A 1945 graduate of the Royal Veterinary College, University of London, Norman Comben initially entered a general practice, but later made a career change in 1959 and joined the ranks of industrial veterinarians. He served as Chairman of the Association of Veterinarians in Industry for five years. He retired in 1987. He is a true bibliophile and has collected veterinary and farriery books for more than 40 years and in the process amassed one of the most important veterinary collections in private hands in the world. He was awarded the J. T. Edwards Memorial Medal by the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons in 1990 in recognition of his extensive knowledge on the significant books in the history and development of the veterinary art. His advice is eagerly sought by collectors, historians, librarians and book dealers alike. He has also been actively involved with the Veterinary History Society for 20 years and has been one of the major forces behind the publication of its bulletin.

Introduction
Veterinary literature is as old as printing itself. Until the 18th and into the 19th centuries however, printed books were largely produced only for the relatively wealthy who had been educated to read, and who had both the money and the inclination to buy books. The landed gentry and other privileged and educated classes were much engaged in hunting, and they were preoccupied with their horses and with other country pursuits such as hawking and falconry. Although the literature of the 16th and 17th centuries was dominated by treatises on horses, the very first book of veterinary interest printed in English was in fact about such birds.

In 1486, the independent press of ‘the schoolmaster-printer’ in St. Albans printed a volume, with no title, containing treatises on Hawking, Hunting, and two treatises on Heraldry. Little is known of the author, who is referred to in a later edition as ‘dame Julysans Bernes’. The book became known as ‘The Boke of Saint Albans’. It was reprinted in London by Wynkyn de Worde in 1496, and has more recently been reprinted in a number of facsimile editions, notably by William Blades in 1881. The treatise on Hawking, the first in the volume, contains no less than fifty-seven paragraphs describing different diseases and vices of hawks and falcons and their treatments.

The facsimile reproduced shows the passage in the original edition of 1486 concerning a sekenesse the wich is called the aggresteynne. This describes what we now know as feather-pecking. It is recommended to place affected birds in a dark place for 4 days. When feather-pecking breaks out in a flock of broilers today, we darken the broiler house.

During the 16th century, a number of titles dealing with the management, dieting, diseases and treatments of horses appeared in various languages. These are listed chronologically by Huth (1887), the most substantial being the 4-part volume by Thomas Blundevill, first published in 1565.

Towards the end of the 16th and during the 17th centuries, various authors published more general works covering horses, cattle, sheep, pigs and other species. Conrad Heresbach’s Rei Rusticae libri quator was translated into English by Barnaby Googe and published as Foure Booke of Husbandry in 1577. Leonard Mascall’s The first booke of Cattell followed in 1587. A number of titles appeared from the pen of Gervase Markham - these have been comprehensively reviewed by Poynter (1962).

But the first book in English devoted entirely to sheep did not appear until 1749 - it was A Compleat System of Experienced Improvements: made on Sheep, Grass-lambs, and House-lambs ... by William Ellis. The first book on pigs was Arthur Young’s Essay on the Management of Hogs; including Experiments on Rearing and Fattening them ... in 1769. The first works dealing exclusively with cattle were a number of scarce titles (such as that by Layard, 1757) on cattle plague (rinderpest) which appeared during the second half of the 18th century; the earliest more general work devoted to cattle being The Complete Cow-Doctor, or Farmer’s Companion ... a surprisingly comprehensive and honest compilation by Joshua Rowlin first published in 1794.

Literature on poultry started early with two tracts - both now exceptionally scarce - published towards the end of the 16th century. The first was a translation of the Discours Oconomique of Prudent le Choyselet, issued as A Discourse Of Housebandrie in 1577 and again in 1580; this was followed by
Mascall's *The Husbandye ordring and Governmente of Poultrie* in 1581. These together with the early treatises on Hawking and Falconry, and, later, cock-fighting, provided material which was repeated in most of the more general works of the 17th century. Another translation from the French, of de Reamur's famous work on artificial incubation, was published as *The Art of Hatching and Bringing up Domestick Fowls Of all Kinds, At any Time of the Year* in 1750. Apart from these three titles, no books devoted to domestic poultry appeared until well into the 19th century. This however is not surprising, since up to this time it had been considered demeaning for men to concern themselves with chickens - poultry were handled by the females on the farm, who probably could not read, and who certainly could not afford to buy books.

