

# Robert Scot Skirving (1859-1956)

## a little case of instruments; an extraordinary story to tell

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30,000 items

Books

Early works – 400 published prior to 1801

Manuscripts and diaries

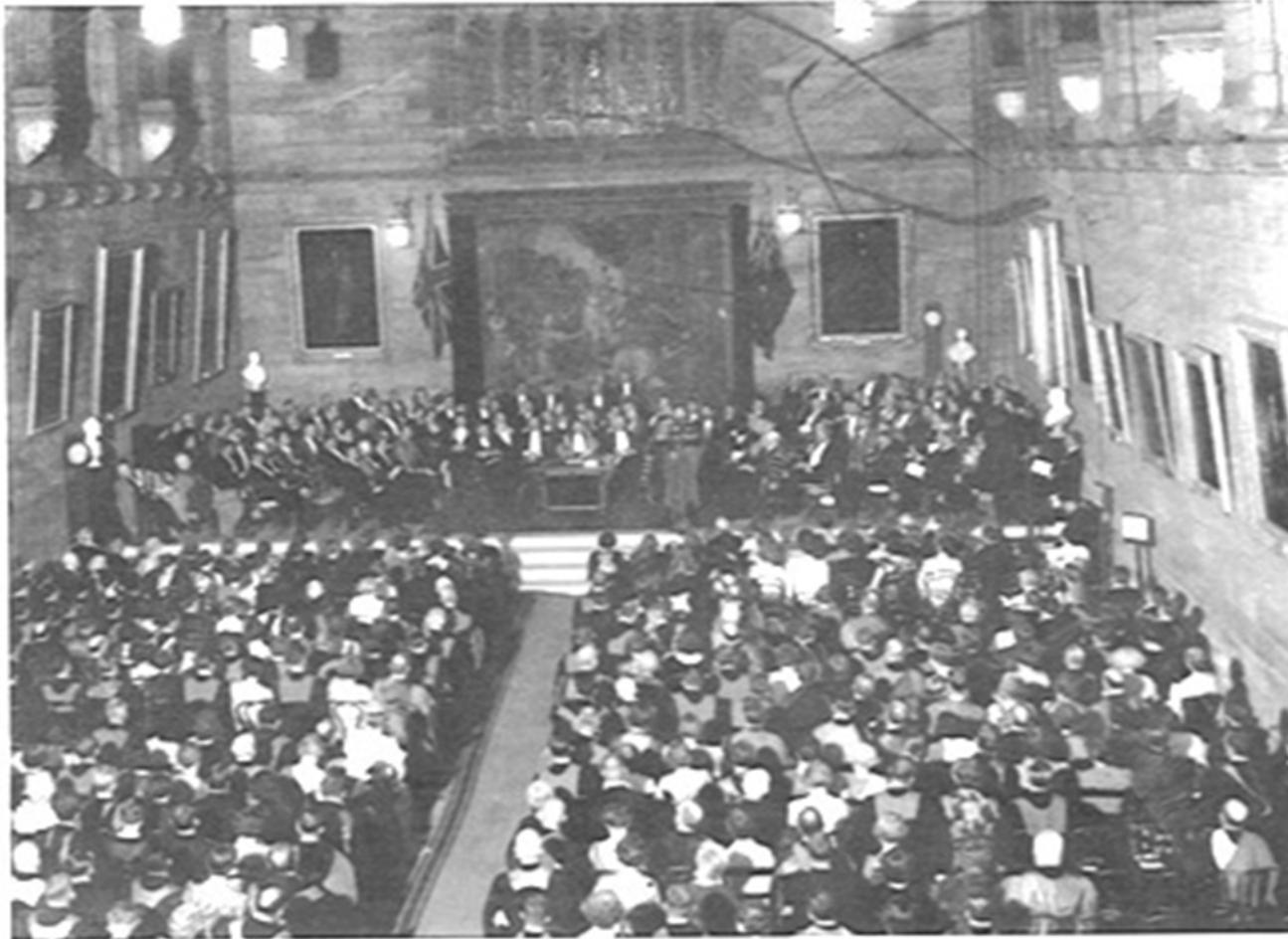
Photographs and pamphlets

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

Old medical instruments



*History of  
Medicine Library*



14<sup>th</sup> December 1938 – Great Hall, Sydney University

“glittering gathering”



