John Evelyn (1620-1706) 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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John Evelyn, the son of Richard Evelyn, was born at Wotton House in Surrey. During his life, he pursued a broad range of interests, such as writing and garden design. Evelyn travelled widely, and, during the 1640s, he spent several years abroad, in Holland, Italy and France, and returned to England in 1652. Evelyn was one of the first members of the Royal Society, becoming its Secretary in 1672. It created great public interest and appeared in several revised editions in 1669, 1679, 1706 and 1729. Each edition contains the two appendices Pomona, or an appendix concerning fruit-trees, in relation to cider, and Kalendarium Hortense. Evelyn's Sylva was probably the most influential seventeenth-century book on forestry.