

A Lost Issue of 'The Sceptical Chymist' Found

by Roger Gaskell

At a launch of vols. 1-7 of the new edition of the *Works* on the lawn at the back of Clare College, Cambridge, on 9 September, Michael Hunter explained the genesis and rationale of the edition and appealed for information about two lost issues of Boyle's works. By good fortune Martin Williams, librarian of Queen's College, was at the reception and by an extraordinary coincidence had only recently handled a copy of *The Sceptical Chymist* dated 1690 in the college library. I have now examined this copy and it is briefly described below.

Between 1684 and 1693 the bookseller Samuel Smith published six natural philosophical or medical works by Boyle. In 1690-1 he also reissued several works originally published by Richard Davis at Oxford, *Flame and Air* (1672, not in Fulton but there is a copy in CUL, Adams 7.69.5), *Saltiness of the Sea* (1673, F113A), *Mechanical Origin of Qualities* (1675, not in Fulton but there are copies in the Plume Library, Maldon, and at Eton College), and *Languid and Unheeded Motion* (1685, F165). In addition the catalogues of Boyle's writings that Smith produced mention issues or editions of *The Sceptical Chymist* and *Some Hidden Qualities of the Air*, but until now, no copies have been recorded (see the new *Works*, vol. 1, p. liv).

Though *Hidden Qualities* still lives up to its name, the details of the newly discovered copy of *The Sceptical Chymist* are as follows. Like the others, it is a re-issue of the Oxford sheets with a cancel title-page. It is identical with the second edition, Oxford 1680 (F34) - though without the advertisement leaf found in a very few copies - except that the main title-page is a cancel and there is a paste-on cancel on the title-page of the annexed *Producibleness of Chymical Principles*. The cancel title has slightly different typography from the original, most noticeably in having the words 'Sceptical Chymist:' in black-letter rather than Roman type. There are some minor changes in punctuation (commas added after 'or' following 'Sceptical Chymist:' and around 'in this edition') and the words 'The Second Edition' are added above the imprint which is as follows:

London: | Printed, and Sold by Sam. Smith, at the Prince's Arms | in St. Paul's Church-yard. 1690.

The imprint on the slip pasted to the title page of *Producibleness*, is the same as that on the main title-page with the omission of the words 'Printed, and': Smith presumably altered the imprint in this way for reasons of economy, as he similarly did in his reprint of *Mechanical Qualities*.