



# Digging Up the Dead: Uncovering the Life and Times of an Extraordinary Surgeon

*Druin Burch*

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## **Digging Up the Dead: Uncovering the Life and Times of an Extraordinary Surgeon** Druin Burch

A tearaway young man from Norfolk, Astley Cooper (1768-1841) became the world's richest and most famous surgeon. Admired from afar by the Brontës and up close by his student Keats, his success was born of an appetite for bloody revolutions.

He set up an international network of bodysnatchers, won the Royal Society's highest prize and boasted to Parliament that there was no one whose body he could not steal. Experimenting on his neighbours' corpses and the living bodies of their stolen pets, his discoveries were as great as his infamy.

Caught up in the French Revolution, and in attempts to bring radical democracy to Britain, Cooper nevertheless rose to become surgeon to royals from the Prince Regent to Queen Victoria. Setting the past against his own reactions to autopsies and operations, hospitals and poetry, Burch's *Digging Up the Dead* is a riveting account of a world of gothic horror as well as fertile idealism.

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