

Robert Scot Skirving (1859-1956)

a little case of instruments; an extraordinary story to tell

Catherine Storey MBBS MSc FRACP
School of Medicine, University of Sydney



30,000 items

Books

Early works – 400 published prior to 1801

Manuscripts and diaries

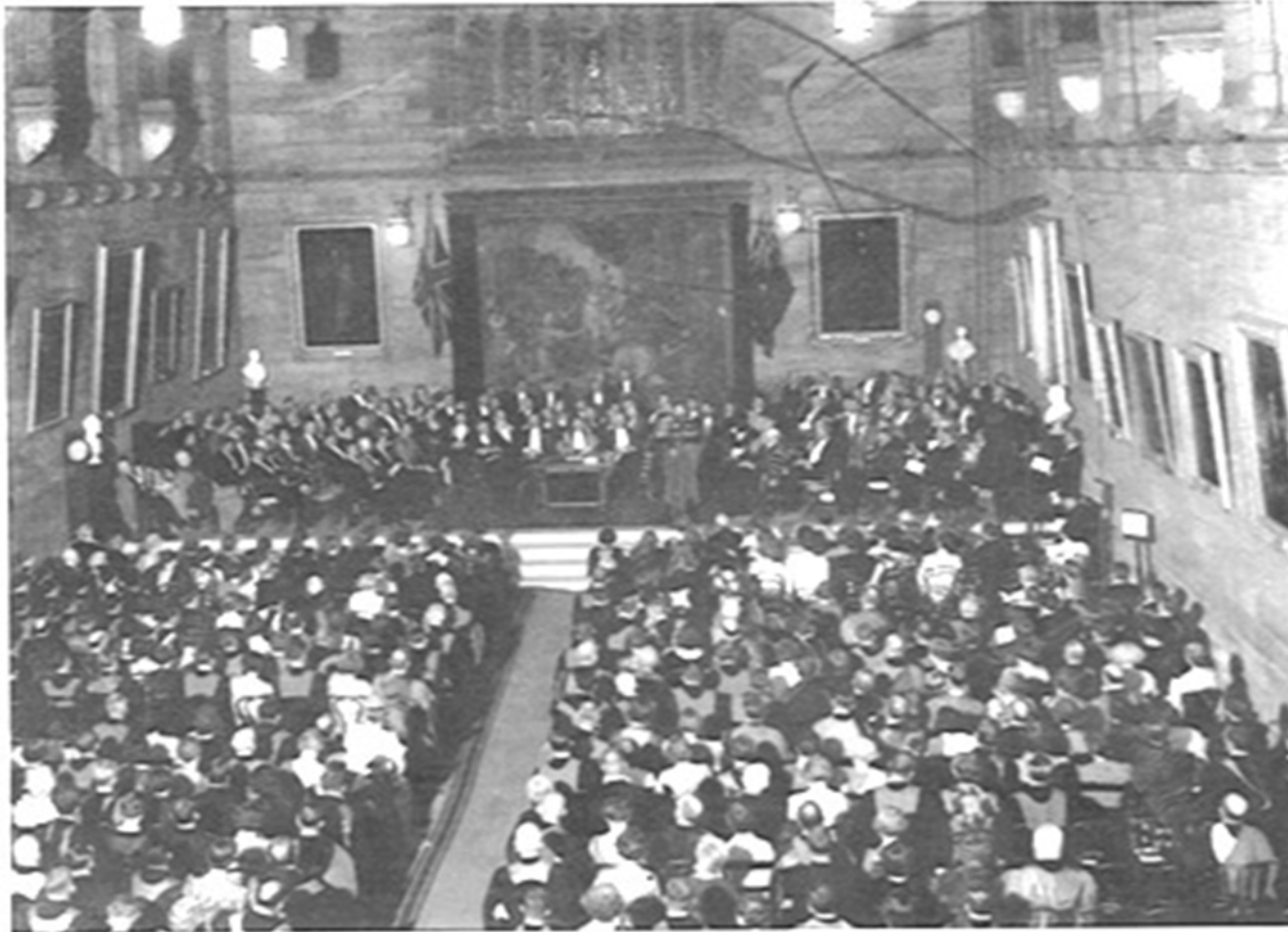
Photographs and pamphlets

Papers relating to the most influential medical events of the
past 80 years

Old medical instruments



*History of
Medicine Library*



14th December 1938 – Great Hall, Sydney University

“glittering gathering”



