



BSHP Gazette

The Newsletter of the British Society for the History of Pharmacy

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Editorial

A slightly different Gazette this time given our lack of evening meetings, annual conference, AGM and usual activities. So we are very grateful to Dr Chris Duffin, Committee Member and President-Elect for the article in this issue on Paracelsus the famous physician. Given that we were unable to present our Annual Report at the AGM in March we are splitting the content between this issue and the one due in September. We sincerely hope that all our members have stayed safe and well during the lockdown.

News update

SUMMER VISIT – to the Museum of the Order of St John. This was scheduled for 1st July but has had to be cancelled.

BSHP/BSHM JOINT MEETING This had been planned for Worcester in September to see their two medical museums, but like many things it has had to be cancelled. We hope to re-organise this event for 2021, so any expressions of interest can be emailed still to conference@bshp.org.

BURNBY MEMORIAL BURSARY AND RESEARCH GRANT 2021 – The new application forms for these will be available on our website from the beginning of June.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE – Thanks to the efforts of Briony, our Conference Organiser, we have managed to transfer 90% of our advance conference payments from this year to next at the same venue, the Copthorne Hotel in Salford, Manchester. This will be 26th March–28th March 2021.

AGM - We still hope to hold this on October 19th this year (our next scheduled meeting date).

NEW MEMBERS – We welcome Ayesha Thompson, Periodicals Library, University of Nottingham.

Books

- 1) A new book due September from McGill-Queen's University Press is the first in a series on the history of drugs and alcohol. The series, called [Intoxicating Histories](#), is edited by Virginia Berridge, Erika Dyck, and Noelle Plack – their first title is *Taming Cannabis - Drugs and Empire in Nineteenth-Century France* by David A. Guba, Jr.
- 2) Please contact the following who have some old pharmacy books which need a good home:
 - Heather Elliston (h.m.elliston@btinternet.com): BNF, BP, Codex, Poisons Law (1936).
 - Mary Snell (marysnell@gmail.com): BP, Codex, Ship Captain's Medical Guide, Extra Pharmacopoeia, Chemists Veterinary Handbook, Pharmaceutical Pocket Book.
 - Stuart Anderson (stuart.anderson@lshtm.ac.uk) BP, BNF 1968, Poisons Law (1936).

Please email them for further details of editions, availability etc.

Contrasting physical and literary monuments to Paracelsus

Salzburg is a natural destination for those following in the footsteps of certain musical and scientific heroes. There you can find the birthplace of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791), the grave of his sister Maria Anna (also known as Nannerl; 1751-1829), his father Leopold (1719-1797) plus that of Haydn's younger brother Michael (1737-1806), also a composer. Salzburg also contains the house where the mathematician and physicist Christian Andreas Doppler (1803-1853) spent his early years. There is a whole tourist industry focused on visiting the filming locations featured in *The Sound of Music* (1965). For the person with an interest in pharmaceutical history the main draw has to be a little-advertised monument tucked away in a fairly dark corner at the cemetery entrance to St Sebastian's Church and accessed from the cemetery entrance on Linzergasse.

The monument marks the tomb of Paracelsus (1493/4-1541). This Swiss-born chemist, alchemist, physician, philosopher and lay theologian had the full name Philippus Aureolus Theophrastus Bombastus von Hohenheim. Although there is debate over his adoption of the pseudo-humanist name 'Paracelsus' around 1515, whilst studying at Ferrara, the most common explanation is that its meaning, 'beyond Celsus' relates to his opinion that he was a superior physician to the famous Roman, Aurelius Cornelius Celsus of the 1st century.



[This photograph (left) of the Marble tomb of Paracelsus, St Sebastian's Church, Salzburg was taken by the author]

The Latin inscription on the memorial (left) translates as:

"Here lies Philippus Theophrastus, Doctor of Medicine of great renown, whose art most wonderfully healed even the most terrible wounds, leprosy, podagra, dropsy, and other seemingly incurable diseases; and who honoured himself by having all his possessions distributed among the poor. He passed from life to death on September 24 in the year 1541."

