



BSHP Gazette

The Newsletter of the British Society for the History of Pharmacy

June 2021

Number 17

Peter Homan - by Roy Allcorn, BSHP Honorary Secretary

All of us at BSHP were deeply saddened back in late March to learn of the sudden death of Peter. Much of this issue is presented as a tribute to him and what he achieved for our Society and also for the History of Pharmacy. I was privileged to be able to present a tribute on Day 1 of our online conference and a summary of what I prepared and read out appears below:

"Peter became BSHP's full time Honorary Secretary around 1998 when the Society lost the services of a paid Secretary who had been based at the Edinburgh office of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society. He grew into the role with his usual professionalism and did such a good job that he held the position for at least 20 years.

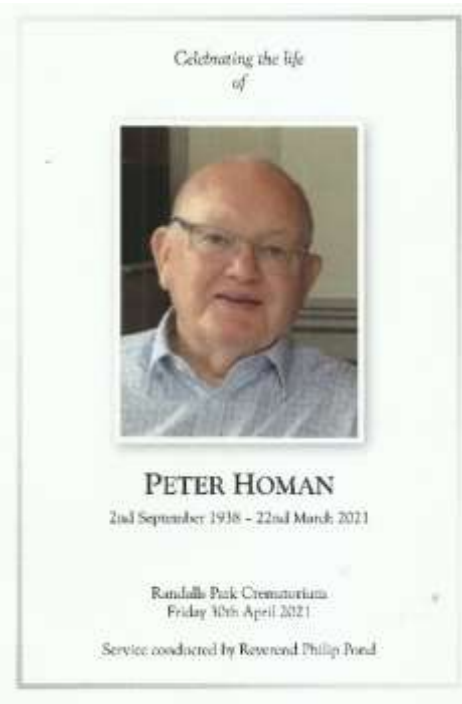
In 2018 the committee proposed that he be elected as President and the only way of achieving this transition was for myself to take over the role of Honorary Secretary. It was to Peter's eternal credit that he had the Society's affairs so well organised that the handover was seamless. He was so very proud of being President and held this well-deserved position for two and a half years until October 2020.

Before all this he was employed by Boots for his working life and managed several of their pharmacies. His anecdotes about his time, for example, in Boots Piccadilly were legendary. He qualified as a Pharmacist and an Apothecary. Indeed, his invaluable support for the Society of Apothecaries must be mentioned here.

I first met him when I joined the staff of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society in the 1990s, then based in Lambeth. He was a part-time volunteer in their Museum and he loved that role. His knowledge about pharmacy past and present came to the fore and this blossomed there over a 25-year period.

His work meant so much to them and was important for him personally. He researched, gave talks and demonstrations to visitors to the Museum, wrote information sheets and articles, even contributes to two textbooks. He revelled in sharing his knowledge of the subject.

Our Society awarded him our own Leslie Matthews medal in 2015 at the annual conference in Sunderland (see photo right with Briony as President doing the honours). This medal honours the memory of Mr Leslie G. Matthews and it is awarded for original and scholarly work on the history of British pharmacy, and is an evaluation based on competence of research, skill in interpretation and ability in presentation. Peter did all these and was awarded the medal in recognition of his significant achievements with historical research.



Peter's ashes will be scattered at Epsom Cemetery on Friday 20th August at 12 noon.



Peter was the ultimate people person and loved all forms of personal interaction. Those whose lives were touched by him know exactly what I mean. Many will remember his wicked and impish sense of humour. For example, the picture opposite shows him at our Summer visit to John Bell and Croyden in 2017. He soon spotted this gold-plated mobility scooter and leaped onto it much to the amusement of those attending the visit and the staff of this famous London pharmacy.



Golden Boy Racer

His beloved wife of many years Christine died some time ago now. They shared everything and, especially, the administration of our annual conferences. He was devastated at losing her but he coped on his own by involving himself in his interests, his friends and colleagues and his family. His prescription for life was to live it to the full which he dispensed with infectious enthusiasm.