Photograph courtesy RACP archives

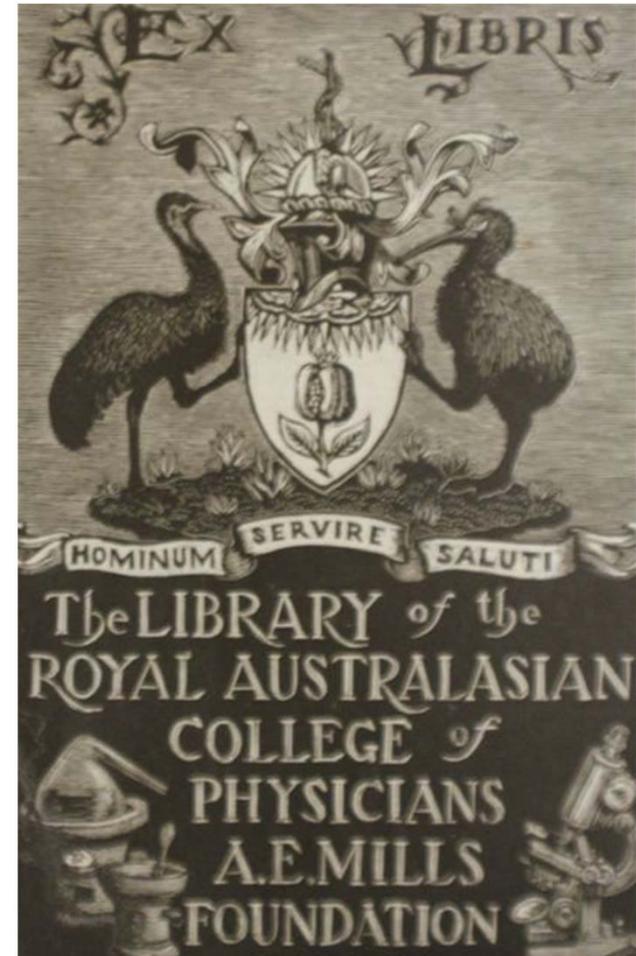
“to acquire by purchase, donation or otherwise a library of scientific works and to maintain and from time to time extend and improve such a library”



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 19<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup> 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)

