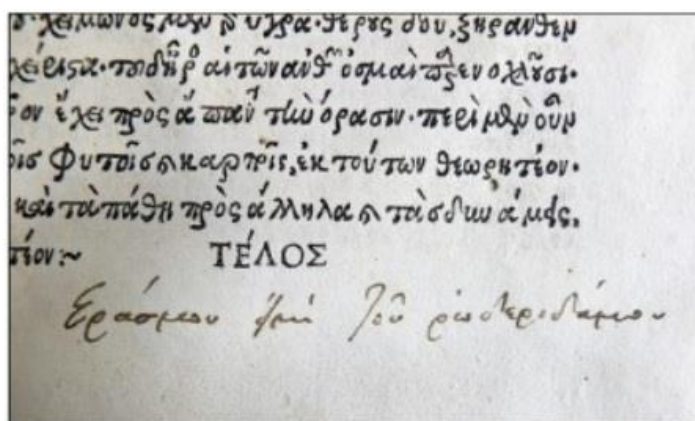


An Englishman visits East Friesland 480 Years Ago!

William Turner isn't well remembered today, though he was prominent during his own lifetime. Born in Northumberland around 1510 into a modest tanning family, his career reflects his wide-ranging enthusiasms. Two of these are clearly interrelated: as his medical activities progressed, his interest in the natural world increasingly focused on herbal remedies. He was also a renowned preacher, who advocated radical change as the Reformation unfolded.

Turner's medical interests weren't yet conspicuous as a Cambridge academic in the 1530s. During this decade he took deacon's orders (and may have obtained a preaching licence). He also published his first book about herbs, and he married his wife Jane. In the early years of the English Reformation various options were possible. When his preaching became too audacious, his scientific interests gave him one tactful reason to seek a lower profile abroad. He initially went to Italy, which was the best place to study medicine. This first nomadic exile also gave him a chance to extend his knowledge of which herbs grew where.

After a few years in the Cologne area, Turner next became physician to the Duke of Emden (who he describes as Lord of East Friesland). At this time Emden was sympathetic to the Protestant cause, and had a prominent book trade. (This ensured that clandestine publications could be smuggled over the border, while Netherlands was a Spanish Catholic territory.) Between 1544 and 1547 Turner bought five Greek Aristotle volumes at Emden that had previously belonged to Erasmus. These books can now be found in the chained library of Wells Cathedral, including pages that Erasmus personally autographed!



Erasmus' signature from his copy of the works of Aristotle printed in Venice, 1495-8

