

# The Hampshire apothecary's book

## An 18th century medical manuscript in the Baillieu Library

Dorothea Rowse

Pharmacopoeias and formularies have a long and venerable history and most medical libraries own big collections of them.<sup>1</sup> The University of Melbourne Library is no exception and holds a rich collection of printed pharmacopoeias, some dating back to the 16th and 17th centuries.<sup>2</sup>

Ownership of the manuscript form is somewhat less common, but an interesting example was acquired for the University's Medical Rare Books Collection some years ago.<sup>3</sup>

The manuscript was created between about 1727 and 1740 by the unknown owner of an anatomy atlas who used the verso of many of the plates to create a cross between a pharmacopoeia and a prescription book. The anatomy atlas that was given this somewhat cavalier treatment was a copy of William Cowper's *The anatomy of humane bodies*. Cowper was a surgeon, anatomist and author who worked in London in the last decades of the 17th century. His elephant folio-sized atlas, first published in 1698, consisted of his own text accompanied by plates purchased from the publishers of Govard Bidloo's *Anatomia humani corporis*, and nine additional plates drawn by Henry Cook.<sup>4</sup> The whole was published in England without mention of Bidloo, who protested

loudly about plagiarism. The book went into several editions and was highly regarded as an anatomy text during the 18th century. The copy which was acquired for the University Library shows signs of heavy usage. The title page, endpapers and covers and several introductory plates are missing and many pages are ink-stained and damaged.

The owner of the book was clearly an apothecary, possibly a member of that group of apothecary/surgeons who delivered the primary health care that was most common at that time. They bled patients, dressed wounds, prescribed remedies and they also made up prescriptions for physicians and others. They sold herbs and prepared medicines for home consumption and also specialised in exotic groceries such as tea. Many were also scientists and it has been suggested that the apothecary's shop was not only 'the local centre for scientific talk, [and] experimentation' but also a centre for 'medical education and research'.<sup>5</sup>

The apothecary owner of the book would have had access to a number of printed pharmacopoeias, both official and privately compiled. The London Pharmacopoeia, which provides a good example of the genre, focussed on the *materia medica*, which listed the available ingredients, and the

simples which were arranged by category; no attempt was made to link remedies to medical conditions.<sup>6</sup> Thomas Fuller's *Pharmacopoeia extemporanea* attempted to fill this gap by including a 'copious index for the assistance of young physicians', which linked medical conditions and the appropriate remedy.<sup>7</sup> Apothecaries of the time also kept a prescription book which provided a record of medicines supplied. Details such as the date of the prescription, the name of the prescribing physician, the costs, the person for whom it was intended, the dosage and the prescription itself were included.<sup>8</sup>

The areas of medical education and research noted above may hold the key to the impetus for compiling this manuscript. The University's manuscript is an interesting attempt to combine elements of the pharmacopoeias and prescription books used at that time, and it would seem that its owner was experimenting with using medical conditions rather than remedies as the primary access point. A page or more was allocated to each of 34 different diseases or groups of diseases. The medical condition was carefully linked to the dissection illustrated on the plate for most diseases, but the selection was made in the light of knowledge at that time. For example,

‘The Ninth Table: The whole brain taken out of the skull ...’, from William Cowper, *The anatomy of humane bodies: With figures drawn after the life by some of the best masters in Europe, and curiously engraven in one hundred and fourteen copper plates, illustrated with large explications, containing many new anatomical discoveries, and chyrurgical observations: To which is added an introduction explaining the animal oeconomy, with a copious index*, Oxford: Printed at the Theater, for Sam. Smith and Benj. Walford ... London, 1698. Purchased with funds from the bequest of Mrs F.M. Meyer. Medical Rare Books Collection, University of Melbourne.

remedies for angina were placed on a plate depicting the oesophagus because in the 18th century it was considered to be ‘a disease of the gullet and throat arising from stagnant blood’.<sup>9</sup> The information supplied for each condition included some general comments about drug treatment, followed by a list of remedies, a small number of which were linked to a named patient and the sort of detail normally included in a prescription book. Occasionally space was left for a block of text that was never copied in and the content of the book seems to be incomplete. Despite the provision of about 1,000 recipes, there is a notable absence of any remedies for cuts and abrasions and associated infections, sprains, and more serious injuries.

