

"William Harvey - Padua and the making of a scientist"

Mr David Webster

22nd June, 2018

Metropole Hotel, Llandrindod Wells

William Harvey (1578-1657), best known for his description of the circulation, lived through one of the more turbulent times in English history. This paper explores the influences that led the son of a yeoman, almost single-handedly, to debunk 1400 years of dogma. The influences came through school, Cambridge University and most importantly his time in Padua. Here in the Republic of Venice heretical views could be held in relative safety so that intellectual freedom flourished. The single most important influence is probably Fabricius. Back in London Sir Francis Bacon provided the foil for his development of the experimental method that culminated in "De Motu Cordis". Equally the patronage of James 1 and Charles 1 provided some protection and added to his credibility. His greatest legacy is not so much the description of the circulation as the method by which he developed his ideas and confronted his critics.

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