



# BSHP Gazette

The Newsletter of the British Society for the History of Pharmacy

June 2023

Number 25

## Editorial

Your committee meets three times a year and one of its key purposes is to ensure that the Society runs efficiently and in accordance with its charitable objectives as embodied in its constitution. We continue to meet virtually and one key job each time is to manage our popular on-line talk series. We would like to get back to some in-person talks and are keen to know if there is a level of support for doing this? We are aiming to have one such talk at UCL in London in December and would like to hear from any members who would support this. Please email your views to [president@bshp.org](mailto:president@bshp.org).

## Pharmaceutical Historian - Volume 53 No.2

With this mailing you are receiving the June 2023 issue of our flagship international journal for the history of pharmacy.

## Membership Subscription Renewals

Our thanks must go to everyone who have renewed their membership and especially to those who have agreed to move their Direct Debits away from Go Cardless for next year. If you have yet to do this then please arrange this with your bank.

## BSHP Online Lecture Series

We are pleased to note the international reach of our online lecture series and hope that members are enjoying the talks. Our latest 'Global Histories of Pharmacy' series explores pharmacy histories (in the broadest sense). We have included some abstracts below for any members who do not have online access or who have missed any.

The series has continued with the following contributions:

Monday 24<sup>th</sup> April 2023: "Shifting from medicine to botany: the hidden history of 16th century herbaria" by Dr Anastasia Stefanaki, Naturalis Biodiversity Center, Leiden.

Abstract: The 16th century was a golden age for botany, also known as the botanical Renaissance. Plants were no longer regarded solely as sources of drugs, an interest in plants for their own sake emerged. For the first time in history, 16th-century botanists turned to nature to find the plants described by Dioscorides and other ancient authors. Gradually, the idea that the ancients had described all existing species was abandoned as more species were discovered in the field. New plants arriving as curiosities from the New World helped in this realization. 16th-century botanists collected and press-dried plants among paper sheets, mounted and bound into books, creating the first herbaria that survive to this day. Two fine examples showcasing this transition are the emblematic En Tibi and Rauwolf herbaria, kept at Naturalis Biodiversity Center in Leiden, the Netherlands. This lecture explores the origins and contents of these and other 16th-century plant collections witnessing the birth of botany from a practice of medicine to a distinct scientific discipline. Biography: I am a botanist working on botanical history and historic plant collections with a special interest in the 16th century. My research focuses on the cultural history of useful plants and their introduction history in 16th-century Europe, for example the wild tulip, tomato, and aloe. I am also interested in the origins and botanical contents of historic herbaria, especially the iconic En Tibi and Rauwolf herbaria, two of the oldest surviving plant collections worldwide. Currently I am a postdoctoral researcher at Wageningen University & Research and at Naturalis Biodiversity Center in the Netherlands.

Monday 15<sup>th</sup> May 2023: "Synthesizing hope: 20<sup>th</sup> century drug discovery in South Africa" by Prof. Anne Pollock, Kings College London.

This talk draws from her book *Synthesizing Hope: Matter, Knowledge, and Place in South African Drug Discovery*, which opens up the material and social world of pharmaceuticals by focusing on an unexpected place: iThemba Pharmaceuticals. Founded in 2009 with a name taken from the Zulu word for hope, the small South African startup company with an elite international scientific board was tasked with drug discovery for tuberculosis, HIV, and malaria. This company becomes an entry point for exploring how it matters who makes knowledge and where. It also provides a concrete example for consideration of the contexts and practices of postcolonial science, its constraints, and its promise. *Synthesizing Hope* explores the many historical legacies that create conditions of possibility for South African drug discovery, especially the specific form of settler colonialism characterized by apartheid and resource extraction. Putting this case into the context of more recent developments in South Africa, this talk argues that paying attention to the infrastructures and laboratory processes of drug discovery underscores the materiality of pharmaceuticals from the perspective of their makers, and that tracing the intellectual and material infrastructures of South African pharmaceutical knowledge production contributes new insights about larger transnational social, political, and economic orders.

