

**THE ENGLISH COOKERY BOOK
HISTORICAL ESSAYS**



Frontispiece. The frontispiece to The Housekeeper's Instructor or Universal Family Cook by W.A. Henderson (sixth edition, ca. 1800).

THE ENGLISH COOKERY BOOK

HISTORICAL ESSAYS

LEEDS SYMPOSIUM ON FOOD HISTORY
'FOOD AND SOCIETY' SERIES

edited by
EILEEN WHITE



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Unless otherwise stated in the captions, all illustrations are taken from books in the Brotherton collection, with the kind permission of Mr C. Sheppard, the Special Collections Librarian.

The page from Sloane MS 2189 (f.64a) is reproduced by permission of the British Library. Reproduction of the two manuscript plans for dinner at Hatfield House in Chapter 5 is by courtesy of the Marquess of Salisbury. Thanks also to Tom Jaine for bringing everything together.

C. Anne Wilson, a former member of the Brotherton Library staff, is a founder member of the Leeds Symposium on Food History. Her book *Food and Drink in Britain* (1973) has served as an important reference work in the growing study of food history and her fellow-contributors to this book are pleased to acknowledge her continuing interest and support.

FOREWORD

'Food and Society' Series

Publication of papers from the Leeds Symposium on Food History

The first six volumes were published by Edinburgh University Press and are now out of print; the following three by Sutton Publishing (two of them in association with The National Trust); the volumes from no. 10 have been published by Prospect Books.

The titles, with the series numbers, are:

1. *'Banqueting Stuff': the Fare and Social Background of the Tudor and Stuart Banquet*, ed. C.A. Wilson (1986 Symposium), 1991.
2. *The Appetite and the Eye: Visual Aspects of Food and its Presentation within their Historic Context*, ed. C.A. Wilson (1987 Symposium), 1991.
3. *Traditional Food East and West of the Pennines*, ed. C.A. Wilson (1988 Symposium), 1991.
4. *Waste Not, Want Not: Food Preservation in Britain from Early Times to the Present Day*, ed. C.A. Wilson (1989 Symposium), 1991.
5. *Liquid Nourishment: Potable Foods and Stimulating Drinks*, ed. C.A. Wilson (1990 Symposium), 1993.
6. *Food for the Community: Special Diets for Special Groups*, ed. C.A. Wilson (1991 Symposium), 1993.
7. *Luncheon, Nuncheon and Other Meals*, ed. C.A. Wilson (1992 Symposium), 1994. Now republished in paperback as *Eating with the Victorians* (Sutton, 2004).
8. *The Country House Kitchen, 1650–1900: Skills and Equipment for Food Provisioning*, ed. P.A. Sambrook and P. Brears (double volume for 1993 and 1994 Symposia), 1996.
9. *The Country House Kitchen Garden, 1600–1950: How Produce was Grown and How it was Used*, ed. C.A. Wilson (1995 Symposium), 1998.
10. *Feeding a City: York*, ed. E. White (double volume for 1997 and 1998 Symposia), 2000.
11. *Food and the Rites of Passage*, ed. L. Mason (1999 Symposium), 2002.

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NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

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EILEEN WHITE began researching in the cookery collection at the Brother-

ton Library after becoming interested in recreating old recipes for period suppers at Bolling Hall Museum in Bradford. She has contributed several papers to the 'Food and Society' series, and compiled the *Soup* volume for the Prospect series on the English kitchen.

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PREFACE

Eileen White

The sixteenth Leeds Symposium on Food History celebrated the collection of cookery books in the Brotherton Library, University of Leeds, which had been the inspiration behind the setting-up of the Symposium in 1986. This collection is the focus of what has been described as the 'Leeds School' of food history, and has stimulated a range of publications and activities. The Symposium ranged from the medieval period to the nineteenth century, from the *Forme of Cury* to Mrs Beeton.

Cookery books are practical, but can be the starting-point of studies relating to topics far more diverse than merely food preparation. It may seem strange, initially, that cookery books, old and new, can form an important collection within a university library. Recipes are not generally perceived as a source of academic study: can they have the same intellectual, theological, historical or literary values of material in other collections? But everyone must eat, and the procurement, preparation and presentation of food, as it was done over the centuries and continues today, must be of interest to all and is part of the social and economic life of any society. Cookery books can therefore provide source material for a range of disciplines.

