



BSHP Gazette

The Newsletter of the British Society for the History of Pharmacy

September 2022

Number 22

Editorial

Welcome to what is effectively our Autumn newsletter after what has been such a challenging Summer weatherwise. Lots of news items as usual about past activities and our exciting plans going forward.

Annual Conference 2023 - "Training, learning and education"

Our 2023 conference will be based at the Holiday Inn, Oxford from Friday 31st March to Sunday 2nd April. We very much hope you will be able to join us for a sociable weekend of talks, visits and plenty of chances to catch up with friends, old and new. Full details and a booking form will be sent out with the next Gazette in January, or will be available on our website.

As usual, we would welcome short talks (20 minutes) from BSHP members, either directly linked to the conference theme or any other aspect of pharmacy history that you're currently exploring. There is also the opportunity to submit a poster, again on the conference theme or other area of pharmacy history interest. You do not have to be an experienced speaker or seasoned researcher to take part - we are always very keen to support those new to pharmacy history. Please contact Briony Hudson, Conference Organiser (conference@bshp.org), with a short outline of your proposed contribution - or with any queries - by Friday 18th November please.

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With this mailing you are receiving the September 2022 issue of our flagship international journal for the History of Pharmacy.

British Society for the History of Medicine - News

The September edition of the BSHM newsletter is available (<https://bshm.org.uk>). This gives details of their Poynter Lecture being held on 30th September at the RAF Club London at 5pm

BSHP Visit to The Royal Botanic Gardens Kew - 15th July

In recent years our series of Summer visits, like many other activities, were cancelled due to the pandemic. Indeed, our last one was July 2019 when we went to the National Archives in Kew. So finally, we were able to resume these visits and by sheer coincidence we returned to Kew, this time to the Royal Botanic Gardens. We were grateful to Professor Mark Nesbitt, BSHP Vice-President and committee member, for setting up this visit and for enabling free entry for BSHP Members. Mark is Senior Research Leader at Kew. We chose one of the hottest days of many this Summer to pay this visit and the vast areas of grass were already brown.

Kew Gardens is known by many purely as a collection of many interesting trees and plants but it is also a world leading plant and fungal science research institute with around 300 scientists looking at many key aspects of plant life on earth.

The plan for the afternoon was to have a leisurely guided walk to two main areas in the Gardens. Having met at the Elizabeth Gate, near the Herbarium and Library, a small party of eight BSHP Members, including two partners, met up with Mark. He was accompanied by Rebecca Lazarou who is a medicinal plant researcher there. Her research work at Kew can be summed up as centering around plants, science and well-being. One current project of hers is to create a methodology that can be used to botanically identify medicinal plants mentioned in ancient texts, with a focus on the *materia medica* of Ancient Greece. More information on her work can be accessed here www.rebeccalazarou.com/work.

Mark complemented his and Rebecca's knowledge during the tour by using Rodale's "Illustrated Encyclopaedia of Herbs" (by Claire Kowalchik and William H Hylton) to give more information on interesting plants that we stopped to study. The whole aim of the afternoon was to draw on all the combined expertise order to investigate the medical stories of a small selection of well-known plants.

We went first to the Nosegay Garden, which is behind Kew Palace, and features plants grown in the UK before 1700. The Palace is the oldest building within the Gardens and is now looked after by Historic Royal Palaces. Behind the Palace is the Nosegay Garden which has been recreated to reflect what a 17th Century Garden would have looked like featuring medicinal and culinary plants grown in the UK in those times. Below this article are some of the pictures taken on the day.

We stopped to hear information about some of the many plants and their medicinal properties and uses. In particular we studied in detail these herbs and plants, to name just a few: chervil, rosemary, aconite (wolf's bane), foxglove (*Digitalis purpurea*), nettles, lemon balm, horehound, tobacco plant, sage, St John's wort, mandrake, yarrow, woodruff (*Gallium*), borage, catnip, field oregano, damask rose, rhubarb and thyme. After the Nosegay Garden a quick visit was paid to the Royal Kitchens which illustrated the kind of vegetables grown in the 18th century and as used in the Royal Kitchens.

En route to the final destination, the Evolution Garden, we walked through the Alpine House which was formally opened in 2006. It was the first new glasshouse to be constructed at Kew for more than 20 years and where it recreates the dry, cool, windy conditions alpiners need to thrive, without using energy-intensive air conditioning and wind pumps.

After this the final stop of the afternoon was the Evolution Garden which was opened in 2019. We were joined by Dr Melanie-Jayne Howes, a research leader at Kew. This garden is arranged according to new scientific thinking and research approaches all derived from using a modern DNA classification system as opposed to the old one based on morphology. This is all embodied in Kew's Plant Tree of Life project which was outlined. Melanie explained in particular all the research being done on plants in relation to, for example, treating Alzheimers/Dementia. Their latest studies were referred to including work on potential plant combinations for treatment.

This Evolution Garden illustrated the diversity of plants and flowers in quite a small space. The big advantage of their research work is coming from not only exploring new medicinal compounds but also knowing how to respond to future environmental challenges. Their database of genomic information provides a new foundation for ensuring that global diversity is conserved, protected and restored.

We were only able to get a short insight into Kew's scientific research work and their Tree of Life project. For more information on some really astonishing science being done at Kew, please see their website www.kew.org/science.



Kew Palace



Mark and Rebecca



St John's Wort



Yarrow



Aconite (Wolf's Bane)



Melanie (centre) joins the group

BSHP online lecture series

Building upon the success of our 2022 online lecture series we are planning something different for the Autumn. This will be a set of 3 talks on Kew's Byzantine herbal project which is being done with Royal Holloway. The first talk will be an overview of the project in October by Andrea Lardos. Then we will have two more talks in November and December.