We dedicated the 2021 conference to his memory. He would have been thrilled at the popularity of the online version of our annual conference."



Peter, the ultimate Pharmacy History expert above, giving one of his many illustrated talks.

At his funeral a life-long friend Philip Smalley, who also worked at Boots, presented a wonderful Eulogy. He summarised Peter's life and all his varied achievements as a working community pharmacist and then he listed all the many activities he pursued after retirement. We learnt, for example, that he was immensely proud of being recognised by Google as an authority on Epsom Salts. Philip reminded us about the "hankie mouse", which will mean something to many who witnessed Uncle Peter in full flight. He likened Peter to Benny Hill which given his appearance and fondness for earthy humour was very apt.

A tribute was published in the *Pharmaceutical Journal* which can be found here: <https://pharmaceutical-journal.com/article/news/peter-gerald-homan-1938-2021>

Peter's extensive collection of pharmacy artefacts has been bequeathed to the Museum of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society. They are planning, when possible, to dedicate one of their display cases to a part of his large collection.

A few of us were honoured to see this collection in an upper room of Peter's house. He loved showing people selected parts of it. Many of the items he had collected were really unusual. To illustrate this, we have one unused photo quiz from him for you based on one of his pieces - so we are using it now. The basic question is: What is this object and what was it used for? The answer is at the foot of page 4.



Also, Peter in his will has bequeathed to our Society his specialised collection of books (see photo left). This was used to help answer some of the many pharmacy history questions that he was asked and in addition he used them to undertake research and prepare some of the many presentations he gave. This library of books certainly also helped him prepare many articles, a chapter in the book "*Making Medicines*" and then as co-author of another book "*Popular Medicines*".

An inventory is being organised and certain libraries have already been identified as possible new homes.

We are certain that Peter's bequest to us was undoubtedly made with the intention of benefiting the Society and its members, whether that transpires to be intellectually, materially or financially.

Editorial

Our committee is formulating a plan for a *Peter Homan Memorial Bursary*. This will replace the Burnby Award which has run its intended 10-year course. Donations towards this fund are welcomed and anyone interested should send an email to Roy Allcorn using honsec@bshp.org or you can write to the secretariat office whose address is given on page 4.

E-mailing Service - JiscMail - (www.jisc.ac.uk/jiscmail)

Our last two promotions about this have not hit our target of increasing interest. JiscMail is a private, secure email system for members' only use. Did you know that BSHP members can join our JiscMail email discussion group? Perfect for sharing event details, asking other members for advice on research queries, or finding people working on allied topics. The information request on page 4 arrived using JiscMail. If you'd like more information, please email Chris Duffin using president@bshp.org.

Pharmaceutical Historian - Volume 51 No.2.

With this latest mailing you are receiving the June 2021 issue of our flagship international journal for the History of Pharmacy.

Other News in Brief

- 1) Our twice postponed Annual Conference will be held in person at the Copthorne Hotel, Salford from Friday 25th - Sunday 27th March 2022. More details to follow later in the year. A date for your diary.
 - 2) As things stand, we are planning to hold our next AGM online via Zoom on 18th October. This will be aimed at approving our 2020 Annual Report and our Annual Accounts for that year. Due to the pandemic, we are out of our normal sequence with these and so we will hold an AGM at the March 2022 conference which will include our 2021 information and Trustee/Officer elections.
 - 3) Some members are receiving a membership subscription invoice reminder this month. Please pay this as soon as possible or we will have to assume that you no longer wish to support us.
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New Members

We welcome the following into membership:

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|---|--------------------------|
| - Nina Aldin Thune (Bergen, Norway) | Anthony Dayan (London) |
| - Kevin Goodman (Dudley, West Midlands) | Kurt Degabriele (Malta) |
| - Emily Betz* (Edinburgh) | Soh Xi Ken* (Sunderland) |
| - Sebastian Kroupa* (Cambridge) | Ciara O'Brien (London) |
| - Victoria Bensley (Great Yarmouth) | Neil Grazier (Keele) |
| - Elisabeth Moreau (Belgium) | Lesley Borzoni (London) |

Many of these joined as result of registering with one of our recent online events. *These three students, being recent award winners, receive free membership for 2021.