The Brotherton collection opens up a vista of life and attitudes covering many centuries. Recipes are not literature, but they can be used for literary and linguistic study. Their language is often blunt and straightforward, but contains the rhythm and directness of everyday speech rather than the self-conscious language of literary composition. They are not obvious historical sources, but reflect the expansion of international trade, reveal the essentials of everyday life, and embody attitudes and personalities. The papers presented here show how recipes can be the starting point for different kinds of investigation, not only into food or cooking practices. Like any text, they can be examined for sources, derivations and dissemination, and can inspire a search for the background of their authors. They can be used by people other than cooks.

Peter Meredith brings his expertise in philology and knowledge of medieval literature and drama to a preliminary study of the recipes in the late fourteenth-century collection, *The Forme of Cury*. These recipes can stand a scrutiny otherwise given to the writings of Chaucer and his fellows, and

reveal something about linguistic forms as well as food preparation. Words such as 'bray' or 'seeth', that fell out of use in more literary forms or published books, survived in recipe manuscripts to indicate their continuing use in local dialects.

Writing down recipes suggests a literacy among cooks, but this cannot be assumed in the medieval period or even later. Professional cooks underwent a long apprenticeship, and domestic cooks would have learned from their mothers or other household members. They did not need instructions in the basic methods. *The Forme of Cury* and later fifteenth-century collections did not give instructions for roasting an ox, or even for making a boar's head, which featured regularly on bills of fare for great feasts. What was provided, however, were suggestions for spiced, ground meat that would be used for stuffing the boar's head, and for other specialities that would enliven a celebratory feast, and were not the everyday fare of the household. The medieval manuscripts may have been in the keeping of the literate clerk of the kitchen in a large household, who could advise the cook when necessary. A recipe collection does not necessarily reflect an everyday diet, but often records the dishes and ingredients provided for special occasions. Once printed books were established, such collections could be made more easily available for general use, cooks and compilers had a commercial market for their recipes, and new formats evolved.

The papers by Eileen White and Valerie Mars concentrate on two periods, the seventeenth and the nineteenth centuries, and reveal different aims and attitudes existing at the same time, male and female, professional and domestic, grandiose and practical. Cookery books reflected the conflict of the Civil War in England as much as other documents of the time, they record how trade made ingredients such as spices more readily available, and they take in new foods and dishes acquired as the British Empire expanded. Detailed examination of the books can reveal trends and developments in society as well as in food.

The recipes also remind us that until the era of industrialization and mass-production, providing food was long and laborious work. Food had to be preserved in the months of plenty, and bills of fare reflected seasonal availability. The modern town-dweller can easily become divorced from country activities, and may not even know what a cow is for. The seventeenth-century recipe, by contrast, would send the cook to milk the cow in order to make a syllabub. People are now more ready to eat out or heat up ready-prepared

food than spend hours in the kitchen making broths or conserves, but shops stock more lavishly produced cookery books than ever before.

Sometimes it is possible to go beyond the printed book and study its origin, as Malcolm Thick has done with the manuscript sources of Hugh Plat's *Delightes for Ladies*. Anyone studying recipes very soon finds the same ones appearing in similar versions in several books, and it is tempting to chronicle this borrowing (plagiarism) by authors. But Hugh Plat's manuscript notes help to elucidate the use of sources, and although he may have acquired his ideas through many friends and acquaintances, like any good compiler he brings his own enthusiasms to the subject.

At other times, the book can be the starting point for investigations into the life or background of the author. Laura Mason describes 'the thrill of the chase' in following up the life of the confectioner William Jarrin: bankruptcy papers are not an obvious place to find out about sugar confectionery, but they preserved a fascinating insight into the business. She first presented her findings as part of the fifteenth Leeds Food Symposium in 2000, which took another look at the subject of the first Symposium, *Banqueting Stuffe*. It was not intended to publish the papers of this retrospective meeting, but the story of Jarrin's life, and the information in the several editions of *The Italian Confectioner*, have a place in the theme of the English cookery book, as well as representing the fifteenth Symposium.

