome.ac.uk)).

<sup>49</sup> E M Tansey and Rosemary C E Milligan, 'The early history of the Wellcome Research Laboratories, 1894–1914', in J Liebenau, *et al.*, *Pill peddlers: essays on the history of the pharmaceutical industry*, Madison, WI, American Institute for the History of Pharmacy, 1990, pp. 91–106.

<sup>50</sup> See CMAC/WA/HMM/RP/Hmm and HMM/LI.

<sup>51</sup> See CMAC/WA/MMS.

<sup>52</sup> See CMAC/WA/PHO/Kel.