The English cleric and historian, Thomas Fuller (1608-1661) gives an interesting sketch of Paracelsus in his *The Holy State* (1642), a work presenting a mix of admirable and 'profane' biographies and which was very popular in Stuart England. Fuller notes that Paracelsus 'boasts that he lived in most Universities of Europe purely rather as a traveller than a student, and a vagrant then a traveller.' Considering claims that he spent 10 years in Arabia and further time in Athens in order to master the medical knowledge available in these centres, Fuller begins to nail his colours to the mast - '[Paracelsus] had not Chronologie enough to tell the clock of time, when and where to place his lies to make them like truth.' It is certainly true that Paracelsus visited universities at Tübingen, Heidelberg, Mainz, Treves, Freiberg, Cologne and Ingolstadt, but came away with the opinion that 'At all the German schools you cannot learn as much as at the Frankfurt fair.' This statement reveals a burgeoning personal sense of his own intellectual superiority at a time when it was believed that all important medical teaching was to be found in the writings of classical and medieval authors. After much further European travel (including through Italy, Spain, France, Portugal, England, Scandinavia, Poland, Russia, Hungary and Croatia) he settled in Salzburg for the first time, practicing as a physician there from 1524-1527. He set up his practice in the premises of a public bathhouse, run by a friend, at Pfeifergasse 11, built directly onto the second city wall. Water from the Alm canal is still piped under the house and was earlier used to drive a mill on the site. Described by Philip Ball as 'reformist in spirit, Catholic by

default, and wildly unorthodox in practice', Paracelsus took his theological message into the surrounding taverns, such as the inn called the *Gulden Zirkhl* situated a few doors down at Pfeifergasse 14. Perhaps this, and his fondness for drink, led Fuller to comment 'His body was the sea wherein the tide of drunkenness was ever ebbing and flowing', and then to connect this with his known personal habits and generosity to the poor in writing 'Every moneth he had a new sute, not for pride but necessity; his apparel serving both for wearing and bedding. And having given his clothes many vomits, he gave them to the poore.'

When Paracelsus arrived in Salzburg, echoes of the Peasant's War were taking place in the city; perhaps it was his outspoken views, proclaimed in polemical literature and oral harangues that led to his eviction after being arrested on suspicion of inciting insurrection. From Salzburg, Paracelsus moved on eventually reaching Basel. Here, he succeeded in alienating almost every person in authority, delivering his University lectures in Swiss German rather than Latin, publishing harshly critical tracts aimed at Basel apothecaries and physicians and reputedly burning the texts of the much-revered Galen and Avicenna in a display of contempt for their ideas. He once wrote 'I do not take my medicines from the apothecaries; their shops are but foul sculleries, from which comes nothing but foul broths let me tell you this: every little hair on my neck knows more than you and all your scribes, and my shoebuckles are more learned than your Galen and Avicenna, and my beard has more experience than all your high colleges.' Eventually, in February 1528, he fled the city; a canon of the Cathedral had offered a reward of 100 guilders to any physician who could cure him of his illness. Attending the cleric, Paracelsus restored him to full health after a couple of days by administering purgatives,

laudanum pills and recommending a strict diet. On claiming the reward, he was given only 6 guilders, which the canon believed to be commensurate with the level of service actually received. Paracelsus took the matter to court but the judges ruled against him, so he was forced to leave the city in high dudgeon. In the words of Thomas Fuller 'the nimbleness of his tongue forc'd the nimbleness of his feet.'

As an itinerant physician, Paracelsus continued to travel, to write polemical politico-theological literature, and to focus on the iatrochemical medicine with which his name is so intimately connected; amongst the titles conferred upon him in later literature he has been hailed as the 'Father of Chemistry', 'Reformer of the materia medica', 'Luther of Medicine', 'Godfather of modern Chemotherapy', 'Founder of medicinal chemistry' and 'Founder of modern toxicology'. Championing the ideas of the Doctrine of Signatures and the correspondences between the Macrocosm and Microcosm, his central thesis was that, rather than trying to heal by readjusting the balances of humours by Galenic treatments such as blood-letting, the 'natural virtues' of chemical remedies could be used. These virtues inherent in herbs, animals and stones needed to be liberated by their alchemical separation from the dross.

Paracelsus returned to Salzburg, lodging at Platzl 3 on the right bank of the River Salzach as an ailing man, and died there on 24 September 1541. At his request, his remains were buried in the graveyard at St Sebastian's Church. They suffered two reburials – once in 1572 when a new chapel was added to the church, and then in 1752 to the marble tomb where they now lie. Fuller's summing up of Paracelsus was that he was 'of more parts than learning, of more fame than parts, a better Physician than a man, and a better Chirurgeon than Physician.'

Further Reading

Ball, P. 2007. *The Devil's Doctor. Paracelsus and the World of Renaissance Magic and Science*. London: Arrow Books.

Fuller, T. 1642. *The Holy State*. Cambridge: John Williams.

Soukup, R.W. 2007. *Chemie in Österreich: von den Anfängen bis zum Ende des 18 Jahrhunderts*. Vienna: Böhlau Verlag.

Webster, C. 2008. *Paracelsus. Medicine, Magic and Mission at the End of Time*. New Haven & London: Yale University Press.

