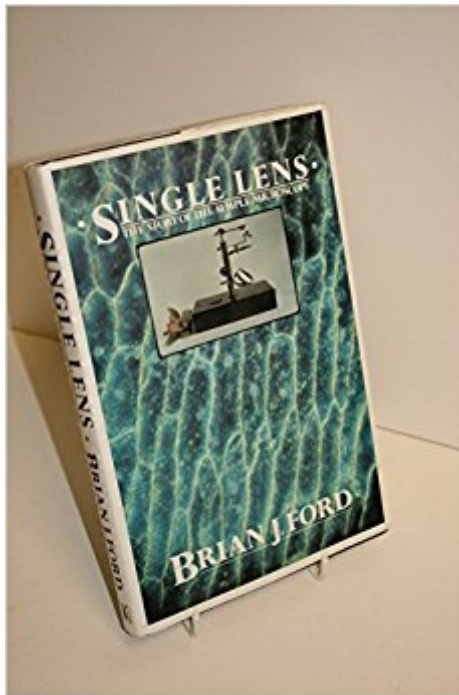


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Single Lens: The Story Of The Simple Microscope



Synopsis

The book describes Ford's extraordinary disclosures. 181 pages including Selected References, Name Index, and Subject Index.

Book Information

Hardcover: 182 pages

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Customer Reviews

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Hold some science history in your two hands!

This is a fascinating first-hand account of how the "father of microbiology", Antony van Leeuwenhoek, was rediscovered (in 1981) after 300 years. It describes the author's own search of the archives of the British Royal Society, and his rediscovery of the resolving power of the single lens microscopes designed and used by Antony van Leeuwenhoek in the 1670s -- much higher resolving power than could be achieved by any compound microscope prior to the mid-1800s. The capabilities of Leeuwenhoek's lenses was greatly under-appreciated - even disparaged - in the history of science up to the time of Brian Ford's work. [Added Jan. 2010: perhaps not so under-appreciated as I thought! I notice that van Leuwenhoek is extensively referenced in Buffon's Natural History - see it online at [...]].As a scientist, I find this book a fascinating tale of discovery, told in a captivating way. The book deserves a broader audience than it has apparently received -- since it has not been republished since the original publication in 1985.

While I agree with everything the other reviewer wrote, Ford covers other simple microscopes as well. In particular, he discusses the later single-lens instruments used by scientists like Robert Brown (of "Brownian motion" fame) and Charles Darwin. The theme throughout the book, which incidentally carries into Ford's other writing, is that the bias against single-lens microscopes is unjustified, and the idea that they were inferior to compound microscopes of the day is simply not correct. These instruments actually compare favorably to modern microscopes for many tasks, and Ford nicely documents the fact that they were a mainstay of microscopy into the middle 19th century. Anyone who has an interest in microscopy or in the history of scientific instruments is very likely to enjoy this book. It will give you a new appreciation for what can be done with what is essentially a high-power magnifying glass.

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