Another element of cookery books is their illustrations, which range from crude woodcuts to the coloured plates in later editions of Mrs Beeton. Modern cookery books, especially those related to television programmes, present themselves through the quality of their colour photographs as much as their texts, but the earlier books can offer useful if less colourful portrayals of the cook, the kitchen and the environment. The etchings in Bartolomeo Scappi's 1570 *Opera* (of which the Brotherton Library has two editions, one with etchings and another with woodcuts) offer a glimpse of the working of a large Renaissance kitchen with its equipment conveniently labelled to provide a lesson in the Italian language. On a more modest scale, Eliza Acton gave illustrations of domestic equipment for an early Victorian kitchen in *Modern Cookery for Private Families* first published in 1845. Ivan Day looks at English illustrations in the wider context of Continental examples, providing many insights into the creations of cooks over the centuries.

The existence of the Leeds Symposium on Food History is due to the large and varied collection of cookery books in the Brotherton Library. These

INTRODUCTION

books are a rich resource, not only for cooks, and deserve to be celebrated. There is no better person to introduce them than Anne Wilson, who gives a personal view of their range, and explains how they came to be there. By her work in the Brotherton Library, she was inspired to write *Food and Drink in Britain*, which has become an essential reference book on the subject. It is hoped that the collection will continue to inspire researchers in the future.

THE ENGLISH COOKERY BOOK



Four cookery book authors and their portraits. From the top left, clockwise: Robert May, 1661; Sir Kenelm Digby, 1674; Edward Kidder, ca. 1740; Elizabeth Raffald, 1784.

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE COOKERY BOOK
COLLECTIONS IN THE BROTHERTON LIBRARY, UNI-
VERSITY OF LEEDS

C. Anne Wilson

The focus for the sixteenth meeting of the Leeds Symposium on Food History on 24 March 2001 was cookery books and manuscripts and their authors. And because the Symposium itself has always had strong links with the collections of early cookery books in the Brotherton Library we took the opportunity to remind the symposiasts that researchers are welcome to come and consult individual books in the Special Collections Reading Room at the Library.

One theme that recurred through the day was the question of how far the writers of cookery books were themselves the originators of the recipes, and how far they had taken them from existing texts, whether printed or manuscript. Medieval cookery manuscripts often incorporated groups of recipes to be found also in other manuscripts, and some of these can be proved to have descended from still earlier lost manuscripts. The tradition of copying and recopying recipes was thus well established in the Middle Ages, when English manuscript recipe collections were still produced anonymously (apart from *The Forme of Cury*, said to have been compiled by the mastercooks of King Richard II).

The tradition did not die out immediately once cookery books began to be printed. John Partridge borrowed from a friend a copy of a household book written for the private use of 'a gentlewoman in the country', and decided it was his duty to publish it in 1585 under the title, *The Widowes Treasure*. Queen Henrietta Maria, wife of King Charles I, collected recipes presented to her 'by the most experienced persons of our time', and when she was in exile in France 'her late servant W.M.' obtained copies of her receipt-books, and transcribed and published them as *The Queens Closet Opened* in 1655.

But other cookery book authors were already reproducing individual recipes gleaned from the manuscripts or printed books of earlier compilers; and

the practice went on through the centuries. The many cookery books in the Brotherton Library's collections allow food historians not merely to put their contents into the context of the food production and menus of their day, but also to trace some of the recipes to sources in a previous generation.

The Brotherton Library holds three named collections of historic cookery books, and contemporary books have been added up to the present day. There are, for instance, two shelves of cookery books and periodicals in Chinese, collected during the 1980s and 1990s. Books in English are chosen to illustrate and record particular trends in menus or cookery practices, such as *nouvelle cuisine*, deep-freezing and microwaving.

The Library's involvement with cookery books began in 1939 when Blanche Leigh presented her collection of over 1,500 items. She was a lady of some importance in Leeds; and she became Lady Mayoress when her husband Percy was Lord Mayor in 1935–6. She herself edited three cookery and household books, in 1905, 1918 and 1929, and through that period and beyond she collected cookery books and food-related books and records. The oldest item in her collection is a Babylonian clay tablet of about 2,500 BC inscribed with a list of foods in cuneiform; and the oldest European book is Platina's *De honesta voluptate* in an edition of 1487 printed in Venice. There is a good selection of French cookery books, and a smaller number in Italian, German, Latin and Greek. But the main section contains the English cookery books which date from 1590 to the time when she presented the books to the Library. They were catalogued after the Second World War, and thus made accessible for readers.