Then we have these two forthcoming talks:

1) Monday 19<sup>th</sup> June 2023: "From plant to drug: The quest for an Indian Pharmacopoeia" by Dr. Nandini Bhattacharya, University of Houston, USA. To book please use this link:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/the-failed-quest-for-an-indigenous-pharmacopoeia-in-colonial-india-tickets-624311722167>

The first official Indian Pharmacopoeia was published in 1955, a few years after independence from British rule. This was the culmination of a long campaign over sixty-odd years by Indian physicians, and practitioners of Ayurveda and Unani who were also joined by significant numbers of Indian nationalists and British medical officials. Several unofficial and semi-official materia medica and similar compilations on Indian drugs circulated in medical and official circles, but these were not standard, official pharmacopoeia. Indeed, there was no official pharmacopoeia in British India. The British Pharmacopoeia served as an unofficial guide, but the drugs circulating in the medical market comprised a medley of potions, pills, and tinctures that were eclectic in composition and origins.

The attempt to standardize a selection of Indian drugs in everyday use by physicians and chemists and druggists, therefore, appeared to be an urgent necessity, and was endorsed by British officials and the medical establishment. Hundreds of drugs from the bazaars were procured and tested in laboratories to identify their active principles and standardize their potency and dosage. Several reports, official and unofficial were produced on the efficacy and characteristics of long lists of indigenous drugs in use from all parts of the subcontinent. Yet, a consensus on the Indian Pharmacopoeia did not emerge in colonial India. This paper will examine why the Indian Pharmacopoeia failed to materialize, although the subcontinent produced a vast number of raw drugs.

Dr. Nandini Bhattacharya is Associate Professor in South Asian History & History of Medicine at the University of Houston.

2) Date to be confirmed - September 2023: "Medicines in Latin America" by Dr Pablo Gómez, University of Wisconsin, USA.

These talks above will be delivered again using Zoom and booking will be done via the Eventbrite system. They are timed to start at 6.30pm and details for September onwards will be released shortly and on our website. Please register your interest now.

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## Annual Conference 2024 - A date for your diary

Our 2024 Conference will be held on Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2024 at the Thackray Museum, Leeds. This will be held on just that day with the AGM at the end of it.

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## Summer Visit 2023

We are hoping to organise a visit in late June or early July to the newly re-opened Hunterian Museum at the Royal College of Surgeons in London. Anyone interested should email for further details using [president@bshp.org](mailto:president@bshp.org).

## Questions and Answers

Members of the BSHP committee receive a steady stream of queries relating to the history of pharmacy and pharmaceuticals, and these and our responses may be of interest to readers of the Newsletter. Recent queries have included the following.

Q1. The 19<sup>th</sup>-century pharmaceutical label (below) is endorsed with a dispensary stamp from the pharmacy of St Bartholomew's Hospital, London. Following the name of the dispensing chemist are the post-nominals A.P.S. What did these letters stand for? If a qualification, when was this instituted, and when did the post-nominals cease to be used?



A1. The post-nominals APS refers to Associate of the Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain (PSGB). Associates were individuals not in business on their own account who were either pharmaceutical chemists (having passed the Society's Major examination) or chemists and druggists (having passed either the Minor or the Modified examination). The title was also used by unexamined assistants who joined the Society at its foundation and were admitted before 1 July 1842. In its early years full membership (MPS) of the PSGB was only available to pharmacy owners. The property qualification was abolished in 1872. Following passage of the Pharmacy Act Amendment Act in 1898, chemists and druggists (holding the lower-level Minor qualification) - whether employed, self-employed or employers - could become full members of the PSGB and use the post-nominals MPS, meaning that the title Associate became redundant.

Source: Sydney Holloway. *Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain, 1841-1991: A Political and Social History*, Pharmaceutical Press, 1991: 269-273.