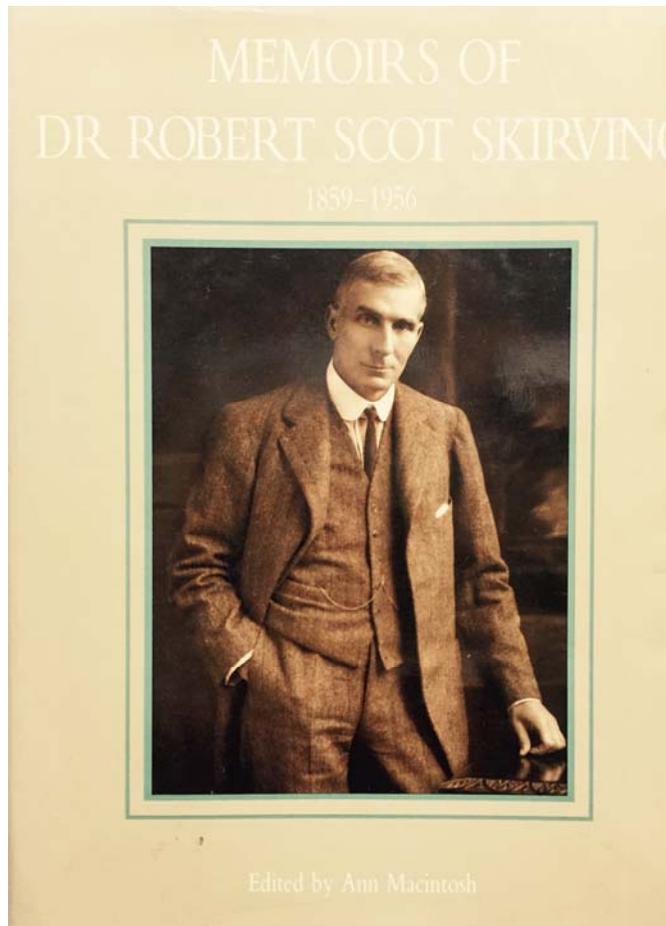


# A little case of instruments; an extraordinary story to tell





## 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  
18<sup>th</sup> November 1939*

## Who was Robert Scot Skirving? (1859-1956)

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

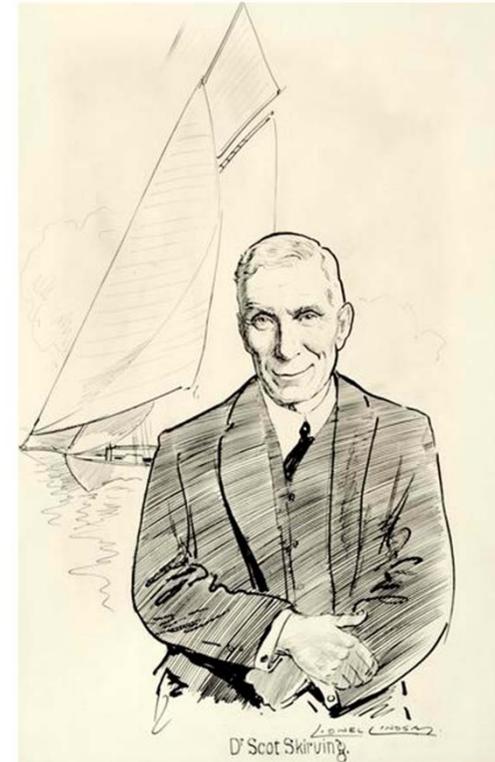
1876 (17) – entered University of Edinburgh, Faculty of Medicine

1881- graduated MB ChM

1883 - Ship's surgeon to Sydney

1927 - Foundation member RACS

1938 - Foundation member RACP



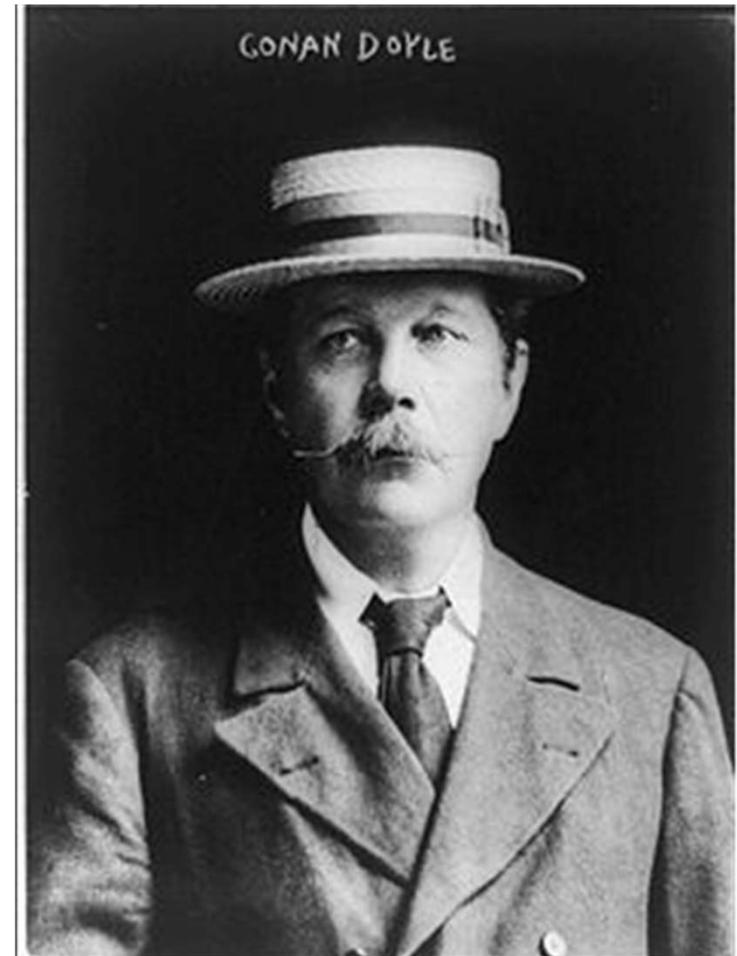
Caricature: Lionel Lindsay – Sydney University Heritage Collection

