

Cover image

Through his 'superior lenses', Leeuwenhoek observed structures, forms and life so vanishingly small as to defy belief, opening a door on a world that would capture curious minds for more than three and a half centuries. A draper from Delft with no formal education – in his 40s before his scientific career started – he was the first whose reputation was built in the pages of *Philosophical Transactions*. The lenses he developed for his trade would be the forerunner of many tools down the ages that allow living form to be unravelled, eventually yielding the processes and fabric of life itself. (Credit: 'Animacules I: homage to A van Leeuwenhoek' by Odra Noel; www.odranoel.eu)

Typeset in India by Techset Composition Limited. Printed in the UK by Latimer Trend.

This paper meets the requirements of ISO 9706:1994(E) and ANSI/NISO Z39.48-1992 (Permanence of Paper) effective with volume 335, issue 1273, 1992.

Phil. Trans. R. Soc. B (ISSN 0962-8436) is published 26 times a year for US\$6340 per year by the Royal Society, and is distributed in the USA by Agent named Air Business, C/O Worldnet Shipping USA Inc., 149-35 177th Street, Jamaica, New York, NY11434, USA. US Postmaster: Send address changes to *Phil. Trans. R. Soc. B*, C/O Air Business Ltd, C/O Worldnet Shipping USA Inc, 149-35 177th Street Jamaica, New York, NY11414.