John Evelyn was born in Wotton, Surrey in October 1620. He lived in tumultuous times – the execution of Charles I, the ascension of Oliver Cromwell and the Interregnum, and the Restoration of King Charles II, of whose Court Evelyn was a member. A friend and contemporary of diarist Samuel Pepys, Evelyn kept his own diary from 1641 until just before his death; it was first published in 1818. Evelyn was a founding member of the Royal Society; and published over 30 works in his lifetime, most notably his treatise on trees and forestry, Sylva; a work that went through multiple editions.

Dunedin-born Esmond de Beer (1895-1990) was an eminent scholar of John Evelyn and wrote the definitive edition of Evelyn’s Diary (1955). De Beer lived most of his adult life in London but donated many of his books to the University of Otago and it is him we must thank for most of the Evelyn titles in Special Collections.

The books in this inventory will be listed in chronological order of date of printing, not necessarily of first publication (please refer to Keynes’s Bibliography for this list.) Multiple edition copies of the same title will be listed together.

For the purposes of this inventory, page numbers from Geoffrey Keynes’s John Evelyn: A Study in Bibliophily with a Bibliography of his Writings, 2nd edition (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), will be given.

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