When all the information was combined with Cowper’s text and the illustration of the anatomy concerned, a resource resembling a textbook was created. It allowed the user to access the information either by medical condition or via the anatomical plate. The information given for each disease provided a comprehensive list of available remedies, evidence of remedies that had been used for named patients, a guide to the physicians recommended for particular medical conditions (for example Dr Langerish was only



consulted on gynaecological matters), and a record of patients who had been treated for serious medical illnesses. It is not clear whether this method of organising a pharmacopoeia was completely original at that time or whether the creator may have seen other examples elsewhere. The book would have provided an excellent resource for the instruction of apprentices and an *aide memoire* for the apothecary himself. It was also a very convenient way to pass on knowledge of the simples that he had found useful, or had created himself,

and which used ingredients that were locally available. A comparison of the *materia medica* at the start of the book and some of the recipes with those in other publications suggests that he used a limited range of basic ingredients and his recipes were simpler.

One of the fascinating aspects of the manuscript is the information it provides about a community of medical men working in the first half of the 18th century. Fifteen medics—in addition to the creator of the manuscript—appear in the book, and



who held a medical degree from Rheims, were the most popular of the physicians listed and prescribed for medical conditions such as fever. A whole page in the manuscript was devoted to the treatment by Dr Cuthbert of one case of testicular disease. He later became the director of the Hospital for Sick and Wounded Seamen at Haslar near Gosport.

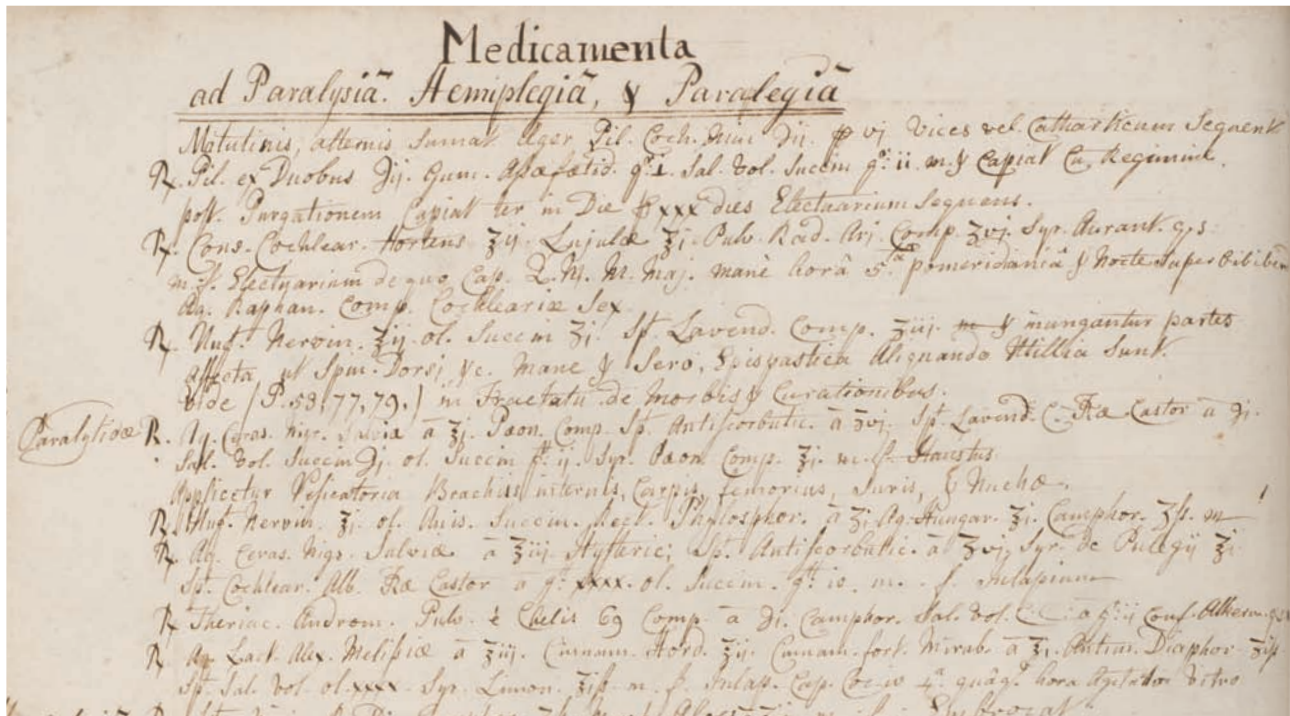
The rest of the medics can be identified as surgeons and/or apothecaries. They were likely to have been reasonably local, although Francis Tribe, who practised in Marlborough in Wiltshire, seems to have been consulted while on visits to his family in Hambleton. His brother Richard Tribe, the surgeon, lived in Hambleton, as did the wonderfully named apothecary Sacheverel Try. Dr John Phillips was an apothecary/surgeon at West Meon, not far from Hambleton.<sup>11</sup>