In 1954 the Times Bookshop in London held an exhibition entitled 'Cookery Books 1500–1954', and some books from the Blanche Leigh collection were on display there. Mr John F. Preston, a private collector who was exhibiting books of his own, became interested in the collection at Leeds and corresponded with Dr Page, then Librarian, with a view to bequeathing his books to the Library when he died. In the event, he and his wife moved into a smaller house in 1962, and he presented his collection to the Library at that time. I was a new member of the Library staff then, and involved in the cataloguing of the weekly through-put of academic and student books. But during the winter and spring of 1964 I was given the task of cataloguing the Preston gift. We were not supposed to spend any time reading the books we catalogued; but when the books were interesting ones, we could never resist reading a few paragraphs here and there. And my brief encounters with John

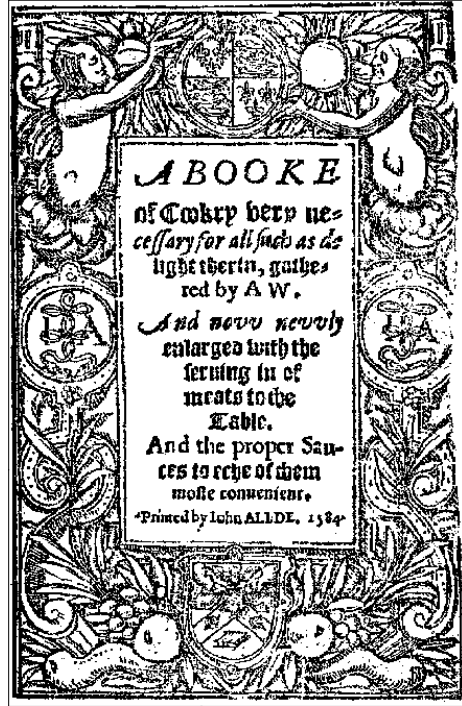


Figure 2. Title-page of *A Booke of Cookry* (1584).

Preston's books inspired me with a lasting interest in food history.

The collection comprises over 600 English cookery books dating from 1584 to 1861 (the date of the first edition of Mrs Beeton's *Book of Household Management*), plus one or two later books. Eventually I met John Preston, and he twice came to Leeds and revisited his books, housed alongside the Library's other Special Collections. He was delighted to know that they were being used by researchers into food history and social history.

John Preston died at the age of 90 in the autumn of 1992. Had he stuck to his original plan, the books would not have reached the Library until perhaps early in 1993, when they would have been catalogued on computer by a member of the cataloguing team of that time. Had I not had the privilege of cataloguing them in 1964, I might never have become involved with food history, or have written *Food and Drink in Britain* – which contains much material drawn from the early cookery books during many subsequent hours of spare-time research. It was published in 1973.

Among other readers who consulted the books were Peter Brears, Lynette Hunter (series editor for the Prospect Books bibliographies of cookery and household books) and Jennifer Stead, all of whom I met in the context of

discussions on food history and the books themselves. Had this not happened, we would never have got together to hold the day-school on the theme of 'Banqueting Stuffe' at the Department of Adult Education in 1986. That meeting became the first Leeds Symposium on Food History, launched for us by the late Alan Davidson who had instituted the Oxford Symposium on Food a few years earlier. The annual meetings of the Leeds Symposium have been held in March or April ever since.

Thus the arrival of the Preston books in Leeds led to the foundation of the Leeds Symposium. The earliest of those books is *A Booke of Cookry Very Necessary for All Such as Delight Therein, Gathered by A.W.*, 1584. (We have never discovered the identity of the Elizabethan A.W.) Another edition of 1587 is also in the collection: the contents are identical to those in the 1584 book, but at the end there is a handful of additional recipes for 'banqueting stuffe'. Other very early books to be found there are John Partridge's *The Widowes Treasure* of 1585, and a 1605 edition of Sir Hugh Plat's *Delightes for Ladies*.

There is inevitably some overlap with the Blanche Leigh books; for instance, both the Leigh and Preston collections have many editions of Hannah Glasse's *The Art of Cookery*, first published in 1747 as a quarto volume and reissued many times in octavo and smaller sizes. The latest Preston edition is dated 1803; and the Leigh collection includes an abridged version of 1842. There are seven editions of Eliza Smith's *The Compleat Housewife* of 1727 in the Leigh and eight in the Preston collection; again the holdings partly complement each other and partly overlap, the latest being the Leigh seventeenth edition of 1766. Both collections offer a very wide range of nineteenth-century books.

