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Royal Society journal archive made permanently free to access

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The Royal Society has today announced that its world-famous historical [journal archive](#) – which includes the [first ever peer-reviewed scientific journal](#) – has been made permanently free to access online.

Around 60,000 historical scientific papers are accessible via a [fully searchable online archive](#), with papers published more than 70 years ago now becoming freely available.

The Royal Society is the world's oldest scientific publisher, with the first edition of [Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society](#) appearing in 1665. Henry Oldenburg – Secretary of the Royal Society and first Editor of the publication – ensured that it was “licensed by the council of the society, being first reviewed by some of the members of the same”, thus making it the first ever peer-reviewed journal.

Philosophical Transactions had to overcome early setbacks including plague, the Great Fire of London and even the imprisonment of Oldenburg, but against the odds the publication

survived to the present day. Its foundation would eventually be recognised as one of the most pivotal moments of the scientific revolution.

Professor Uta Frith FRS, Chair of the Royal Society library committee, said: “I’m delighted that the Royal Society is continuing to increase access to its wonderful resources by opening up its publishing archives. The release of these papers opens a fascinating window on the history of scientific progress over the last few centuries and will be of interest to anybody who wants to understand how science has evolved since the days of the Royal Society’s foundation.”

Treasures in the archive include [Isaac Newton’s first published scientific paper](#), [geological work by a young Charles Darwin](#), and Benjamin Franklin’s [celebrated account of his electrical kite experiment](#). And nestling amongst these illustrious papers, readers willing to delve a little deeper into the archive may find some undiscovered gems from the dawn of the scientific revolution – including accounts of [monstrous calves](#), grisly tales of [students being struck by lightning](#), and early experiments on to [how to cool drinks](#) “without the Help of Snow, Ice, Haile, Wind or Niter, and That at Any Time of the Year.”

Henry Oldenburg writes in his [introduction](#) to the first edition: “...it is therefore thought fit to employ the Press, as the most proper way to gratify those, whose...delight in the advancement of Learning and profitable Discoveries, doth entitle them to the knowledge of what this Kingdom, or other parts of the World, do, from time to time, afford...”, going on to state that potential contributors are: “...invited and encouraged to search, try, and find out new things, impart their knowledge to one another, and contribute what they can to the

Grand design of improving natural knowledge, and perfecting all Philosophical Arts, and Sciences.”

Thomas Huxley FRS wrote in 1870: “If all the books in the world, except the Philosophical Transactions, were to be destroyed, it is safe to say that the foundations of physical science would remain unshaken, and that the vast intellectual progress of the last two centuries would be largely, though incompletely, recorded.”

The move is being made as part of the Royal Society’s ongoing commitment to open access in scientific publishing. Opening of the archive is being timed to coincide with [Open Access Week](#), and also comes soon after the Royal Society announced its first ever fully open access journal, [Open Biology](#).

Search the journal archive [here](#).

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