It is now almost impossible to comprehend the activities of the early animal doctors - the farriers and cow-leeches - whom we must presume were able to earn some sort of a living by advising on the management and treating the ailments of horses and other animals with hardly any of the knowledge, and with none of the specific remedies, which are available today. Their remedies consisted of various herbal, and other vegetable, and mineral concoctions, frequently mixed with urine and dung, and with vinegar, beer, treacle, honey, tallow and other animal grease, salt, soap, soot and even clay and tar, and whatever other natural and sometimes unnatural substances were to hand. The treatments were generally recommended on the basis of the part of the animal's body affected, rather than on the nature of the illness, so that it is not profitable to try to identify the diseases recorded in the early literature by studying the remedies which were used to treat them.

There were of course other procedures, which undoubtedly were more dramatic, to which the early animal doctors resorted at the slightest opportunity - they could bleed, they could purge, and they could fire. Practically all of these remedies, and these procedures, are now recognized to have been useless if not positively harmful, and most of the animals which recovered certainly did so in spite of, rather than because of, their treatments.

It can however still be rewarding to study the early veterinary and farriery texts, for with a knowledge of contemporary animal diseases, and a little imagination, it is quite possible to identify many of the conditions and diseases which are described in the literature of the 15th to the 19th centuries. The poultry veterinarian will find, in *The Boke of Saint Albans*, 1486, passages which almost certainly describe fowl pox, respiratory disease, coccidiosis, worms, bumble-foot, and cramp as well as feather-pecking. The surgical caaponising of cockerels is also described in the literature and was evidently well established in the 16th century. Similarly it is possible to identify many of the diseases of horses and other farm animals which are described in the early books, and various surgical procedures are also detailed at surprisingly early dates.

Our clinical and research colleagues who decide to include historical introductions in their scientific papers have to be encouraged to do more than simply follow back the references in earlier referenced papers until the trail runs out, usually during the 19th century. They should study the relevant early works in both agricultural as well as veterinary/farriery historical library collections. The historical agricultural libraries contain many important titles on more general animal husbandry, but most have only few, or in some cases specifically exclude, holdings of the early works on farriery. The historical veterinary collections on the other hand generally contain only few of the early titles on nutrition, housing, breeding, and the other subjects which tend to be included more under the heading of agriculture.

There are of course a considerable number of magnificent and comprehensive historical veterinary and agricultural library collections in all languages and in many countries of the world. This paper will describe briefly the English language collections which are available in the United Kingdom, and the relevant library catalogues and bibliographical works which have been published in this country.

**Historical Veterinary Collections**

The Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons is the governing body of the veterinary profession in the U.K. When the College moved to its present location in Belgrave Square, London, the entire library was refurbished and equipped through a generous grant from the Wellcome Trust - and is as a consequence now known as The Wellcome Library. A comprehensive, up-to-date working library of books and journals with a postal loan service is available to all members of the profession in the U.K. Donations over a period of nearly 150 years have created an extensive and important Historical Collection. Many books were damaged as a result of enemy action during World War II, but restoration was thorough and the books are now well maintained, attractively presented, and eminently accessible. A short-title catalogue of the books up to 1850 in the Historical Collection was published in 1953, but original copies are no longer available. Miss Benita Horder BA ALA is the librarian.
The Royal Veterinary College is one of the six teaching colleges in the U.K. The libraries at its London site and at its field station provide a service for staff and students at the College. Founded in 1791, this was the first veterinary college to be established in the English speaking world. It is not surprising that its library in London houses not only the most important, comprehensive collection of predominantly English language books of veterinary historical interest in existence, but also an extensive collection of related ephemera and archival material covering the past 200 years. The origins and development of this historical library collection have recently been described in detail in another paper (Comben, 1992).

Granville Penn - grandson of the Quaker leader William Penn, who gave his name to Pennsylvania - played a leading role in the events which led up to the establishment of the (now Royal) Veterinary College in 1791, and immediately thereafter very generously presented a collection of over 50 volumes in order that the new College should have the nucleus of a library. These books are recorded in a remarkable manuscript *Catalogue of the Books belonging to the Veterinary College* dated 18 September 1793 which has survived amongst the College archives.

For a long period during the 19th century, there were two separate libraries at the College. Alongside the College library proper, the library of The Veterinary Medical Association grew at an impressive rate, inheriting William Youatt’s collection of more than 400 volumes, and acquiring (for £68 odd) the books which had previously belonged to the old London Veterinary Medical Society. Eventually the two libraries were amalgamated. The College library also purchased (for £150, in 1882) the collection of books belonging to James Beart Simonds.