Photograph courtesy RACP archives

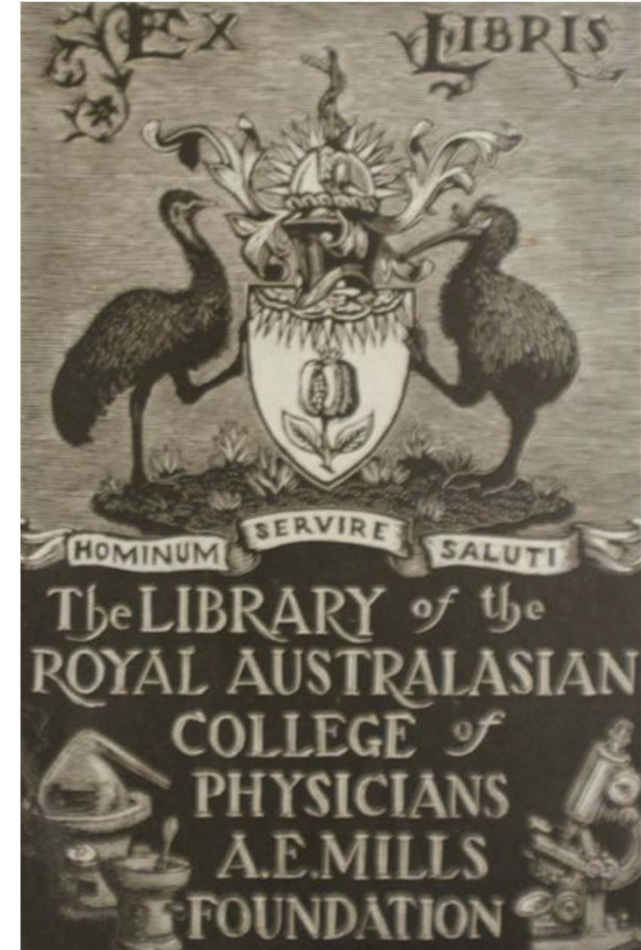
“to acquire by purchase, donation or otherwise a library of scientific works and to maintain and from time to time extend and improve such a library”



Dr Leslie Cowlshaw (1877-1943) –
Honorary Librarian

Important milestones for the Library

- 1938 Inauguration of RACP
- 1941 Library endowed by Mrs A.E. Mills
- 1954 RCP (London) gift of 30 books from 1500-1900
- 1954 RACP decides to concentrate on History of Medicine
- 1954 Professor (Sir) Edward Ford curator of the Library



Important milestones for the library

- 1971 *Medical Journal of Australia – Australasian Medical Gazette*
1884-1910
- 1978 Sir Edward Ford – unique collection of 2000 items of 19th
& 20th medical Australiana
- 1979 NSW branch of AMA – 5000 books <1951
- 1982 **The Royal Australasian College of Physicians History of
Medicine Library**



Sir Edward Ford – MB BS DTM MD DPH Hon D Litt FRCP FRACP (1902-1986)



1936 – courtesy – Royal Australasian College of
Physicians
The University of Sydney

