

Inventory of William White, apothecary, Basingstoke 26 September 1636

Explanation of items found in his shop (reference letters are explained below)

Sope (sic): Often used as a bulking agent in handmade pills. Pellets of soap used as laxative suppositories. Also used in water solution for enemas. (i.e. Soap not just used to wash the apothecary's hands!) D. p.201

White starch: Used in poultices for skin complaints. Constituent of dusting powder. E. p.715
Also used by dyers to dispose their stuffs to take colours the better. N. p.3063

Blue hot waters: No information found.

Liquorishe (sic): Liquorice, also known as Spanish juice. Ingredient in cough mixtures, and in laxatives. Sometimes used to soothe symptoms of stomach ulcers. D. p.130
According to Culpepper it could be useful in a great number of complaints, including respiratory problems such as TB, urinary troubles and irritation of the eyes. A. p.150

Aniseed: Seed of the anise plant. Aniseed oils used as antispasmodics, analgesics and cardiac stimulants. E. pp. 44. 549

Vinegar: Found in many home remedies. Believed to be helpful in cases of fever, headache and sore throats. Used during outbreaks of the plague to disinfect coins. D. p.232
A medicine of excellent use in all kinds of inflammatory and putrid disorders. Weakness, fainting, vomiting, hysterical and hypochondriacal complaints have also been frequently relieved by vinegar. N. p.3353

Round and longe pepp[er] graynes (sic): Peppers used externally as a counter irritant. Also taken by mouth to stimulate digestion and decrease flatulence. E. p.580

Nuttmeggs (sic): Used as a tonic and an aid to digestion. D. p.153
Stops vomiting, excellent remedy for flatulence, and conjoined with rhubarb is a cure for diarrhoea. N. p.2276

Cinnamon: Used as a stimulant for the stomach and as an anti-spasmodic. D. p.55

Cloves: Oil of cloves used to reduce the pain of toothache or gumboils. Oil of cloves also rubbed on the chest when treating a cold. D. p.56

Mace: An aromatic oil can be made from mace and used to rub on children's navels to cure gripes and rubbed on the temples to promote sleep. N. p.1987.

Ginger: "Helps digestion, warms the stomach, clears the sight and is profitable for old men". Also treated gout. A. p.97
Ginger was added to many homemade aperients and purgatives. D. p.97
"It is particularly said to strengthen the memory ... and has the credit of being a great provocative to venery." N. p.1437

Saffron: Believed to stimulate the circulation and increase perspiration. D. p.185
Given in cases of jaundice. D. p.118

According to Nicholas Culpepper saffron was an excellent remedy when used to treat epidemical diseases such as plague, smallpox and measles. A. p.228

“It is of almost immediate relief against fainting and palpitations of the heart; it also strengthens the stomach and assists digestion. It is of great use in disorders of the breast arising from the lungs being loaded with a rough phlegm ... Women with child, and those who have profluvia of the menses, are never to meddle with it ... Convulsive laughter is an uncommon effect of an immoderate use of saffron, and there are not wanting instances of people who have died in that state.” N. p.2831

Almonds: Almond oil was used as a laxative. F. p.859

Dates: Prescribed for diarrhoea, for weaknesses of the stomach and for strengthening the womb. N. p.850

Olaves (sic): Probably olives to make olive oil which was used as a lubricant to ease earache and to soothe the symptoms of stomach ulcers. Also a cure for flatulence. D. p.155

Olive oil used as a cure for costiveness and gripes. N. p.2300

Capers: Mention of oil of capers but medicinal use not given.

Tumericke (sic): “Opens obstructions” (? of the bowels). Also used to treat jaundice and problems of the liver and spleen. A. p.312

Ffennegricke (sic): Fenugreek. Used externally for pains, bruises, etc. N. p.1291

Sugars: Probably to sweeten concoctions made by the apothecary.

Raysons (sic): No information found.

Corents (sic): Currants believed to be useful in colds, coughs and fever as it was used as an expectorant. C. p.90

Prunes: An aperient.

Molasses: Sometimes taken as a tonic in the spring to rid the body of “winter toxins”. Molasses is a good source of iron and calcium. G. p.174

Gunpowder shot: Not a clue!