The library continued to grow through donations, and the books were evidently well preserved until well into the present century. A short-title *Catalogue of the Books, Pamphlets and Periodicals up to 1850 in the Library*, by Raymond Catton, the librarian at the time, was eventually published in 1965. Copies of this catalogue are still available from the present librarian Miss Linda Warden BA ALA.

The third significant collection of early veterinary books in this country is now housed in the Library of The Science Museum in London. This consists of the approximately 900 volumes which I personally collected between the 1940s and 1987 when the books were taken over in their entirety by the Museum. The collection is particularly rich in the scarcer titles from the 17th and 18th centuries, including 24 editions of various of the works of Gervase Markham, and the unique copy of Andrew Snape’s *Purging Pill for Horses: ...*, 1692. It is perhaps the only collection of its kind to contain both important early farriery and veterinary titles as well as the more general works on animal husbandry. A fully detailed catalogue of *The Comben Collection* has been compiled by Mrs Pauline Dingley BA ALA, librarian, and will be published, illustrated and in hardback, by H.M.S.O. later this year.

The Royal Army Veterinary Corps also has a library of some considerable historical interest housed in its headquarters at Aldershot. This collection is unique in its content of early veterinary military titles, as well as other works originating from the days of the British Empire. The library has recently been re-organised, re-housed and catalogued, but arrangements for the production of copies of the catalogue appear still to be under discussion.

There are of course many smaller collections both in various institution libraries as well as those acquired by individual private collectors - the majority of whom are to be found in the list of members of our Veterinary History Society. None of these have been separately catalogued. Particular credit must be given to the fine, extensive library collected by Mr John G. P. Wood, a now retired veterinary surgeon in Norfolk, which is rich in early medical works as well as historical veterinary titles.

But perhaps the finest and most comprehensive private collection is that of a Mr. Emory who is resident in the U.S.A. His holdings of early veterinary works exceed those of most of the University libraries in the U.S.A. Unfortunately no catalogue is available.

**Veterinary Historical Bibliographies**

The first substantial accounts of veterinary history in English appear in the early editions of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, and in the first edition of Delabere Blaine’s *The Outlines of the Veterinary Art*, 1802. Both of these contain bibliographical comments, but the only significant veterinary historical bibliography is the massive work entitled, *The Early History of Veterinary Literature and its British Development*, compiled by Sir Frederick Smith during his retirement from a military career. The greater part of this work was originally published as a series of articles in *The Journal of Comparative Pathology and Therapeutics* (1912-1918) and later in The Veterinary Journal. It was subsequently issued in a series of four volumes - with a total of nearly 1000 pages - by Bailliere between 1919 and 1933. It is
understood that only about 50 copies of the Volume 1. were produced, so that complete sets of the original volumes are now extremely scarce, but the work was reprinted by J A Allen in 1976 and boxed sets of this reprint are still available.

There are a number of omissions in Smith's work despite the fact that he had access to the R.C.V.S. and R.V.C. collections and to the British Library. He had strong likes and dislikes, and he tended to be unkindly critical of many of the early writers, often without seeming to appreciate, or to accept, the state of knowledge and the conditions prevailing during the earlier days. Nevertheless Smith's contribution is a monument to his industry, and a most valuable bibliographical tool for all veterinary historians.

A number of bibliographies have been published on the horse. The most comprehensive and useful reference source is Frederick Huth's Works on Horses and Equitation. A Bibliographical Record of Hippology, published by Quaritch in 1887. It lists published works on the horse in all languages both chronologically and under various headings such as Breeding, Equitation, Horse's Foot, Harness, Laws, Cavalry, Veterinary, Dentition, and many more. It is an extremely good compilation, more complete than most, and difficult to fault. Original copies are now expensive, but a reprint was issued by Olms in the U.S.A. in 1981. The bibliography of the horse has more recently been brought up-to-date with Anne Grimshaw's The Horse. A bibliography of British books 1851-1976, published in London by The Library Association, 1982. Copies are still available from the author.

There are other bibliographies which are invaluable for the veterinary historian. F N L Poynter's masterly A Bibliography of Gervase Markham 1568?-1637 was published in 1962 by The Oxford Bibliographical Society. On a very different specialised subject, Henry Heymering has very recently published his On the Horse's Foot, Shoes and Shoeing: the Bibliographic Record; ... (1990). Copies are available from St. Eloy Publishing, Cascade, MD, USA.