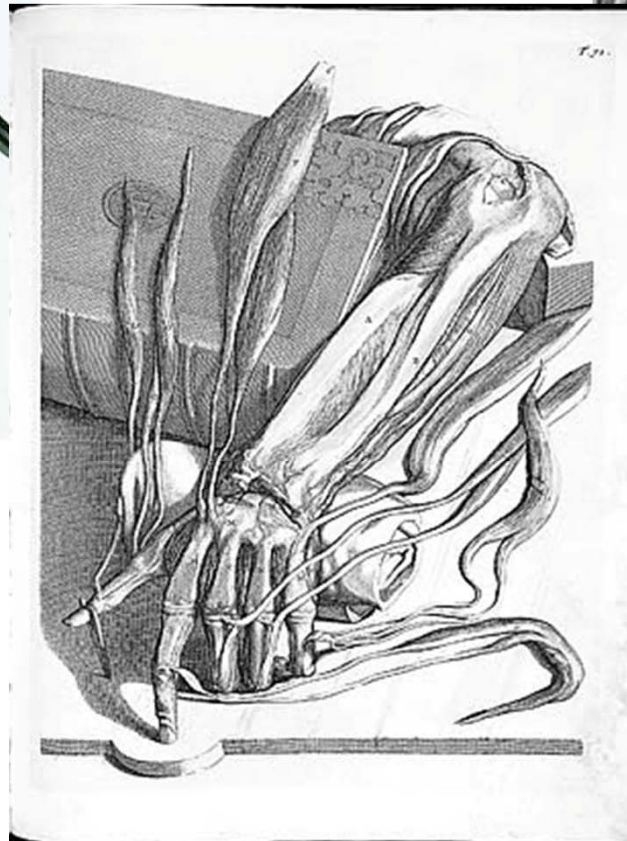


C1950 – courtesy Royal Australasian College
of Physicians

Early Medicine

A catalogue of books (chiefly medical) printed before
1801, now in the History of Medicine Library, The
Royal Australasian College of Physicians
2004

(438 books)

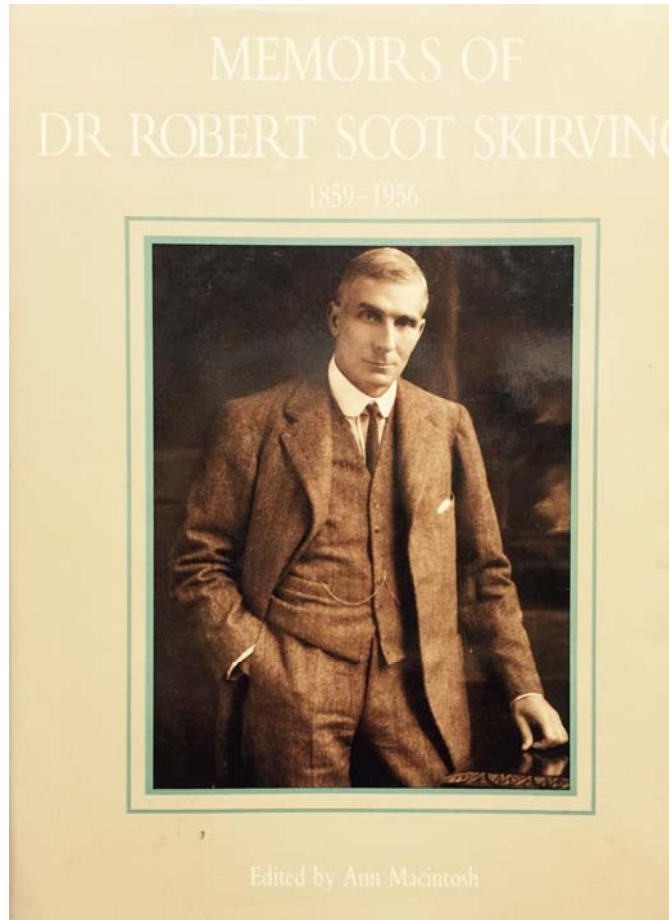


A little case of instruments; an extraordinary story to tell





Who was Robert Scot Skirving? (1859-1956)



These four typescript volumes are the trifling memoirs of my most ordinary and undistinguished life.....I hope some doctor may find interest in the material for papers on the past history of Sydney.....