VOLUMES PURCHASED BY DR WILLIAM TURNER
IN EMDEN AROUND 1545

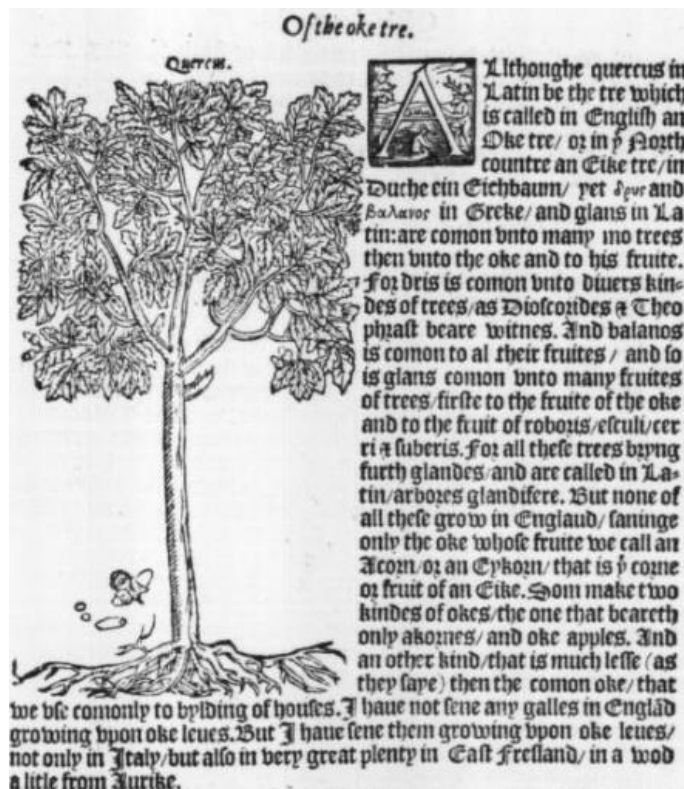


ASPARAGUS ... GROWETH RIGHT PLENTUOUSLY IN
THE YLANDES OF EAST FRESLANDE

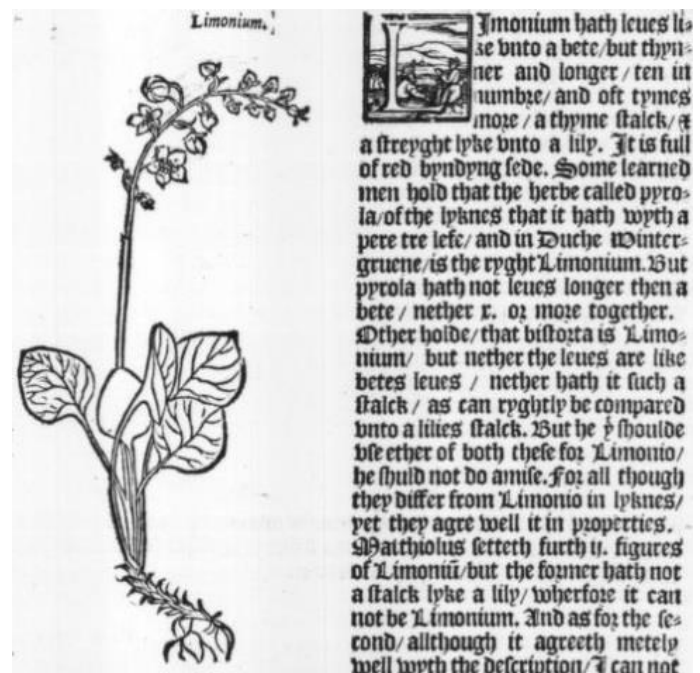
During the same period Turner looked for herbs in East Friesland, and made many observations that would subsequently be published. He records that 'weak teeth' documented during the Roman occupation of East Frisia persisted into the 16th Century. This suggests that there may have been a calcium deficiency in the local diet. Dairy products from Friesian cattle may have subsequently become more available in East Friesland? [The Moormuseum in Moordorf, which some of you will have visited, reminds us that a poor diet is one inevitable consequence of rural poverty.] Turner also notes a shortage of pharmacies apart from Emden, which was '...but one city in all East Friesland where there are any pothecaries...'

After the death of Henry VIII, England was controlled by the Duke of Somerset during the short reign of Henry's young son Edward VI. A switch to a more austere Protestant faith was exactly what Turner had hoped for. Returning to England, he became the Duke of Somerset's physician, and he lived close to him in Kew. For five years he also served as a Wiltshire MP!

This was a period in which Turner persuaded Archbishop Cranmer to invite John a Lasco, an influential Protestant reformer from Emden, to visit London. It's very likely that a Lasco had helped Turner to acquire his Aristotle volumes, and a library foundation in the Great Church of Emden is still named after him.



GALLES ... GROWING UPON OKE LEVES ... IN VERY GREAT PLENTY IN EAST FRESLAND IN A WOD A LITTLE FROM AURICKE



SEA LAVENDER GROWETH ... IN AN ILAND OF EAST FRESLAND CALLED NORDENEY

In 1551 the Dean of Wells was deposed due to his Catholic sympathies. Turner was appointed as his successor, though more than one year elapsed before he was ordained as a priest! [This isn't particularly surprising as Wells had four lay Deans who never sought ordination – including Thomas Cromwell – covering more than half the period from 1537 to 1602. Turner's personal views foreshadowed the puritan unrest that continued well after his own death.]