## 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

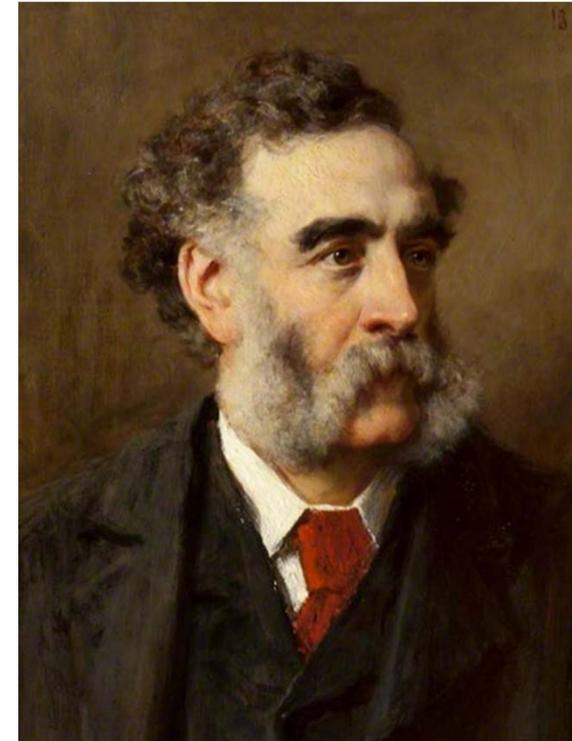
Douglas Moray Cooper Lamb Argyll Robertson (1837-1909)

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)

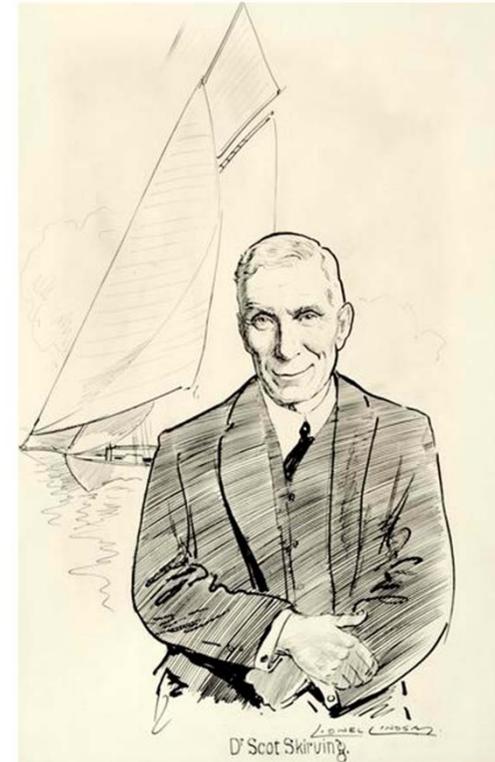
1881 - graduated MB ChM

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  
was I fear incomplete  
I gave me