Hoppes (sic): In the C17 hops were used for many complaints such as cleansing the blood, preventing and treating skin conditions such as ringworm, to get rid of intestinal worms, cure jaundice etc. A. p.135

Antidote against poison, and cures the itch. N. p.1646

Brimstone: Old name for sulphur. Used widely. Burned as a disinfectant - “bad” air believed to cause much illness. Used in skin lotions in cases of skin conditions, and also to treat rheumatism. Also a gentle laxative. E. p.730

Wax: An ingredient of ointments, plasters and suppositories. E. p.841

White ledd (sic) Both used in lotions on painful areas such as inflamed joints, bruises and

Red ledd (sic) Given to relieve itching skin such as in eczema. Used in the making of plasters. Can check diarrhoea and used to treat bleeding haemorrhoids. E. p.438

Litharge: Lead monoxide.

“Soluble in oil, and thus dissolved makes the basis of a great part of the ointments and plasters in the shops ... is of great use in cleansing ulcers.” N. p.1944

Gales: Possibly galls. These come from abnormal growths on plants caused by parasites. Have astringent qualities and were used powdered in ointments. Often mixed with opium as a treatment for haemorrhoids. Tannic acid also extracted from galls, and used to stop bleeding and discharges from nose, throat, bowels and womb. F. p.867

Possibly Galangales, an Herb, whose root is hot and dry in the 3rd degree, coming from East India, and much used in Physick. K.

Coppis (sic): If this is “copperas” it could be used as an emetic though in large doses could cause death. F. p.1024

Allom (sic): Alum was used medicinally to stop bleeding.

Wax books: Perhaps blocks of wax which was used as an ingredient in some ointments, plasters and suppositories. E. p.841

Wax candles

Pitch: A form of tar. Sometimes used in the making of poultices which were placed on the chest to clear chest infections. D. p.163

Fumes from heated tar used as an inhalant in cases of whooping cough and respiratory infections. Used as an expectorant. D. p.212

Tar ointments used to treat skin diseases such as eczema, psoriasis and ringworm. F. p.918

Rossin (sic): Probably resin which was included in ointments to treat indolent ulcers.

Rosin: This substance in a solid state obtained as a residue after the distillation of oil of turpentine from crude turpentine. ... Rosin oil, an oil obtained from the resin of the pine tree used by painters and for lubricating machinery. Rosin (v) to seal over or smear with rosin; to rub (*esp.* a violin bow or string) with rosin. OED.

Tallow candles

Ruddle cocker (sic) Red ochre. No medical references found.

Ruddle: a sort of red Chalk. L.

Modern definition of ruddle: red ochreous iron ore, used in dyeing or marking. Possibly used to mark sheep (see the reddleman in Hardy’s *Return of the Native*).

Turpentine: Untreated turpentine is dangerous but distilled as an oil or spirit of turpentine was used in counter-irritants, inhalants, liniments and to treat worms. F. p.872

Used for clearing the urinary passages; prescribed for gonorrhoea. N. p.3304

Nayles (sic): Nails.

Salt: Used in water as a gargle. D. p.188

Also used to treat heat exhaustion. No longer in use for either of these conditions. G. p.101
Common ingredient in clysters, used to soften and bring away hardened faeces. Suppositories are also made of salt mixed with honey. N. p.2844

Paper

Corke (sic): Used as stoppers for medicine bottles?

Whitinge (sic): Whiting. No medical references. Possibly ground chalk used to colour pills.

Washballs: Probably soap for the laundry, or a scented ball of hand soap.

Turnesole: Another name for the sunflower. Has been known to be used for medical preparations for intestinal problems. H. p.210

Turnsole: A Plant so named, because its lowers turn towards the Course of the Sun. L.
Also used for dyeing textiles and as a food colorant.

Methridate: A purging plant used in enemata. Also used to treat sciatica. Resists poison, venom and putrefaction. A. p.256

Mithridate Venetiae VID.

Mithridate: (call'd after its inventor, Mithridates, King of Pontus) a Concoction that is a special Preservative against Poison. L.

A compound medicine [huge list of ingredients] used as a remedy against poisons, also as a cordial and an opiate. N. p.2126

Dascordium: No medical references.

London Triacle: This might be a C17 version of treacle which was used as a prophylactic against bites and poisons. J. p.138

There was a purgative called Venice Treacle. B. p.14

Aloes: Acts as a purgative.

Rhubarb: Used as a gentle purgative. A. p. 318

Also given “with great success” to people with gonorrhoea. N. p.2784

Agricke: Could be “agaricus muscarius” which is a poison. F. p.599

Agaricus or Agarick VID

One of various species of polyporus – a cathartic OED.