His *Names of Herbes* was published in 1549, and the first part of his *New Herball* was also printed in London two years later. Turner was quick to flee when the catholic Queen Mary I ascended to the throne, whereas his diocesan bishop William Barlow ended up in the Tower of London. Some English Protestants fled to Emden, including Bishop Barlow in due course. There's no evidence that Turner stayed there during this five year absence, though with his prior knowledge it's unsurprising that two of his books were printed in Emden during this exile period.

Turner himself probably travelled gradually towards Wissembourg in Alsatian Rhineland. He returned to London after Mary I died. His predecessor had been reinstated in the Deanery at Wells, and a few years elapsed before he was dislodged. The second and third parts of his *New Herball* were published in Cologne in 1562 and 1568 respectively. Turner also died in 1568 after a period of declining health.

As further evidence of his interest in natural history Turner published a book on birds in 1544, and one of his letters about fish was printed in 1558. Much of his knowledge about saltwater fish derives from his visit to the coast near Norden. In his herbal books at least fourteen types of plant are associated with East Frisian locations. Plant names have changed considerably during the intervening centuries. Turner studied historic sources such as Pliny, and used their descriptions to try to link what they'd described to a variety of contemporary European names that he'd learnt on his travels. Confusingly 'duche' often indicates *German* names particularly when he's writing about East Friesland!

As well as a *New Herball* in the chained library of Wells Cathedral, facsimile copies of all Turner's herbal books can be accessed more easily in the adjoining reading room. Online copies of these books can also be studied. However modern search engines aren't ideal for an author who spells 'Friesland' in more than six different ways, and they (and I) also find that sixteenth century fonts can sometimes be challenging! Plant names have also changed considerably during the intervening centuries. Please contact me if anyone would like extra information to investigate these Online and Wells Cathedral options in greater detail.

<i>Modern Name</i>	<i>Linnaean Name</i>	<i>Books</i>	<i>Location</i>
Sea Wormwood	<i>Artemisia maritima</i>	NH-1	Norden [Norddeich?]
Wild Celery	<i>Apium graveolens</i>	NH-1	Nordeney or Juist?
Asparagus	<i>Asparagus</i>	NH-1, NoH	Nordeney/Juist?
Candytuft	<i>Iberis sempervirens</i>	NH-2, NoH	East Frisian seabanks
Sea Lavender	<i>Limonium</i>	NH-2, NoH	Nordeney
Oak (gall)	<i>Quercus</i>	NH-2	woods near Aurich
Raspberry	<i>Rubus idaeus</i>	NH-2, NoH	woods near Aurich
Willow	<i>Salix</i>	NH-2, NoH	around Aurich
Marram Grass	<i>Ammophila arenaria</i>	NH-2, NoH	Nordeney/Juist
Bistorta	<i>Polygonum bistorta</i>	NH-3, NoH	East Frisian woods
Marsh Samphire	<i>Salicornia europaea</i>	NH-3	East Friesland
Wild Cabbage	<i>Brassica oleracea</i>	NoH	East Friesland
Eelgrass [?]	<i>Zostera marina</i> (?)	NoH	East Frisian seaside
Sea Buckthorn [?]	<i>Hippophae rhamnoides</i> (?)	NoH	Nordeney/Juist?
Sweet Clover	<i>Melilotus</i>	NoH	East Frisian gardens

Key:

NoH *Names of Herbes* (without any illustrations) 1549

NH-1 *New Herball* (Part 1 with individual illustrations) 1551

NH-2 *New Herball* (Part 2 with individual illustrations) 1562

NH-3 *New Herball* (Part 3 with individual illustrations) 1568

Question marks above indicate less certainty, eg whether I've deduced modern plant names correctly? Where Turner refers to East Frisian islands in general, there's no evidence he visited any apart from Nordeney and Juist.

Note that *Herb* encompassed all plants that were useful to man in Turner's era, not just those with a culinary or medicinal value.