Sir D. Augustus  
While I had been  
the had been  
as a party  
I had been  
the had been  
as a party  
I had been  
the had been  
as a party

# Who was Robert Scot Skirving? (1859-1956)

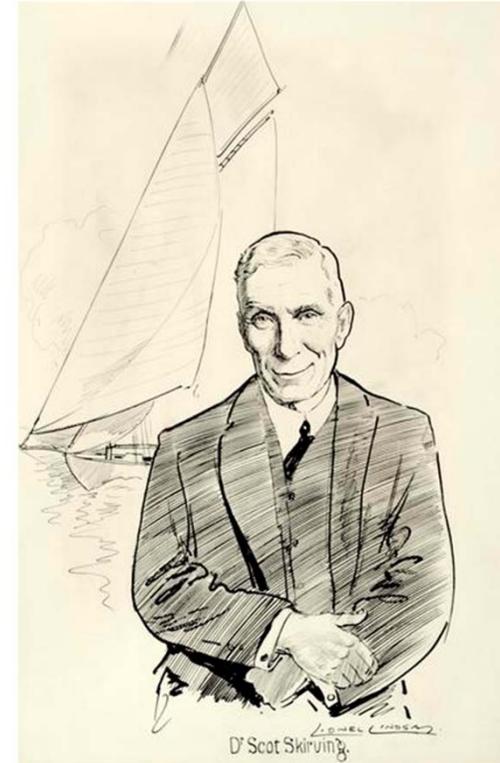
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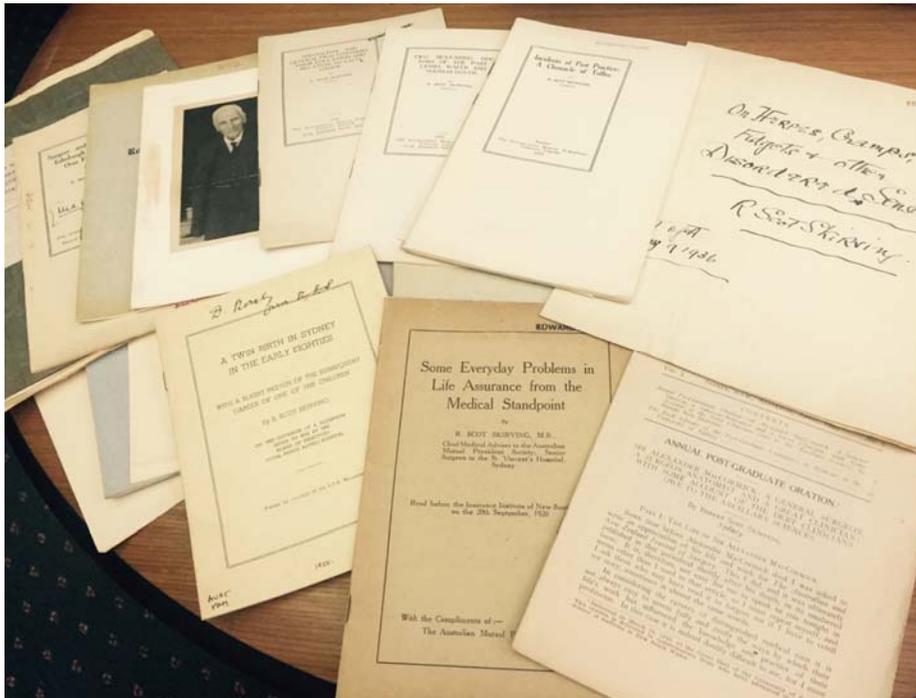
**DID HE EVER PRACTICE AS AN EYE  
SURGEON?**

