Francis Bacon promoted the investigation of nature, often denigrating, by contrast, the over-reliance on books. This rhetoric found an audience among English scientific figures of the late 17th century. Accordingly, the Royal Society branded its critics as 'bookish'. Yet the gathering of empirical information required careful note-taking; and many of the relevant methods and assumptions derived from humanist scholarship. I consider how some leading virtuosi, including Robert Boyle, John Locke and Robert Hooke, lived in these apparently different worlds (of scholarship and science) and, in doing so, shaped some features of a new scientific culture.