BSHP's Online Annual Conference March 2021

People, places and things – a compendium of talks on pharmacy history

This took place as planned via Zoom over the period 26th to 28th March. A full report on the conference will be provided ready for our next AGM. An analysis of the numbers accessing this online event showed we reached a truly international pharmacy history audience both on the days themselves but also nearly as many who viewed the recordings after the event.

As a reminder the three talk sessions were entitled:

- 'Pharmacy history: people and places'
- 'Reflecting on pharmacy history through material culture'
- 'Exploring pharmacy's global history'

[YouTube museum films](#)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bXr33f1fiBM>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M1-oEtUwTtc>



The "Behind the Scenes" films on YouTube from the RPS Museum and from the Thackray Museum of Medicine proved extremely popular.

On the left are the relevant links for viewing them.

Events - BSHP's Recent Virtual Events

Our current series of online events has continued to be live-streamed using the Zoom platform with tickets booked and administered using Eventbrite. The latest two are detailed below. You can catch up with all the recordings of our online lectures and discussions on our YouTube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCGycostH8KsAE6JnWDsdlvA>

Monday 26th April

'From Apollo to the ISS – The History of Space Pharmacy'
by Dr Christiane Staiger (Neu Isenberg, Germany) (shown right)

Here we learnt from Christiane everything there is to know about the extensive and vital role that pharmacy played in the preparations for the various US space programmes. She demonstrated just how much effort went into looking after the health and welfare of the astronauts at all stages. The amazing level of detail covered, for example, the specific medicines carried on board and used, as well as the ISS bio-medical kits and details of the various drug therapies employed.



Monday 24th May

'The contribution of the Cairo Geniza to the study of medieval Arabic medicine' by Professor Efraim Lev (Haifa University, Israel). Efraim gave a fascinating account of how 300,000 documents from the 9th Century came to be stored in a Jewish Synagogue in Cairo and then accessed and researched. These give an insight into medicinal practice in medieval Mediterranean countries. Opposite is a leaf from a medical book dealing with different kinds of fevers, their causes, symptoms and treatment.



(Credit: T-S NS 222.73, Cambridge University Library.)

Events -BSHP's Forthcoming Virtual Event

21st June – "How Empire Turned People into Patients: Big Pharma's Early Modern Roots" by Dr Zachary Dorner (University of Maryland).

This will be the fifth in our current series of virtual talks taking place online using our Zoom platform via Eventbrite. All the required links are publicised on the Events page of our website (www.bsph.org/events/), plus on our Facebook page and through our Twitter account. This recording will be available later in June via YouTube.

Information Request via JiscMail

We have an enquiry from Naomi Mews, RPS Chair in Jersey, who wrote "In celebration of 180 years of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society, I was considering writing an article about the history of pharmacy in the Channel Islands". She wonders if anyone might have any recommendations on where to start the research or any particular contacts that might be helpful? If so contact: BSHPHARM@jiscmail.ac.uk.

Events - Other Organisations

British Society for the History of Medicine

BSHM are holding their 2021 Congress at the University of Sheffield 15th-18th September and this is entitled "The History of Medicine in the Workplace".

Full information can be found here: <https://bshm.org.uk/congress-2021/>. BSHP is an affiliated organization so we can take advantage of this when members book BSHM events. You need to have registered on the BSHM website to take advantage of this.

BSHM's new open access, online only, annual journal "Topics in the History of Medicine" has been published. The first issue covers "History of Medicine at Sea" – see <https://bshm.org.uk/thom/v1/>

Contacts

Facebook: British Society for the History of Pharmacy

Twitter: @PharmHist BSHP Secretariat: info@bsph.org JiscMail : BSHPHARM@jiscmail.ac.uk

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Answer - Powder Folder. Ensures all folded powders are the same length (choice of four lengths)