1938 - Foundation member RACP



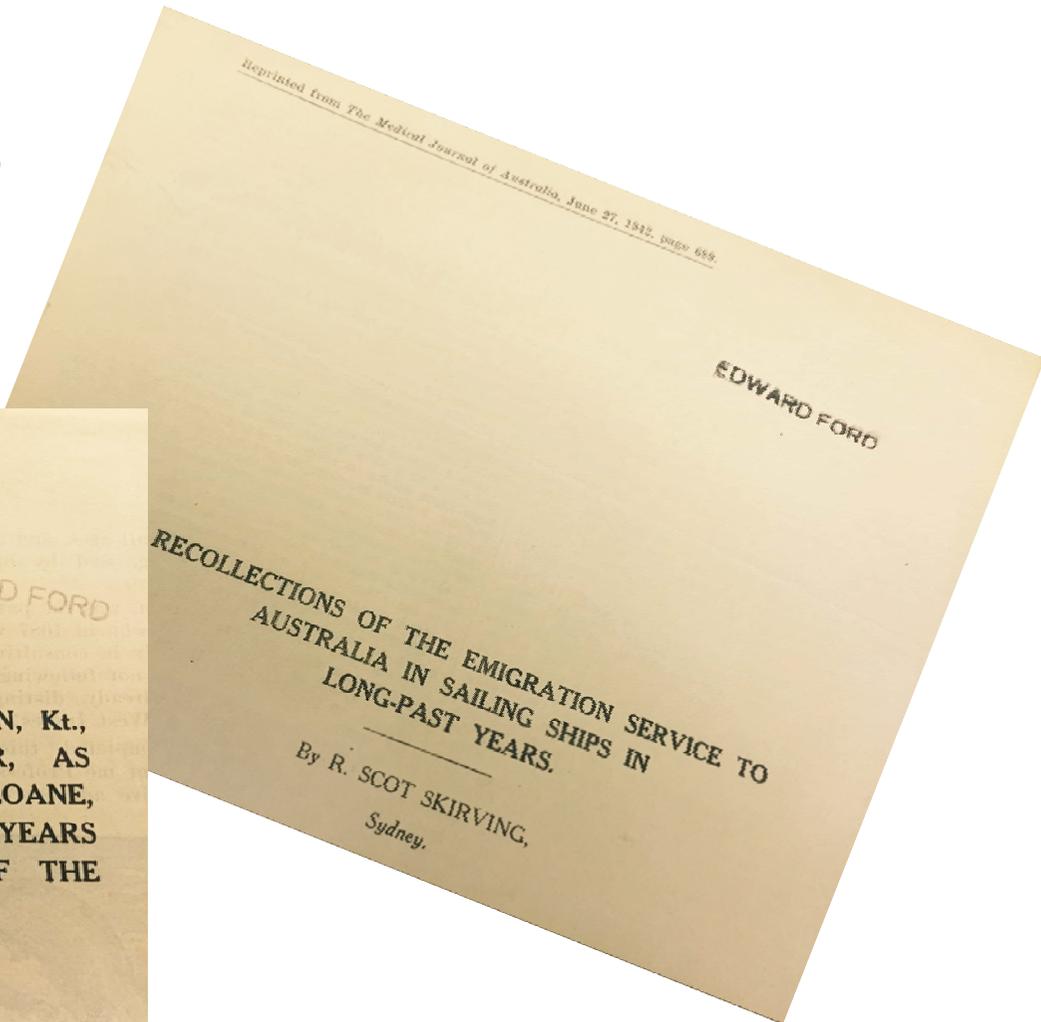
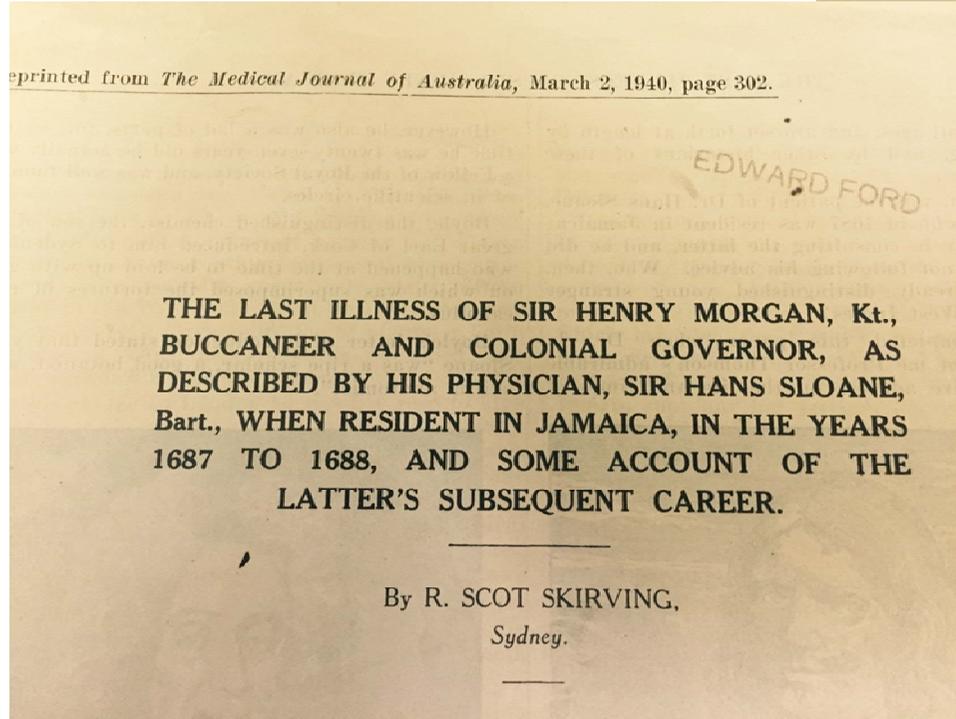
Caricature: Lionel Lindsay – Sydney  
University Heritage Collection