*R Scot Skirving
18th November 1939*

Who was Robert Scot Skirving? (1859-1956)

1859 - Born Scotland, trained at Naval Academy; joined Merchant Navy

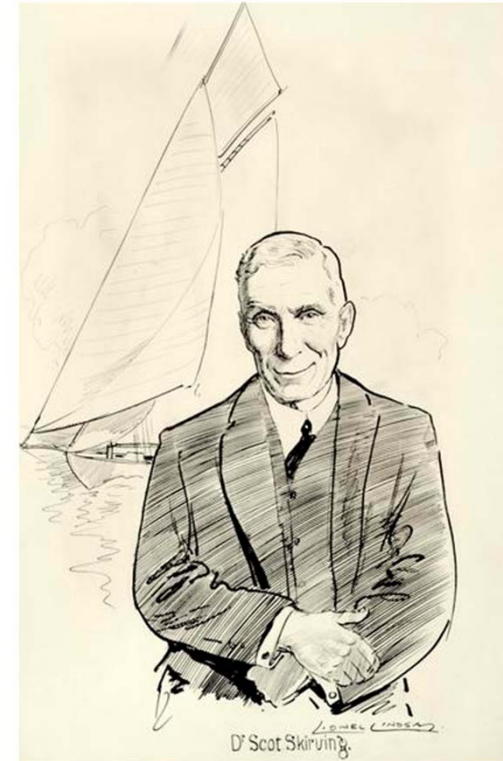
1876 (17) – entered University of Edinburgh, Faculty of Medicine

1881 - graduated MB ChM

1883 - Ship's surgeon to Sydney

1927 - Foundation member RACS

1938 - Foundation member RACP



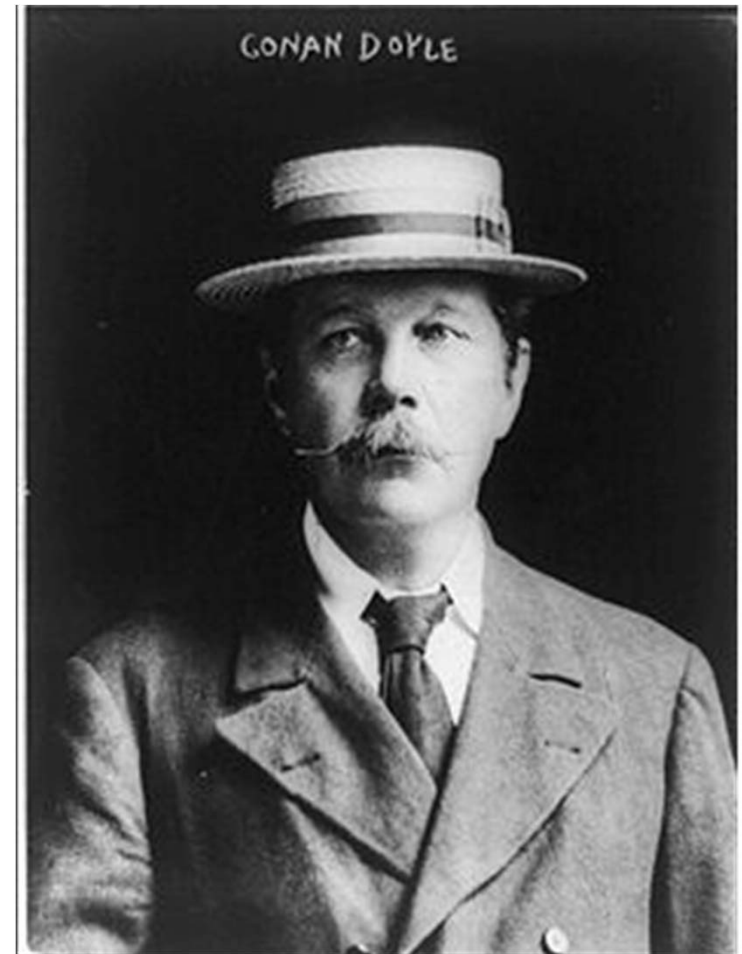
Caricature: Lionel Lindsay – Sydney University Heritage Collection

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (1859- 1930)