More general bibliographies worthy of notice include John B Podeschi's catalogue of The Paul Mellon Collection of Books on the Horse and Horsemanship ... 1400-1941, published by The Tate Gallery in London for The Yale Center for British Art in 1981. This is an extremely detailed and luxurious production. Copies are still available in the U.S.A. The catalogue of the books, manuscripts, prints and drawings in the Schwerdt collection on Hunting, Hawking, Shooting, originally published in four volumes in 1928, is also now available again, a reprint having been issued by Olms in 1985.

Finally notice must be given of the superb work of General Mennessier de la Lance. Essai de Bibliographie Hippique, first published in Paris, 1915-1921, in two volumes plus a supplement, altogether some 1560 pages. The entries are extremely detailed, and accurate, and although confined to works published in, or translated into, French and Latin, this has proved to be an essential source for veterinary historians studying the early literature on the horse. The work has been reprinted in two volumes in facsimile in 1971, and copies are available from the publishers B. de Graaf in Nieuwkoop, Holland.

Historical Agricultural Collections
Agriculture is a far wider and larger field than farriery and veterinary science, and there are a considerable number of very comprehensive historical agricultural collections, both of a general and more specialised content, in institutional libraries and in the hands of private collectors. It is not possible, nor indeed is it either appropriate or necessary, to attempt to describe all of these in this brief review. Notice will be given of six of the larger collections, which are accessible and for most of which catalogues are available. Between them, these six collections will provide practically all of the bibliographical information which is available other than in certain specialised fields such as bee-keeping - for which it is necessary to consult specialist collections which are outside the scope of this paper.

Rothamsted Experimental Station is an essentially horticultural research establishment situated some 30 miles northwest of London. It houses one of the finest and most comprehensive collections of early agricultural books in the U.K. A complete, illustrated Catalogue of the printed Books on Agriculture published between 1471 and 1840 was compiled by the librarian, Mary S. Aslin, and published in 1926. This catalogue of 331 pages lists for each item: author, title, imprint, edition, size and a brief collation. The main listing is followed by a chronological list of English authors and translations, and an alphabetical list of foreign authors and translations. The catalogue was up-dated, revised and re-published in 1940; in this 2nd edition both the illustrations and the collations have been omitted. Copies of these catalogues can be found from time to time on the second-hand book market.

The University of Southampton inherited, through University College, Southampton, the historical agricultural collection formed by the late Walter
Frank Perkins (see below). A Catalogue of the Walter Frank Perkins Agricultural Library was published in 1961. Perkins had excluded a number of agricultural subjects from his collection, nevertheless this fine catalogue runs to 291 pages and lists over 2000 titles alphabetically, giving author, title, imprint, edition, brief collation and format for each item. Remainder copies of this catalogue were available until very recently but the supply now appears to have been exhausted and it will be necessary to search for copies on the second-hand market.

The headquarters of The Royal Agricultural Society of England are located in Belgrave Square, London, very close to the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons. The Society maintains a very large collection of early agricultural books, a large part of which derived from two major acquisitions - the library of the old Board of Agriculture (forerunner of the present Ministry of Agriculture); and the personal library of Arthur Young. A catalogue of the library was published in 1918 but is now extremely scarce. The library can be visited by appointment.

Two other excellent, if smaller, collections deserve recognition. Wye College is the College of Agriculture of the University of London; in 1977 it published A Catalogue of Agricultural & Horticultural Books, 1543-1918, in Wye College Library. The Bath and West and Southern Counties Society was founded in 1777 and has maintained a substantial library ever since. The books were first catalogued in 1864. An up-dated and revised catalogue was published exactly a century later in 1964, with a supplement issued in 1973. The catalogues of both of these collections are available.

The Institute of Agricultural History at the University of Reading maintains a very comprehensive working library which is readily accessible through the good offices of the librarian, Mr. John Creasey BA MA. No catalogue is available other than the records of holdings in the library. The Institute is embarking on a major appeal for funds for a rebuilding programme, and it is hoped that this may be developed into a centre of excellence in this field in the future.

