

## REMEDIES FROM THE ARCHIVES

### From the Northumberland Archive

Visiting the Northumberland Archive, held at Woodhorn colliery museum, there are many records that provide an insight into past centuries' treatment of health and disease. Here are a few of them.

#### **To make Fern Soap**

c. 1800

Mow the fern towards Autumn, before it turns brown and whilst the green is fresh upon it. Burn it in heaps, as they do kelp, and with a little water makes the ashes up into balls which must be dried in the sun. It will wash linen nearly as well as common soap

SANT/PRI/5/3

#### **Honey of Roses for a Sore Mouth, Throat or Gums**

c. 1800

With boiling hot water, make a strong infusion of red rose buds, the white parts being cut off. Strain it and add as much honey as will make it a strong syrup. The boil it, taking off all the scum and when it is cold, bottle it.

This is good for all sores in the mouth and throat and cancer in the gums especially if you take your own water and quench it with hot cinders, then mix it with honey of roses and wash your mouth, teeth and gums night and morning. When no salve will work, this will heal.

SANT/PRI/5/3

#### **For the cramp**

c. 1800 Rosemary

leaves, chopped small and sewn into fine linen to make a garter, which is tied round the leg, next the skin.

SANT/PRI/5/3

#### **For Burns**

c. 1800

At Rome on 10<sup>th</sup> March 1789, a lady had the misfortune to be severely burned over almost the whole of her body when her clothes caught fire. To give temporary care, a domestic had recourse to some honey that lay at hand and which had so good an effect that, at the end of 9 days, she was perfectly cured by use of this remedy alone.

SANT/PRI/5/3

#### **Dr. Darwin's Decoction of Foxglove for Dropsy, Scurvy etc.**

c. 1796

This genuine recipe of the late Dr Darwin of Derby, given by him as an effectual remedy for the dropsy before tapping, was also recommended by that celebrated physician in all scrophulous and scorbutic complaints.

Take 4oz of leaves, boil in a quart of water till reduced to a pint, add a tablespoon of brandy and cork it up close for use.

Of this decoction, the patient must take a small tablespoonful at going to rest and another at 11o'clock the next morning. Should this prove too violent, the above quantity must only be taken at bedtime.

In cases of scurvy etc. where the patient is not too far reduced and particularly where the lungs are ulcerated, it is of highest use. As, however, it is a powerful remedy, caution must be taken in administering it to patients of a tender age.

SANT/PRI/5/1

**Valuable Properties of the Elder Tree**

c. 1796

1. Saving turnip from fly
2. Preserving wheat from yellows
3. Preserving fruit trees from blight
4. Preserving cabbage plants from caterpillar

Dwarf elder is the most potent. Throw leaves over the ground or strike fruit tree with the twigs.

SANT/PRI/5/1

**An Excellent Prescription to Prevent Infection in Case of Contagious Disorders**

c.1796

Take 1 handful of

- Rue, Wormwood, Sage, Lavender, Mint, Rosemary

Place in stone jar. Add one gallon of best vinegar, cover and leave to infuse for 8 days. Strain off.

To every quart bottle, put ¾ oz. of Camphire\*. (Dissolve Camphire before putting in bottles).

Rub temples and loins with this before going out in the morning, wash the mouth, snuff some up into the nostrils and carry on a piece of sponge (dipped) to smell at.

*\*Camphire is a waxy substance from the Camphor Laurel (Cinnamomum camphora) from Asia.*

SANT/PRI/5/1

**From 'A Book of Physicke & Chyrugery' Edward Potter**

1610

This was the oldest record (actually, a book) that I found in the archive. I had expected a magazine when I requested a particular reference, but a thick book appeared instead. Started in 1610 by an Edward Potter of Tynemouth, it was added to over the following 2 centuries by various un-named people. At the beginning of this hand-written book, Edward Potter starts by listing each month with a number of 'evil days' each month and a number of 'not so evil' days. Each month also includes an abjuration of what to eat and drink in each month.

January	Drink white wine this month
February	Eat no potage of okes or mallows – they are venomous
March	All sweetmeats are good this month
April	Use hot meats of light digestion
May	Rise early and breakfast
June	Sage and lettuce are good to eat; Cold water fasting does not hurt.
July	Abstain from carnality
August	It hurteth not to abstain from Potage and all hot meats and drinks of Spicerye
September	Eat good fruit
October	Good wine is wholesome this month
November	Bleed not.
December	Bleed not overmuch. Warm not thy legges at the fire.

In the medicine of the time (Humoral medicine), foods and drinks had qualities of heating or cooling; moistening or drying and with various degrees in between, for example 'Hot meats' included chicken, veal and lamb which were also 'moistening'; Beef was a cooling and drying food.

SANT/BEQ/19/1/1

**A Good Watter to Kill Ringworm or Tetter\*****1610**

Take a great handful of sallendine leaves and stalks [Greater Celandine, *Chelidonium majus*] and pound it in a mortar, and in the pounding put in a quarter of a handful of cleane bay salt that never touched fish. And when it is pounded enough, then strain out all the juice and put in an earthen pipkin. Boil till skum is thick. Skim and strain. Use it as necessary: Pour a little onto a saucer, warm it and wash the sore.

\**Tetter – a skin disease such as eczema or ringworm*

SANT/BEQ/19/1/1

**For Memory****1610**

Add frankincense powder in wine when the weather is cold; add it in water when the weather is hot.

SANT/BEQ/19/1/1

**To Make Surfett Water****1763**

Take ½lb each of

Poppies	(Poppy - <i>Papaver somnifera</i> )
Agremony	(Agrimony – <i>Agrimonia eupatoria</i> )
Wormwood	(Wormwood – <i>Artemisia absinthum</i> )
Sallendine	(Greater Celandine – <i>Chelidonium majus</i> )
Angellicoe	(Angelica – <i>Angelica archangelica</i> )
Sage	(Sage – <i>Salvia officinalis</i> )
Tormentil with roots	(Tormentil – <i>Potentilla erecta</i> )
Scabies	(probably Devil’s bit Scabious - <i>Scabiosa succisa</i> )
Balm	(Lemon Balm – <i>Melissa officinalis</i> )
Red Pimpernelle	(Scarlet pimpernel – <i>Anagallis arvensis</i> )
Cardus	(Milk Thistle – <i>Silybum marianum</i> )
Dragons	(Tarragon – <i>Artemisia dracuncululus</i> )
Fetherfew	(Feverfew – <i>Tanacetum parthenium</i> )
Wood Sorrel	(Wood Sorrel – <i>Oxalis acetosella</i> )
Avens	(Avens / Herb Bennet – <i>Geum urbanum</i> )
Butterby	(Butterburr – <i>Petasites alba or vulgaris</i> )
Rue	(Rue – <i>Ruta graveolens</i> )
Marigold leaves and flowers	(Marigold – <i>Calendula officinalis</i> )
Allicompain roots	(Elecampane – <i>Inula helenium</i> )
Wood dittany	(poss Wood Betony – <i>Stachys betonica</i> ; or Dittany of Crete – <i>Origanum dictamnus</i> )

And take 1lb of

Rosemary	(Rosemary - <i>Rosmarinus officinalis</i> )
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Keep in Brandy

SANT/BEQ/19/1/1

This book (SANT/BEQ/19/1/1) has many more writings and remedies and would be well worth exploring in more detail.