The named patients make up a very important component of the detail in the book. Names such as Snuggs, Pincke, Bruning, Hogsflesh and Souter made searching for them in official records very rewarding. About half of the 93 identifiable patients were found to live in the vicinity of Hambleton in Hampshire and this was probably the centre of the practice. There were also some

clusters of names that were based further away, for example at Alton. Hambleton is now a traditional village in the Meon Valley, with a claim to being the original home of cricket.<sup>12</sup> In the early 18th century it was the centre of a farming community with a thriving population of merchants. Grocers, maltsters, innkeepers and a cloth shop and wool loft owner all appear amongst the patients, largely dominated by agricultural workers and yeomen. The community was affected by the national politics of the time. In 1716, just two years after the accession of George I, there was a violent clash at a race meeting between local Whig supporters of the King and the vicar and other Jacobite supporters in the community.<sup>13</sup> In 1725 the village split along a different faultline when 16 parishioners, many of whom were numbered amongst the apothecary's patients, met to agree not to pay the costs of the rather litigious churchwarden Henry Barlow in his two-year legal battle with another churchwarden John Collins. They were prepared to set up a fighting fund and hire a lawyer. Barlow had his supporters amongst the wealthier gentry and this appears to be a disagreement with class overtones.<sup>14</sup> In 1726, at just about the time that the apothecary was starting to

compile his book, a disastrous fire destroyed a large portion of the village.<sup>15</sup>

Most of the patients were adults and included a substantial number of women with gynaecological problems and an even greater number of the elderly afflicted by all the ailments that currently beset the aged: respiratory and digestive problems, stroke and heart disease. From time to time there were outbreaks of fever in the village, mainly in the autumn and winter. Depression, then described as 'languor', was evident amongst the older patients. As might be expected many of the patients were identifiable as coming from the more affluent part of local society. There were a few members of the gentry such as the elderly 'Madame Bilson', the widow of Thomas Bilson of West Mapledurham Manor in Buriton and the sister of the Earl of Dartmouth. Clergymen also featured, an example being John Sutton, the vicar at Hambleton from 1724 to 1730, treated by Dr Bailey for fever in 1733. Captain Edmond Hook, a retired naval man, lived in Hambleton and was treated by Dr Cuthbert for breathing difficulties and some sort of seizure in 1738. There were a number of merchants such as Titus Allen, an innkeeper of Alton, who was treated for kidney disease from which he died



in 1727; or Richard Hunt, a maltster of Hambleton, who was treated by Dr Smith for breathing difficulties and diarrhoea in 1729. Examples of the wealthy yeomen patients who farmed in the valley included the Barlow family of Hambleton and the Goldsmiths of Hambleton Chidden Farm.

Since all pages at the start of the book which might have indicated ownership of the manuscript are

missing, it seems unlikely that it will ever be possible to identify the apothecary with any certainty—but it has proved possible to make a reasonable guess. Having established the possible location of the practice, a search through Wallis's extraordinary publication *Eighteenth century medics* provided the names of two apothecaries working in Hambleton at the dates given in the book. One of the apothecaries, Sacheverel Try, was

included in the manuscript as one of the consulting medics and so was unlikely to be its author.

The other name given was Edward Hale, an apothecary and barber surgeon.<sup>16</sup> The first reference is to a surgeon living in Hambleton from about 1720 to about 1783, probably two men of the same name since the man practising in 1720 was unlikely to have been in practice in 1783. The second man is likely to

have been Edward, the son of the older Edward, also an apothecary in Hambledon, who took on an apprentice in 1760. A surgeon and farmer who lived in a house behind the George Inn, he married Martha Barlow in December 1761 and they had two children baptised in Hambledon. His son, another Edward, was still living in the village in the early years of the 19th century. The elder Edward Hale seems to be a likely candidate to have been the author of the manuscript.