Agricultural Historical Bibliographies
The first serious listing of early printed books on agricultural subjects was A Catalogue of English Authors, who have written on Husbandry, Gardening, Botany, Natural History, and Subjects relative thereto compiled by Richard Weston and anonymously published as an appendix to his Tracts on Practical Agriculture and Gardening in 1769. In the more common second edition of 1773, the 136 pages catalogue lists all known titles on the subjects indicated, up to 1772. Included are a number of exceptionally scarce early works which do not appear to be recorded elsewhere, but in general Weston’s catalogue - a remarkable achievement for its time - has now been superseded by more comprehensive, recent bibliographies.

Donald McDonald published Agricultural Writers, from Sir Walter of Henley to Arthur Young, 1200-1800 in 1908. This volume was based on a series of articles by McDonald which had been printed in the magazine The Field from 1903 to 1907. It is an attractive work of 228 pages, printed on art paper and with a number of photo-illustrations. It is however by no means a comprehensive bibliography, and as the illustrations appear to have been taken exclusively from books in the author’s own collection, they are not all either the best or the most appropriate that could have been used. The volume was reprinted in the U.S.A. in 1968; the reprint is rather poor quality, but copies can usually be found.

Walter Frank Perkins, apart from forming the collection which eventually passed to the University of Southampton (above), also published in 1929, a bibliography entitled British and Irish Writers on Agriculture containing some 1300 titles. Revised and enlarged editions appeared in 1932 and 1939. Various subjects such as Farriery and Veterinary Science, Poultry, Bees, Goats and a number of others were however specifically excluded. These volumes are interesting and desirable collectors’ items, but have largely been superseded as reference works by the various more recent comprehensive catalogues and bibliographies.

The literature on agricultural history during this century has of course been dominated by the writings of George Edwin Fussell. In 1967, the Museum of English Rural Life in Reading published a bibliography of his writings. It listed 19 books and more than 500 articles from 1925 to that time. These included The Old English Farming Books from Fitzherbert to Tull, 1523 to 1730 published in 1947, and More Old English Farming Books from Tull to the Board of Agriculture, 1731 to 1793 published in 1950. These two works rapidly became extremely popular and were sought after as reference sources by historians and collectors; they were reprinted together in one volume (but without the original illustrations) by Aberdeen Rare Books in 1978. Copies of this reprint are still available.

If the Museum of English Rural Life published their bibliography of Fussell’s writings in 1967 because
they considered that he must have been nearing the end of his career as an author, then they were in for a surprise for he continued to write for more than another twenty years. His eventual output included 25 books and more than 600 journal and newspaper articles contributed to about 150 different periodicals. Volume III of The Old English Farming Books covering the period 1793-1839 was published in 1983, and Volume IV covering 1840-1860 appeared the following year.

Fussell was now well past his 90th birthday, and physical frailty seriously frustrated the requirements of his still very active mind. Volume V of The Old English Farming Books covering the period 1861-1900 was only completed with great difficulty shortly before his death in 1990; he had lived for more than 100 years. Volume V, the last in the series, was published posthumously; regrettably the editing which Fussell's manuscript required had not been carried out. It has to be said that the Volumes III, IV and V in the series progressively lack the scholarship, accuracy and general presentation of the first two volumes; these last three volumes are still available from the publishers, but at prices which are generally considered to be rather high.

There are a number of smaller and specialist publications which deserve notice. An extremely useful paper on The Writings of Arthur Young by G. D. Amery MA was published in the Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society of England in 1924, and issued as a reprint the following year. R. C. Punnett published Notes on Old Poultry Books ... with a Bibliography up to 1880 (together with E Comyns Lever) in 1930. Punnett's own collection of early books on poultry (on which the above bibliography is largely based) is now held by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food; a typescript catalogue of the collection was produced in 1980. In the U.S.A. Books on Poultry Husbandry by Lucille N. Wright was published by the James E. Rice Memorial Poultry Library at Cornell University, Ithaca, in 1961.

The University of Cambridge School of Agriculture published an admirable but now very scarce pamphlet of 16 pages, Agricultural Periodicals of the British Isles, 1681-1900, and their Location by F. A. Buttress, in 1950. On another area of specialist interest, the International Bee Research Association published British Bee Books - A Bibliography 1500-1976 in 1979. This is a highly satisfactory and comprehensive reference source.

The list of smaller publications on the many specialised areas of agricultural history is almost endless. The Institute of Agricultural History in Reading itself publishes a series of Bibliographies in Agricultural History. It was the intention of this review however to indicate the important and more generally useful bibliographic sources, and the many more specialist publications must form the subject for another occasion.

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—— See also, AMERY