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Annual Report 2019 Highlights - Part 1 (Part 2 in next issue)

Annual General Meeting -The 52nd BSHP AGM was held on Sunday, 31st March 2019 at the Best Western Royal Beach Hotel, Southsea, Portsmouth. The following office bearers were confirmed/elected: President: Mr P G Homan; Vice-President: Dr C Duffin; Hon. Treasurer: Mrs D Bishop; Hon. Secretary: Mr R T Allcorn. The audited 2018 Annual Accounts were agreed by the membership.

Membership Total membership (including Honorary Members) at 31st December 2019 was 140. Movements in the year had been: New members: +7 ; Removed/Lapsed/Resigned: -13. The agreed subscription increase to £30 was instigated and for the most part this was well received and successfully implemented. However it was a challenge for some mainly because at least nine members did not update their old £20 Standing Order with the bank. Then they did not pay the shortfall of £10 despite a reminder invoice and a personal letter.

On the positive side 16 members took up the option of paying by Direct Debit rather than by Standing Order. Some however didn't cancel their old bank payment instructions requiring a few refunds. One member overseas, however after our offer, elected to have all his mailings sent electronically as pdfs.

Meetings/Events The following were held during 2019:

Monday 4th February: A joint evening meeting at the UCL School of Pharmacy, Brunswick Square, London was held where Professor Anne Charlton gave a talk entitled "The treatment of Henry VIII's *sore legge*".

Monday 13th May: A joint evening meeting at the UCL School of Pharmacy, Brunswick Square, London was held where Professor Clare Fowler gave talk entitled "The Pharmacopoeia Londinensis 1618 and its descendants".

Friday 12th July: Our Summer visit was to the National Archives, Kew for a "Behind the Scenes" tour. Twelve members enjoyed an overview of the history of the archive its aims and activities with specific emphasis on the types of material kept and conserved including some documents relevant to a pharmacy / pharmaceutical audience.

Monday 14th October: A joint evening meeting at the UCL School of Pharmacy, Brunswick Square, London was held where Henrietta McBurney Ryan gave a talk entitled "Animal Vegetable, Mineral and....Dr John Addenbrooke's Cabinet of Materia Medica".

November 2019: Once again this year we were unable to arrange a joint meeting between the Society and a School of Pharmacy.

Annual Spring Conference 2019, Southsea, Portsmouth

There were 49 participants overall including 24 members of the Society and 11 pharmacy students. The conference theme was pharmacy and the sea – maritime history, medicines and trade, and overseas influences on British pharmacy. Friday's dinner was followed by a talk by Andrew Whitmarsh (The D-Day Story) on Portsmouth and D-Day.

The following short papers were given on the Saturday morning:

- Darek Gorecki *One hundred years of pharmacy education in Portsmouth*
- Chris Duffin *John Woodall and 'The Surgeon's Mate' (1617)*
- Ayman Atat *Oxymel in Ottoman Pharmacy*
- Peter Homan *Highlights of an ephemera collection*
- Stuart Anderson *Pharmacy and migration: James Butler Swann (1834-1901) and his three sons in New Zealand, Fiji and Samoa 1862-1936*

The Saturday afternoon visit to the Mary Rose Museum was very successful with 2 guided tours accommodating 29 delegates. The Saturday evening dinner was followed by a quiz.

Sunday's proceedings began with the Annual General Meeting. This was followed by the Burnby Memorial Bursary talk from Katrina Maydom titled *Consuming New World drugs in Early Modern London: James Petiver's apothecary practice*. The conference closed with a paper from Jane Wickenden (Institute of Naval Medicine) *V Antim Tart, Emp Lyttae and others: naval pharmacy on a river expedition in Africa, 1825*

Posters were presented by:

- Norma Cox : *Eleven chemists and druggist in Edwardian Portsmouth*
- Florian Eidam : *Historical research from the British colonies: a grass from Africa as a repellent*
- Shirley Ellis : *The uses of seaweeds through the ages and sea sickness through the ages*

Following the popularity of non-resident and day fees at previous conferences, this was again offered and taken up by a number of delegates. It was particularly pleasing to have both students and staff attending from Portsmouth School of Pharmacy, obviously encouraged by the conference opening with a talk from a staff member in the School's centenary year.

Helped by the fabulous weather and seafront location, the conference again successfully met our aims of attracting members and non-members to share a common interest in pharmacy history in an enjoyable and welcoming atmosphere.

Accessing pharmacy history material at home

The Royal Pharmaceutical Society's Museum has material on the RPS website:

<https://www.rpharms.com/about-us/museum/learning-resources>

The archive of Pharmaceutical Historians (1967-2016) can be accessed via the University of Braunschweig using: <http://publikationsserver.tu-braunschweig.de/get/65362>.

More recent issues from the start of 2017 are available online as open access pdfs through Ingenta Connect. Use this link to access them: <http://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/bshp>.

Remember also all the digitised pharmacy history material on the Wellcome Library website.

Contacts

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