The Library's third named collection of cookery books came from a place rather than a person: the London borough of Camden. Hence it is called the Camden collection. After the war, the London borough libraries divided up the Dewey classification and each agreed to collect and house as many as possible of the new books published in Britain and classed within their section. Camden was allotted 635 onwards, which is agriculture, and 640 onwards, which is food and drink. In practice a large part of their allocation fell within 641: cookery books. By the late 1980s Camden Public Library had run out of space, and the cookery books were being kept in a Pickford's store at Swiss Cottage. The Camden librarian advertised in the *Library Association Record*, seeking a new home for them; and after many months of negotia-

tion and a further wait for the books to be decommissioned from Camden's computer records, they came to Leeds to the Brotherton Library.

The collection includes a few late-Victorian books and many others published between 1900 and the late 1940s. These supplement the Leigh books which are not very numerous for the twentieth century. But the most notable feature of the Camden collection is its coverage of English cookery books published between 1949 and about 1975. They were most welcome, because our additions of twentieth-century cookery books have come by gift or by very modest purchases. So until the Library received the Camden collection, there were a great many gaps among the books for the period 1900–1975. It is Library policy to continue to add a few titles reflecting current developments in food fashions and cooking and preserving techniques. And one day, far in the future, we shall receive a bequest of the most significant books from the 1980s onwards from another food historian.

French influences on English cookery go back to Norman times, and were certainly in evidence from the 1660s onwards. The substantial French section of the Blanche Leigh collection makes it possible to pair up French works with the English translations made from them. In the Library are several French editions of La Varenne's *Le Cuisinier François* from 1669 onwards, and also the English translation, entitled *The French Cook*, in the third edition of 1673. Du Four's *De l'Usage du Caphé, du Thé et du Chocolat* of 1671 is there; as is *The Manner of Making of Coffee, Tea and Chocolate*, translated in an edition of 1685. Lémery's *Traité des Aliments*, second edition, Paris, 1705 had already been translated as *A Treatise of Foods in General* and published in London in 1704. The Library has both. And there are similar pairings for other significant French titles.

While the majority of books in English contain collections of cookery recipes, there are also some relating to food production. *The Feminin' Monarchi' or The Histori of Bee's* (in partially phonetic spelling) by Charles Butler, 1634, and John Hill's *The Virtues of Honey in Preventing many of the Worst Disorders*, the third edition, 1760, are two examples. There is good coverage for the growing of herbs and for their medicinal usage with Gerard's *Herball* of 1597 and Parkinson's *Paradisus terrestris (The Earthly Paradise)* of 1629, both large, handsome books with striking illustrations. A favourite of mine is *A Book of Fruits and Flowers, shewing the Nature and Use of Them either for Meat or Medicine*, 1653. It has both recipes and pictures, and several years ago I wrote an introduction for the Prospect Books facsimile reprint.

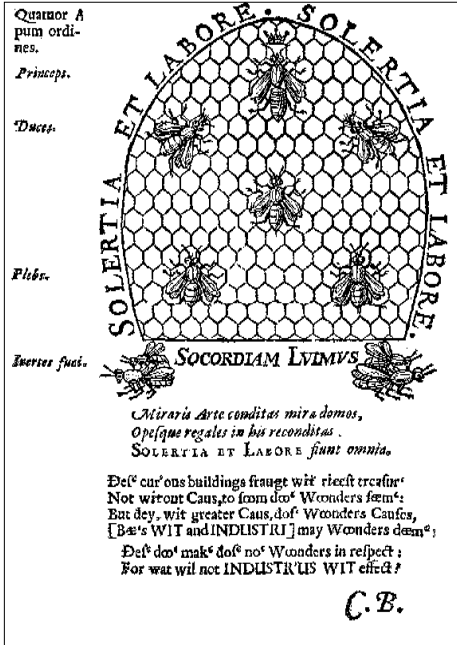


Figure 3. *Bees in the hive*, from *The Feminin Monarchi*, or *The Histori of Bee's* (1634). The page also shows the phonetic spelling employed by Charles Butler.