1876 – Entered Medical Faculty

1881 – Graduated MB ChM

Inspired by Joseph Bell, whose powers of deduction impressed at least this student – later become model for Sherlock Holmes









- J Gardner & Son – well known surgical instrument makers – Edinburgh (1830-1921)
- Gardner started 45 South Bridge
- Moved to Teviot Place
- 1870: J Gardner & Son
32 Forest Rd., Edinburgh

Who was the owner? An Edinburgh ophthalmologist before 1870

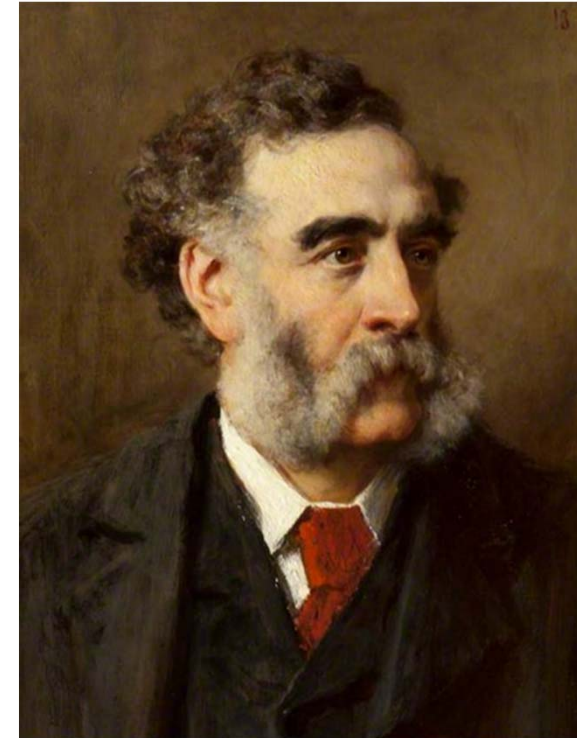
Douglas Moray Cooper Lamb Argyll Robertson (1837-1909)

1837 – Born Edinburgh

1857 – Graduated St Andrews

Travelled to Berlin to work with
Albrecht von Graefe (1828-1870)

Returned to Edinburgh as the only trained
Eye specialist



Who was Robert Scot Skirving? (1859-1956)

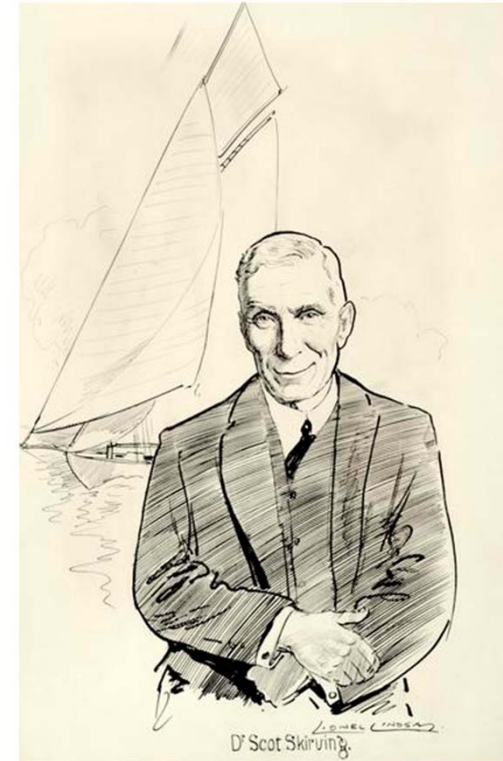
1881 - graduated MB ChM

House surgeon to Argyll
Robertson

1883 - Ship's surgeon to Sydney

1927 - Foundation member RACS

1938 - Foundation member RACP



Caricature: Lionel Lindsay – Sydney
University Heritage Collection



Set of Eye Instruments
now I fear incomplete
I have one

Sir D. Augustus Nichol
while Chief Assistant i.e. Nichol Surgeon
I had been as a party for when left Edinburgh
the head and neck to be the much as a result.

