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.
Relief carving on oak panel depicting the diarist John Evelyn (1620-1706). This is an unusual image of Evelyn, and one that has been both discussed and exhibited at NMM and elsewhere since it came to light in 1936, with an attribution to Gibbons. This may have been prompted by the fact that in 1671, after Gibbons moved to Deptford from York, Evelyn discovered him by chance there working in 'a poore solitary thatched house in a field' and set him on his rise to fame. However, there is no solid evidence it is by him or, if not, who carved it, why and when. Evelyn's house in Deptford (Sayes Court) was let to John Benbow when the latter was commissioner of the dockyard and also to Tsar Peter the Great when he came to study shipbuilding there, both in the 1690s. John Evelyn (1620-1706) was a diarist, traveller, numismatist, antiquary and gardener. Throughout his life he wrote diary and it is considered to be very valuable as a source of information about social, cultural and political life in the 18th century England. Evelyn wrote the work Sylvia on behalf of the English Navy, describing different types of trees, their cultivation and use. The publication was published ten times until the year 1825, with all possible modifications over the years. In Sylvia, Evelyn urges landowners to plant forests on