Books that deal more directly with gardening methods include Thomas Tusser's *Five Hundreth Pointes of Good Husbandrie* of 1590, and an edition of William Lawson's *The Country Housewives Garden* issued with the eighth edition of Gervase Markham's *The Way to get Wealth* in 1653. These form part of Blanche Leigh's collection, as do books by several eighteenth-century writers on gardening, including John Laurence and Stephen Switzer; and Philip Miller's *The Gardeners Dictionary*, the second edition of 1733 and the eighth of 1768. French gardening is covered in the two volumes of de Combles, *L'ecole du jardin potager* in editions of 1752 and 1770.

For the cook and housekeeper, John Evelyn's *Acetaria* explains how to serve the salad plants available in 1699. For gardeners and cooks there is *Adam's Luxury and Eve's Cookery*, 1744: the first part tells how to grow vegetables and fruit and the second how to cook them, with a final section on the physical, or therapeutic, virtues of several garden herbs and roots.

Many of the cookery books include sections on preserving, dairying, brewing and distilling; and also a substantial number of medical recipes. They are thus household books in the fullest sense. The medical sections in such books as E. Smith, *The Compleat Housewife*, 1727 and later editions, and C. Cartwright, *The Lady's Best Companion... to which is added The Approved Family Physician*, 1789, remind us that until well into the nineteenth

century the housewife had to produce the home-made remedies as well as the cooked dishes for mealtimes. A few books supply information on cookery for special groups of people. Examples are the chapter 'For captains of ships' in Hannah Glasse's *The Art of Cookery*, 1747 and many later editions; and the army meals recommended by A. Soyer in *Soyer's Culinary Campaign* (1857) based on his contribution to improving the diet of soldiers on active service in the Crimean War. Another group whose needs were considered from the late eighteenth century onwards were the very poor. *The Report of the Society for Bettering the Conditions of the Poor*, 1798, explains how some parishes tackled the problem of providing nutrition for the destitute. 'Charitable cookery' is included in M.E. Rundell, *A New System of Domestic Cookery*, 1806 and many later editions; and A. Cobbett, *The English House-keeper*, third edition 1842 and sixth edition 1851, has a final chapter titled 'Cookery for the poor'. In most cases the principal food on offer was soup made with some cereal or vegetables, plus the trimmings from the meat eaten by the better-off families who provided this form of charity.

Other types of additional information to be found in the books include directions for marketing, and sample menus (in the eighteenth century the menus often take the form of diagrams depicting the arrangement of the dishes on the table). Glimpses of contemporary life appear in *Madam Johnson's Present*, 1755, which contains lessons on arithmetic, letter-writing and an English spelling-dictionary alongside the cookery sections. *A New System of Practical Domestic Economy*, third edition, 1823, has an appendix showing the system and amount of taxation payable on carriages with four wheels and on the horses to draw them; and another table listing the taxes payable on male servants, on a rising scale from £1 4s 0d for a single one to £3 16s 6d each for eleven or more servants in the same household. It is details like these that supply fodder for social historians.

Many of the mainstream Victorian writers and their cookery books are discussed by Valerie Mars in a separate chapter. A useful analysis of the progress of English cookery book publication in the nineteenth century was made by Lynette Hunter at the seventh Leeds Symposium on Food History, and was subsequently published by Sutton Publishing in the volume titled *Luncheon, Nuncheon and Other Meals*, edited by C. Anne Wilson, 1994. Copies of all the volumes of the papers of the Leeds Symposium have been deposited in the Library's cookery book collections.

