



## Correspondence of John Wallis (1616-1703): Volume IV (1672-April 1675): 4 (The Correspondence of John Wallis 1616-1703)

By Philip Beeley, Christoph J. Scriba

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The Correspondence of John Wallis (1616 -1703) is a critically acclaimed resource in the history of early modern science. Volume IV covers the period from 1672 to April 1675 and contains over eighty previously unpublished letters. It documents Wallis's role in the crucial debate over the method of tangents involving figures such as Sluse, James Gregory, Hudde, Barrow, Newton, and Christiaan Huygens. In this way it illuminates further an important part of the history of the calculus.

Wallis's letters also provide valuable new insights into mathematical book production and the importance of the international exchange of books in the growth and dissemination of mathematical knowledge. We learn more about the part played by the intelligencer John Collins and the astronomer royal John Flamsteed in the edition of Jeremiah Horrox's *Opera posthuma*, published by Wallis in 1673. There are also new insights on the background to Wallis's early work on equations, and the reasons why he criticized Gaston Pardies's proposed tract on motion. The causes of the breakdown in Wallis's epistolary relation to Christiaan Huygens following the publication of the *Horologium oscillatorium* in 1673 are also revealed.

Many letters reflect Wallis's active involvement in the Royal Society. Through the medium of correspondence the Savilian professor participated in numerous debates such as those over the anomalous suspension of mercury in the Torricellian tube or Hevelius's use of plain sights in positional astronomy. The volume allows us to gain a deeper understanding of the background to these debates. Furthermore, the volume throws important new light on the history of the University of Oxford and of the University Press in the early modern period. As keeper of the University Archives, Wallis was one of the institution's highest officers. Scarcely any event of note concerning the University did not require his involvement in some way, and this is reflected in numerous letters and documents which the volume publishes for the first time.

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#### About the Author

Philip Beeley, *Research Fellow, Faculty of History and Linacre College, Oxford*, Christoph J. Scriba, *Professor Emeritus, University of Hamburg*

Philip Beeley is Research Fellow in the Faculty of History and Fellow of Linacre College, Oxford. He has formerly held teaching and research posts at the Technical University Berlin, and at the universities of Hamburg and Munster, where he was associate editor of the Academy Edition of Leibniz's philosophical writings.

Christoph J. Scriba was Emeritus Professor at the University of Hamburg. After teaching for some years at universities in the USA and Toronto, and holding a research fellowship in Oxford, he became professor for the history of science at the Technical University Berlin (1969-75) and University of Hamburg (1975-95). He died in 2013.

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