## 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

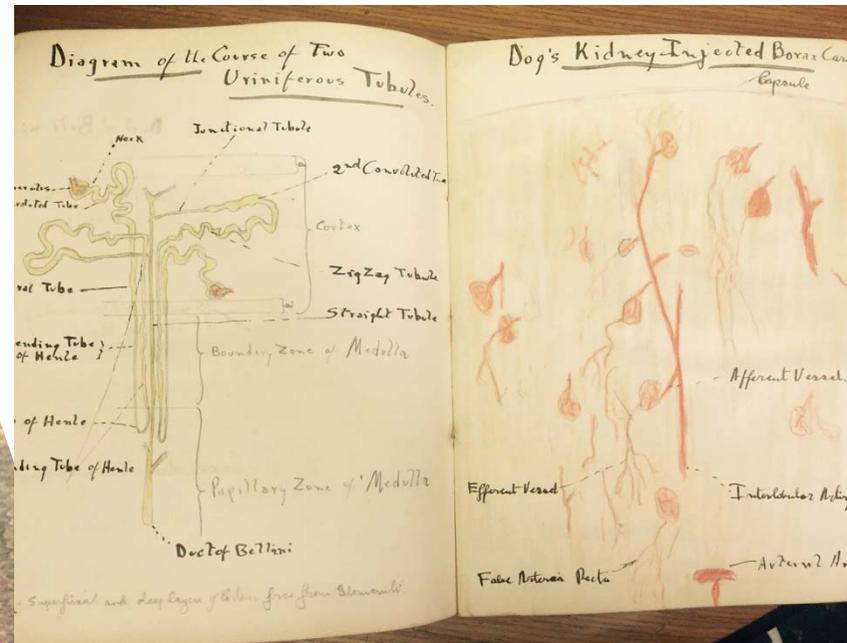


## Another Scot Skirving collection



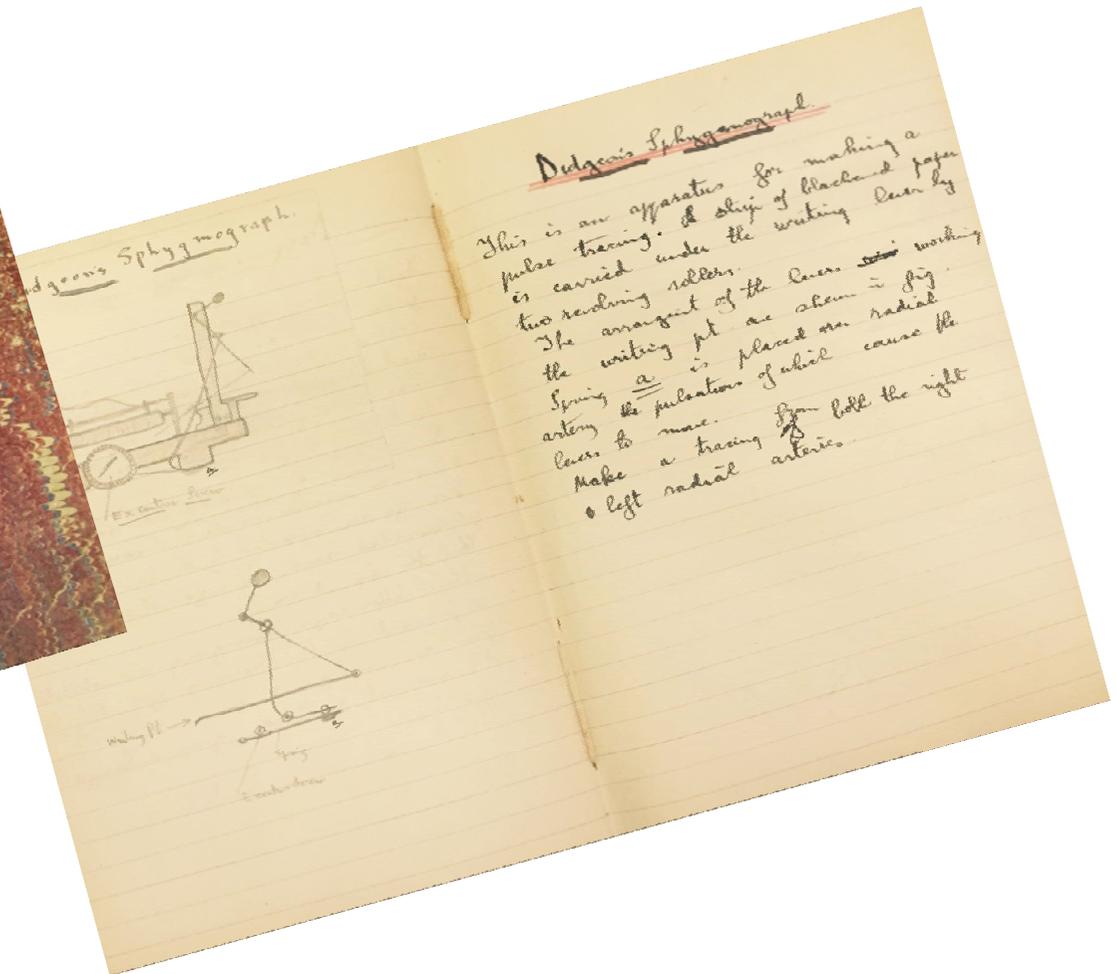
# A.W. Scot Skirving: Lecture notes 1908

## Medical student – 1907



# A.W. Scot Skirving: Lecture notes 1908

## Graduated MB ChM 1911, MS 1913





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.



*History of  
Medicine Library*