

Floyer and Samuel Johnson

Image: Print of Samuel Johnson from John Jackson, *History of the City and Cathedral of Lichfield* (London, 1805).

Image from: Local Studies and History, Birmingham Central Library

Living and practising in Lichfield for over 50 years, and holding important public duties there, Floyer must have been well acquainted with very many of the 3,000 or so inhabitants of the town.

Four of Floyer's books were published by the Lichfield printer and bookseller Michael Johnson, the father of the future compiler of *A Dictionary of the English Language*. It was Sir John Floyer who advised the parents of the baby Samuel Johnson to take him to Westminster Abbey to receive the Royal Touch of Queen Anne in order to cure him of scrofula. Although it was not a therapeutic success, the memory of Dr Floyer was obviously preserved in Johnson's family. Samuel Johnson was 25 years old when Floyer died, and he remembered the physician as 'a man of civility and elegance'. Johnson used some of Floyer's writings to illustrate the meanings of individual words in his 'Dictionary', and felt that Floyer's 'learning and piety deserve recording'.

Three of Floyer's essays have been preserved at Lichfield Cathedral Library. One of them, the *Treatise of Asthma*, was borrowed by Samuel Johnson on 17th July 1784, a few months before his death: 'I am now looking into Floyer who lived with asthma to almost his ninetieth year. His book by want of order is obscure; and his asthma, I think, not the same kind with mine. Something however I may perhaps learn.'