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Q2. I understand that in founding the Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain in 1841, Jacob Bell was in no doubt that he was formally establishing chemists and druggists as a fourth branch of medicine, alongside the physicians, the surgeons, and the general medical practitioners (formerly the apothecaries). Yet when the Medical Register was established following passage of the 1858 Medical Act, pharmacists were excluded – it listed only physicians, surgeons, and general medical practitioners. What was the cause of this about turn?

A2. The relationship between pharmacy and medicine was a key theme in the medical reform movement in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and runs throughout the history of pharmacy during that century. The issue was clarified in the Courts in 1828, when Mr Justice Park ruled that there were "four degrees in the medical profession – physicians, surgeons, apothecaries (the general medical practitioners), and chymists and druggists". In 1842 Jacob Bell wrote about "the position which pharmacy occupies or ought to occupy as a branch of the medical profession".

Bell returned to the theme regularly in the pages of the *Pharmaceutical Journal*. For example, he stated that "We have always maintained that our body is and must be considered a branch of the medical profession, and that whatever regulations - respecting education, registration or protection - may be considered necessary for medical practitioners, the same or similar enactments are no less requisite in our department".

Medical reform progressed slowly in mid-century, and Bell was anxious to press ahead with legislation to give pharmacy legal recognition. The 1852 Pharmacy Act established a Register for Pharmaceutical Chemists (but not Chemists and Druggists, which was introduced in the 1868 Pharmacy Act). Medical registration only occurred 6 years after the Pharmacy Act with passage of the 1858 Medical Act. Because pharmacists already had a statutory Register they could not be included in the Medical Register. If the Register for Pharmaceutical Chemists had not already existed it is possible that pharmacists may have been included as a fourth Register under the Medical Act, as Bell had originally intended.

Source: Sydney Holloway. *Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain, 1841-1991: A Political and Social History*, Pharmaceutical Press, 1991: 51 + 182

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## Peter Homan Small Grant Scheme

Further to the item in the last Gazette we are pleased to report that we have had the first applications under this newly created grant scheme in Peter's name, you can find full details and an application form on our website here: <http://www.bsph.org/awards/PeterHoman.asp>. The Grants Panel will meet in June and December each year, with the first deadline for applications having been 31<sup>st</sup> May.

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## New Members

We welcome the following into membership:

Susan Lupton (Chichester) – Paul Russell (Isle of Man) – Louise Cope (Southport)

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## Society of Apothecaries - Faculty events - Save the date!

**Three day course: Collecting and Reflecting Pharmacy History**

**Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> to Friday 29<sup>th</sup> September 2023**

BSHP and the Faculty of the History and Philosophy of Medicine and Pharmacy at the Worshipful Society of Apothecaries are collaborating again on a three-day course, directed by Stuart Anderson and Briony Hudson. Based at six London venues, the programme will take you behind the scenes of key pharmaceutical collections with curator-led tours, object-based sessions and insightful talks that provide background stories and reflect on the challenges of curating and collecting pharmacy history to present to visitors in the 21st century.

From carboys to COVID vaccination, herbs to herbals, materia medica to medicines, it's a perfect opportunity to explore the objects and organisations that tell pharmacy histories today. Our hosts are the Medicine Team at the Science Museum, the Royal Pharmaceutical Society Museum, the Economic Botany Collection at the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew, the Royal College of Physicians, the Worshipful Society of Apothecaries, and - in its 350th anniversary year - the Chelsea Physic Garden.

The course fee for the full three days will be £260. BSHP is providing funding to allow for a limited number of student places at £160 for the full course. There will also be the option to book for individual days. Booking opens soon on the Society of Apothecaries' website, with full programme details available. This will be announced on BSHP's social media and beyond, so keep your eyes peeled! Any queries at this stage to Briony via [conference@bsph.org](mailto:conference@bsph.org)

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## Contacts

**Facebook:** British Society for the History of Pharmacy

**Twitter:** @PharmHist **BSHP Secretariat:** [info@bsph.org](mailto:info@bsph.org)

**JiscMail :** [BSHPHARM@jiscmail.ac.uk](mailto:BSHPHARM@jiscmail.ac.uk)