

## Book Reviews

detail" that Hunter has unearthed. A respect for detail is not the monopoly of historians, nor indeed of historians of a certain methodological tendency. Yet an ambition to arrive at an account which captures "full historical complexity" is—dare one say it—"naive".

Steven Shapin, University of California at San Diego

GEORGE P. MILNE (ed.), *Aberdeen Medico-Chirurgical Society: a bicentennial history 1789–1989*, Aberdeen University Press, 1989, 8vo, pp. xv, 313, illus., £17.00 + £1.50 p&p from Aberdeen Medico-Chirurgical Society, Medical Centre, Foresterhill, Aberdeen AB9 2ZB.

Readers who assume from the title that this is a structured history of Scotland's oldest Medico-Chirurgical Society will be sadly disappointed by this compilation of essays, which, although intended to update and complement J. S. Riddell's 1922 history of the Society, makes no attempt to provide either a chronological or thematic account of developments during the two centuries of the Medico-Chirurgical's existence.

One of the principal features of the volume is its concentration upon some of the leading figures connected with Aberdeen medicine during the past 200 years. More than a third of the chapters are devoted to biographical essays on such luminaries as Naughton Dunn (commemorated in the Naughton Dunn Memorial Trust, which is administered by the Society although he was never a member), Matthew Hay, Andrew Moir, Sir Ashley Mackintosh, Sir Alexander Ogston and David Rorie of Cults, author of 'The Lum Hat Wantin' the Croon' and revered as the Poet Laureate of the Society. Not surprisingly, several authors make extended reference to Sir James McGrigor, credited with being the key figure in the foundation of the Aberdeen Medical Society in December 1789 by a group of medical students and subsequently the first Director General of the Army Medical Department.

While some contributors do treat of events which have a significance beyond the merely parochial—such as Iain Levack's investigation of early anaesthesia in Aberdeen, or J. M. Stowers's account of Aberdeen's place in the history of diabetic research and progress (which confessedly leans heavily on Michael Bliss's *The discovery of insulin*)—a number of the others are decidedly esoteric in their appeal. In this regard one need look no further than the description, originally published in 1933, of the Eskimo kayak that has been in the possession of the Society for more than a century, or the story of the snuff mill appropriated from the Garioch and Northern Medical Association.

The quality of the individual chapters varies considerably and, despite the scholarship and antiquarian charm of some of the essays, one is left with the feeling that an opportunity has been lost to place on record a more considered assessment of the place of the medical society in modern medicine.

Derek A. Dow, University of Glasgow

A. D. MORRIS, *James Parkinson: his life and times*, ed. F. Clifford Rose, History of Neuroscience, Boston, Birkhäuser, 1989, 8vo, pp. xi, 207, illus., \$59.00.

The late A. D. Morris spent most of his career practising in Shoreditch, so it is perhaps not surprising that he devoted his retirement years to investigating the life of Hoxton's most eminent medical man, James Parkinson (1755–1824). As one would expect, Morris's biography, skilfully edited by F. Clifford Rose, devotes considerable attention to Parkinson's work on *paralysis agitans* (Charcot came up with the eponym, "Parkinson's disease"). Parkinson is justly credited as being amongst the earliest to view its varied symptoms as an authentic clinical syndrome; and the quality of his observations of the disorder may be judged from the text of the *Essay on the shaking palsy* (1817), here reproduced. Parkinson's other contributions to medical and scientific investigation also receive due note. His *Chemical pocket-book* (1800) was widely used as a compendium of practical chemistry, his *Organic remains of a former world* (3 vols., 1804–11) was, in its day, the most comprehensive