More than twenty periodicals are also represented there. Among the titles

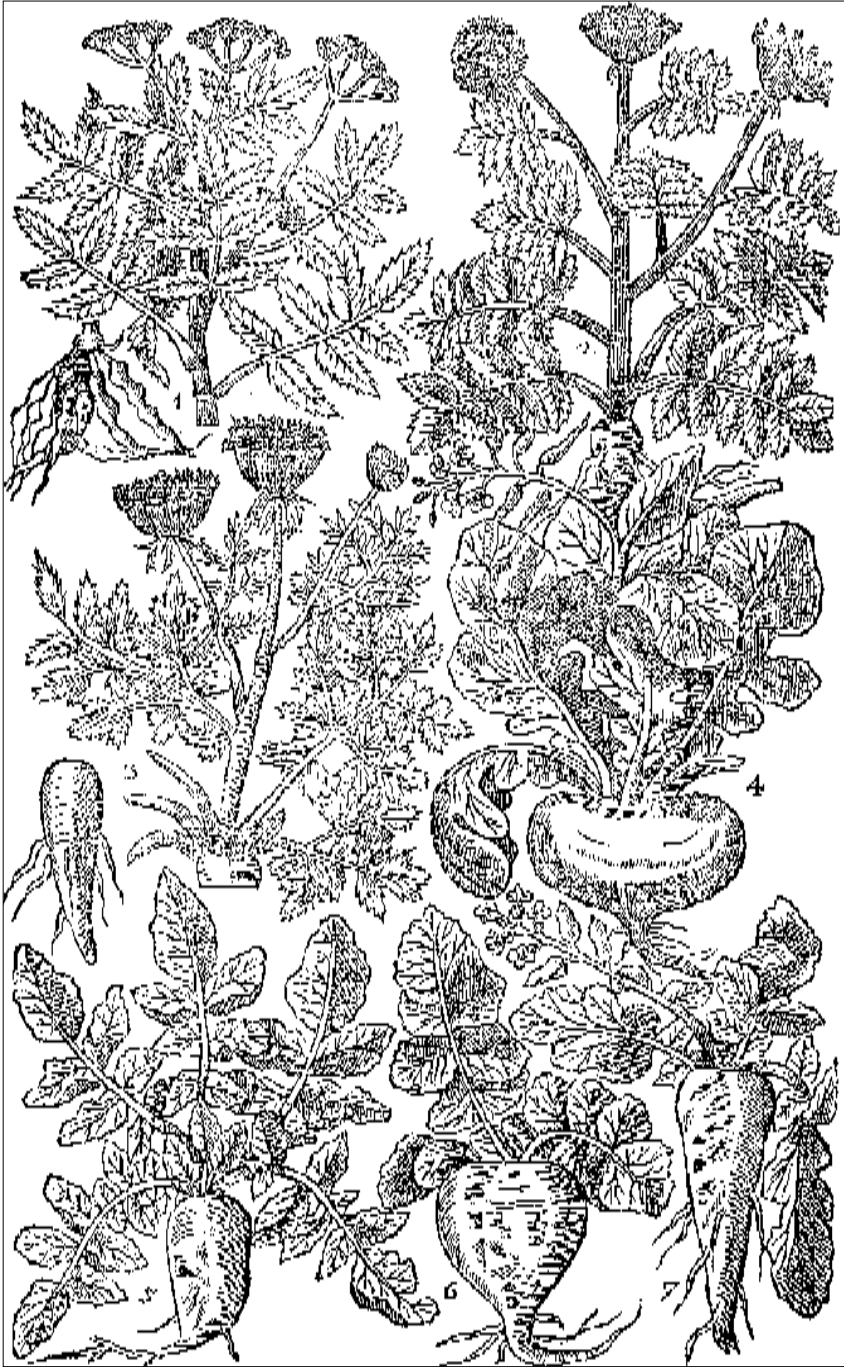


Figure 4. Root vegetables from the kitchen garden, illustrated in John Parkinson's *Paradisus terrestris* of 1629. 1. Skirrit; 2. Parsnip; 3. Carrot; 4. Turnip; 5. Navew (wild turnip); 6. Black Radish; 7. Common Radish.

are *The Country Magazine* for 1736; *The Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine*, 1852–59 and 1862–63; *The Dietetic Reformer*, 1872–86, and its successor, *The Vegetarian Messenger*, 1887–1935. Several bibliographies of cookery books are available for consultation; the older ones in the Blanche Leigh collection have been supplemented by others published more recently. And the Library holds over 60 manuscript cookery books, mostly falling within the period mid-seventeenth to early twentieth century. About half of them were collected by Blanche Leigh, and the rest have been added since through gift or purchase.

The Blanche Leigh and John Preston collections are catalogued on the Library's database, and can be checked out via author's name, title, and keyword. Anyone wishing to find out more may consult the Special Collections website: <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/library/spcoll/spprint/21200.html> which leads directly to information about the Library's cookery book collections, from where there is a link to the Library's catalogue. Information is also provided on how to gain access to the Special Collections.