Who was Robert Scot Skirving? (1859-1956)

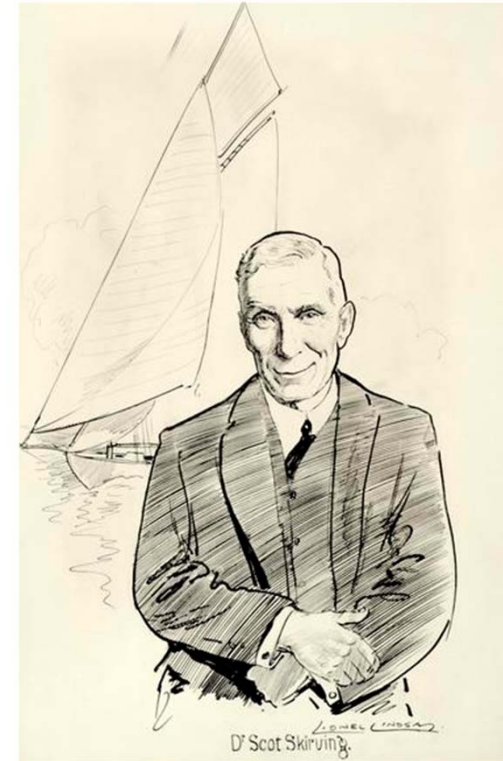
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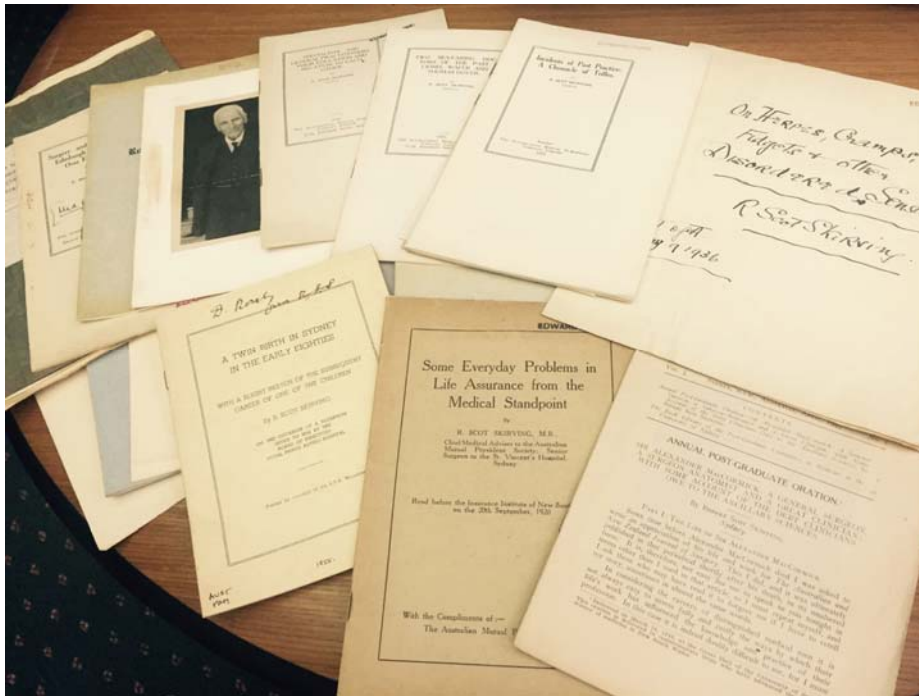
**DID HE EVER PRACTICE AS AN EYE
SURGEON?**

1938 - Foundation member RACP



Caricature: Lionel Lindsay – Sydney
University Heritage Collection

Other material held by the College?



- 83 publications
- 1884-1955
- Broad range of topics
- *Medical Journal of Australia*
- *Australian Medical Gazette*

Broad range of subjects

Reprinted from *The Medical Journal of Australia*, March 2, 1940, page 302.