See www.kew.org/science/our-science/projects/byzantine-popular-pharmacy.

In 2023 we will start a series on colonial pharmacy. Dates and further information will follow using email, website and social media. Please email expressions of interest in the talks to honsec@bshp.org.

Peter Homan's book collection

We have received the following message from Michelle Wake, Site Libraries Manager and Senior Librarian, UCL School of Pharmacy. This arose after it was arranged for the remaining books from Peter's extensive collection to be donated to them:

"We are so pleased to have been offered part of Peter's book collection. The items will be stored and displayed at the UCL School of Pharmacy, recorded as a distinct collection with each item noting that they are part of the 'Peter Homan Collection'. The UCL School of Pharmacy Collection is considered a UCL Flagship Collection and the donation will make a real difference to teaching and research.

Flagship Collections are those which retain a focus on teaching and research needs, but also have a national or international significance. Our Library will actively develop these collections, and continue to invest time, effort and resources to ensure they are globally visible, promoted and externally recognised. This all fits in with the UCL Library's collection framework.

By coincidence a few weeks ago the School of Pharmacy Library staff had a tour of the RPS Library and we also had a quick self-guided tour of the Museum. Seeing Peter's artifact collection in place there was another opportunity for the School Library staff to learn about the importance of Peter's contribution to pharmacy history and we will share that with UCL and beyond."

BSHP Members' Forum online meetings

Following mention in the June Gazette we had some positive interest shown in this idea and so this will now be discussed further at our October committee meeting. It's not too late to show your support or to suggest topics alongside our initial thoughts which were to have *Pharmacy Artefacts* as the Forum's first theme. More about this in the future - please send any comments to honsec@bshp.org.

Society of Apothecaries

Dr Andrew Papanikitas has been elected as President of their Faculty of History and Philosophy. He takes over the role from Briony Hudson, BSHP Committee Member and Conference Organiser, who must be congratulated on her three-year tenure as their President. Briony steered them through all the challenges of the pandemic and will continue to contribute to their work as Immediate Past President. The Faculty has announced its future event programme, here are details of the ones up to early next year:

Tuesday 11th October, Sydney Selwyn Lecture: "Crowdfunding, ethics, and medical responsibilities" by Dr Kathryn Millard, plus the Flavell Lecture: "Clinician-managers: the boundary of medical ethics" by Dr Koot Kotze.

Wednesday 23rd November, Monkton Copeman Lecture "From Powerhouse to Playhouse: London Blackfriars at the heart of the nation" by Dr Simon Thurley.

Thursday 19th January 2023, John Locke Lecture "What makes health public? Ethical and legal lessons from the pandemic" by Professor John Coggan.

The Faculty have now announced their annual courses for 2022/23. These are the History of Medicine Course and the Philosophy of Medicine course. Both lead to a Diploma and more information can be found on the Apothecaries' website <https://www.apothecaries.org/faculty-events/>.

The Friends of the Archives at the Worshipful Society of Apothecaries have announced a new small grants scheme. The Friends will award up to 4 grants each year, each of £250, to support researchers to use the Society's collections. The grants are intended to encourage researchers to use the collections either as the main focus of their project, or as part of a larger research proposal. We are

keen to widen further use of the collections and engage with a wider range of researchers. Grants are available to all, although applications are particularly welcomed from those early in their research careers, independent researchers or those who are precariously employed. Further details are provided in the guidance document, and applications should be made using the standard form or available here: <https://www.apothecaries.org/history/our-collection-and-access/>

New Members

We welcome the following into membership:

Amber Marks (London)

Krystle Kingston (Shropshire)

Reopening the RPS Museum by Catherine Walker

“We were thrilled when, on Monday 16th May, we were able to open our doors to the public for the first time since the COVID-19 Pandemic. Since then, we have had a constant stream of visitors, bringing life back to the displays. It’s been exciting to see the reach of our little museum, with international visitors coming from America and Denmark, and we are looking forward to seeing many more.

It is not just the display areas that have new life in them, our amazing team of volunteers have been supporting the museum from the office, and from their own homes. We are continuing with our COVID Oral History Project and hope to be able to begin recording oral history interviews by the end of the year.

Another exciting return to ‘normal’ has been the restart of our guided tour programme. We have a new volunteer tour guide, Jean, who has bravely stepped into Peter Homan’s shoes, starting with staff tours, and moving on to booked groups. We also agreed to take part in London Open House on 10th September, another first since the pandemic, which was run in tandem with the RPS Library. Please see <https://open-city.org.uk/open-house-festival>

We have also been delighted to welcome three placement students this summer. All have really contributed to the work of the museum, particularly supporting the important work of managing the collection. This kind of work is not always seen by the public, but it is fundamental to our work of caretaking pharmacy heritage. Between the three students they created 229 new records and updated 498 records.

We are hoping to create a series of new displays towards the end of the year. If you have not seen Peter Homan’s Pharmaceutical History Collection please do come by and see it, as we will be creating a new display in November on *Botany: Art and Science*. Placement student Baixue will be curating a new display on painkillers, so if you haven’t seen our vaccine display, please do come and see it before it changes in September. Work on a display in our Scottish Office continues which we hope to launch in November, as well as an online tour of Pharmaceutical Edinburgh, which can be followed online or in the city itself.

There’s lots going on at the RPS Museum so please do come and visit us if you can!”

For more information about guided tours please email museum@rpharms.com



Contacts

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