This book provides a wealth of information on the community of Hambledon and the lives of its scientifically minded apothecary and his colleagues and patients. It highlights the role of the apothecary in 18th century England and while research to date suggests that this practice was typical of many in England at the time, further work is needed to put the practice into a comparative perspective. Some of the questions still to be answered include whether this format was largely original and if not, from where did the owner get his ideas; whether the remedies included are typical of the period and what variations from those in published sources can be identified; and further research on the patients and the other medics. The book has turned out to be a very valuable

acquisition for the Library and will certainly repay continued research.

Dorothea Rowse is a retired academic librarian and an Honorary Fellow of the School of Historical Studies at the University of Melbourne. She was Sciences Librarian at the University for ten years, during which time her responsibilities included the development of the Medical Rare Books Collection and she started her research on this manuscript. She has a Bachelor of Arts from the University of London and a Master of Arts in history from the University of South Africa.

#### Notes

- 1 A pharmacopoeia is 'a book, especially one published by authority, containing a list of drugs and medicines and describing their preparation, properties, uses, etc.', *Macquarie dictionary*, rev. 3rd ed., North Ryde, NSW: Macquarie Library, 2003.
- 2 For example, Collegio de' Signori Medici di Bergamo, *La farmacoepa o'antidotario dell'eccellentissimo Collegio de' signori medici di Bergamo ...*, translated by Tito Sanpellegrino, Venice: Nicolo Moretti, 1597. Medical Rare Books Collection, University of Melbourne. Presented by the Friends of the Baillieu Library.
- 3 William Cowper, *The anatomy of humane bodies: With figures drawn after the life by some of the best masters in Europe, and curiously engraven in one hundred and fourteen copper plates, illustrated with large explications, containing many new anatomical discoveries, and chirurgical observations: To which is added an introduction explaining the animal oeconomy, with a copious index*, Oxford: Printed at the Theater, for Sam. Smith and Benj. Walford ... London, 1698. The University's annotated copy was purchased with funds from the bequest of Mrs F.M. Meyer, a generous donation which has funded many outstanding additions to the Medical Rare Books Collection over the years.
- 4 Govard Bidloo, *Anatomia humani corporis ...*, Amsterdam: Sumptibus viduae Joannis à

Someren, haeredum Joannis à Dyk, Henrici & viduae Theodori Boom, 1685. The Medical Rare Books Collection holds a 1972 facsimile edition of the Bidloo work, part of the Roy Douglas Wright Collection.

- 5 John M.T. Ford, 'Apothecaries' roles reassessed', *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine*, vol. 76, no. 8, August 1983, p. 634.
- 6 Royal College of Physicians of London, *The pharmacopoeia ...*, first published in 1618. Various editions appeared throughout the century, with a vastly revised edition appearing in 1721. The University's Medical Rare Books Collection holds: Royal College of Physicians of London, *Pharmacopoeia Collegii Londinensis ...*, 9th ed., London: 1680.
- 7 Thomas Fuller, *Pharmacopoeia extemporanea ...*, London: Printed for W. Innys, 1714. A copy of the second edition is held in Special Collections, Baillieu Library. Part of the bequest of Sir Russell and Lady (Mab) Grimwade, it is inscribed by William Ware (1728) and J.R.M. Thomson (1880) and bears the bookplate of Wm. Allison.
- 8 Steven King, 'Accessing drugs in the eighteenth century regions', in Louisa Curth (ed.), *From physick to pharmacology: Five hundred years of British drug retailing*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006, p. 61, note 57.
- 9 William Buchan, *Domestic medicine, or, The family physician ...*, Edinburgh: Printed by Balfour, Auld and Smellie, 1769. The Baillieu Library's copy of this book was also presented by the estate of Mrs F.M. Meyer.
- 10 King, 'Accessing drugs', p. 64.
- 11 P.J. and R.V. Wallis, *Eighteenth century medics (subscriptions, licences, apprenticeships)*, 2nd ed., Newcastle upon Tyne: Project for Historical Biobibliography, 1988.
- 12 John Goldsmith, *Hambledon: The biography of a Hampshire village*, Chichester: Phillimore, 1994, p. 5.
- 13 Goldsmith, *Hambledon*, p. 65.
- 14 Covenant by 16 parishioners of Hambledon, February 1725. Pink Family Papers, 23M76/2, Hampshire Record Office.
- 15 Goldsmith, *Hambledon*, p. 67.
- 16 Wallis, *Eighteenth century medics*, p. 573.