EDWARD FORD

THE LAST ILLNESS OF SIR HENRY MORGAN, Kt.,
BUCCANEER AND COLONIAL GOVERNOR, AS
DESCRIBED BY HIS PHYSICIAN, SIR HANS SLOANE,
Bart., WHEN RESIDENT IN JAMAICA, IN THE YEARS
1687 TO 1688, AND SOME ACCOUNT OF THE
LATTER'S SUBSEQUENT CAREER.

By R. SCOT SKIRVING,
Sydney.

Reprinted from *The Medical Journal of Australia*, June 27, 1942, page 659.

EDWARD FORD

RECOLLECTIONS OF THE EMIGRATION SERVICE TO
AUSTRALIA IN SAILING SHIPS IN
LONG-PAST YEARS.

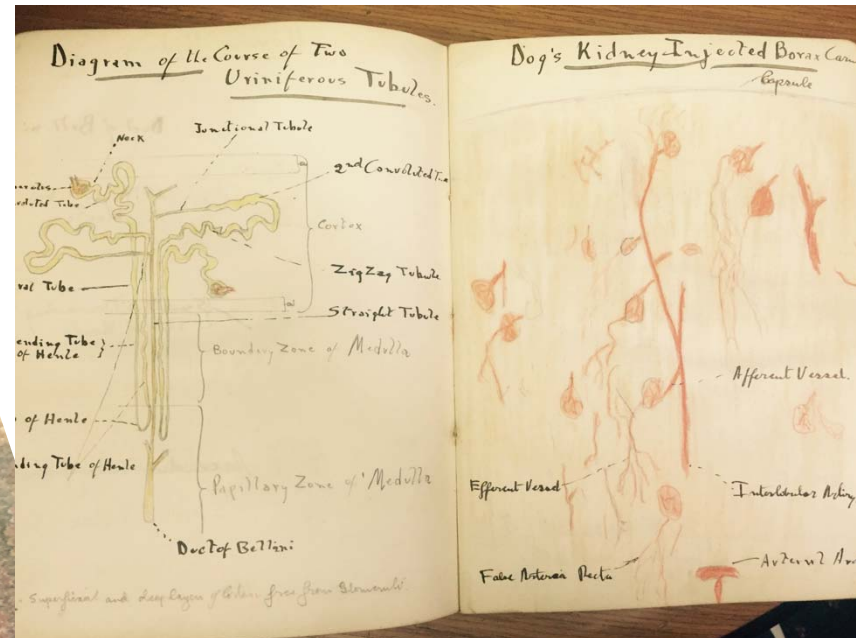
By R. SCOT SKIRVING,
Sydney.

Another Scot Skirving collection



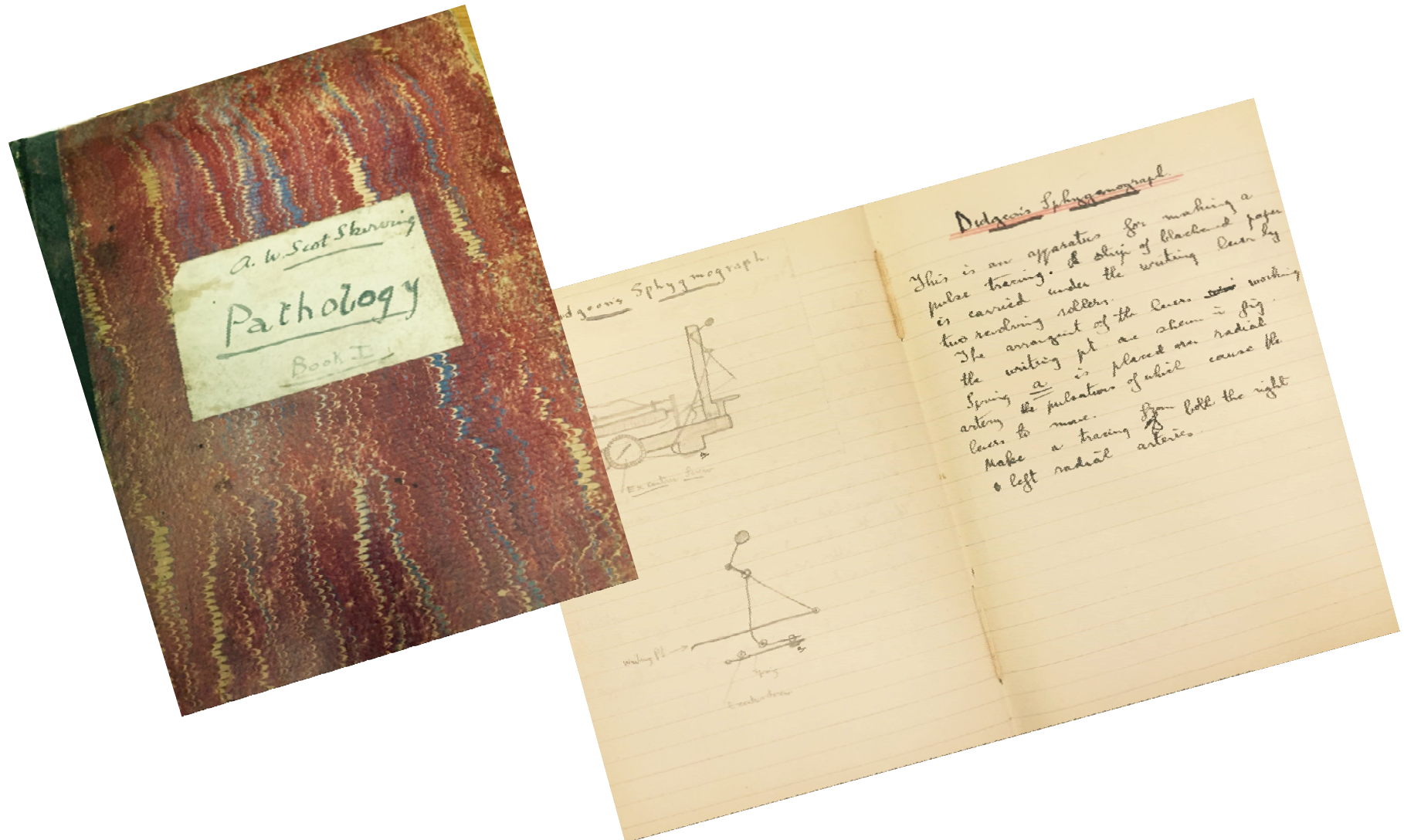
A.W. Scot Skirving: Lecture notes 1908

Medical student – 1907



A.W. Scot Skirving: Lecture notes 1908

Graduated MB ChM 1911, MS 1913



Set of Eye Instruments
 Ans. I fear incomplete
 given me
 by D. O. M. M. M. M.
 while I was at the
 I had been
 the had been
 as a part of the
 when I left school
 as a part of the
 when I left school

The University of Sydney
WAR SERVICE RECORD

SURNAME Scot Skirving Other Names Archibald Walker
(Print Letters) (Family Name)
 Rank Captain Unit 5th Bnth Royal Irish Fusiliers.
 Date and Place of Enlistment Joined up in England in 1914 2nd Bnth
 Date of Embarkation and Name of Transport From England
 Date of Return to Australia and Name of Transport Not applicable
 Place, date and nature of Casualty (if any) The landing at Suvla Bay. Date ?
abdominal gunshot wound
 Decorations (if any) 5
 Full details and remarks as to service:—
Totally wounded at Suvla Bay. Dura 9.8.15-
on SS "Valdivia" - landed at sea off
Cape Keppel - Imbros Island

School or Schools attended before entrance to University: Sydney Grammar School - and
and School in England?
 Period of attendance at University: 1907 to 1911
 Faculty and Degrees: Faculty of Medicine - M.D. C.M. : M. - 1911 Honours

The particulars above are correct to the best of my belief.

Signature Scot Skirving
 Present Address Gairgairish
185 Macquarie St
Sydney

The History of Medicine Library of the Royal Australasian College of Physicians is a truly remarkable collection. A collection that still has a lot of secrets to reveal.