Sena (sic): Senna - another purgative. C. p.250. Also see entry below.

Sallop: No medical reference found. It is possible that it is “sena sallop” - see entry above.

Mechoacon: “Purges flegm (sic) chiefly from head and joints”. Also used to treat coughs, and venereal disease. A. p.315

A purging Root like Briony, taken from the West-Indies. K.

Turbith: A Herb of a violent purging Quality. L.

Sassafras: Promotes sweating. Remedy for scurvy and “foulness of the blood”. Was used to treat venereal disease though there was controversy whether it was effective. C. p.243
Used in a lotion to combat head lice.

Sarsapilla: Also spelt Sarsaperilla. Variety of uses especially as a tonic in cases of long-term illness. C. p.242

Sarsaperilla, Sassifras, both used much in the Cure of the Venereal Disease. K.

Gaicum Hermodac: Also spelt Hermodactyli. Used to purge the patient of phlegm, good in treatment of gout. A. p.314

Hermodactylus VID.

Hermodactyl: Mercury’s finger, a root imported from Egypt or Syria of a purgative quality, but not much used of late. M.

“The dried roots as we have them in the shops are a gentle purge, and have the credit of being particularly good in rheumatic disorders.” N. p.1613

Scammony: Used as a purgative. Believed to reduce the fluid in dropsy. C. p.249

Purging bindweed. K.

Cassia fistula: In the same family as cinnamon. An aromatic. F. p.595

An Arabian Shrub, that purges. K.

Radice: Probably radish which was thought to be good for scurvy. Also treated intestinal worms in children. A. p.210

Believed to be an excellent remedy for small renal calculi. F. 222

Chinae mirabolus: No medical reference found.

Mirabolans VID.

Mirobolans: a type of plum. M.

Opium: A narcotic and analgesic. Used extensively in the past despite the risk of overdose and addiction. D. p.156

Removes melancholy and eases pain. N. p.2311

Vermillion: Red pigment, probably used to colour pills or powders.

Mercurie (sic): Mercury was used as a disinfectant, as a dressing for eczema and in ointments. In the past used extensively to treat syphilis. Can be a poison if dosage incorrect. E. pp.493 and 494

“Opens obstructed passages and attenuates tough and viscid humours in the very remotest parts of the body ... cures the itch and other cutaneous eruptions of the most malignant kind.” N. p.2077

Amber: Rubbed on the chest to cure colds and other respiratory conditions. D. p15

Coral: Perhaps used as a kind of therapeutic amulet in the form of a pendant.

Fine bole (sic): Perhaps a ceramic bowl to mix ingredients in.

Cardamus (sic): Perhaps cardamom which was used to treat dyspepsia, headaches and colic. F. p.62

Spicknard: Seems to have been used for a variety of treatments, particularly urinary problems. A. p.245

Spickenard: an Indian Odiferous Plant, smelling like Lavender. K.

Tartar: An emetic. F. pp.851 and 853

Arsnicke (sic): Arsenic was used in veterinary medicine. H. p.11

Viridiceris: Could be verdigris. A solution of verdigris in common water was used as a detergent for old ulcers and used in eye-waters to clear away specks or films. N. p.3339
Also used as a pigment in dyeing.

Musk: "Taken inwardly produces ease from pain ... is of great use in spasmodic disorders, malignant, putrid fevers, the jail distemper, hiccoughs, &c." N. p.2201

Civet: As above - used in perfumery.

Amber Greece (sic): Ambergris 1481. [- (O Fr) *ambre gris* "grey amber". To this substance the name *amber* orig. belonged after its extension to the resin dist. in France as *ambre jaune* "yellow amber", ambergris received its distinctive designation of "grey". Various early spellings show assim. To [*grease*] A wax-like substance of ashy colour found floating in tropical seas, and as a morbid secretion in the intestines of the sperm whale. Used in perfumery and formerly in cookery. OED.

Pearle: No medical references. Could it have actually been pearl barley.

Unicornes Horn: No further medical references found. Probably the tusk of a narwhal - could have been used as an aphrodisiac (similar to rhino horn in the Far East). Even more likely to be in the shop to impress the clients with the mysteries of the apothecary's profession (see old prints with various strange objects such as large dried lizards hanging up).
Used for fevers attended with diarrhoea. N. p.3377

Ivory

Orris (sic): Orris. Helped cases of shortness of breath and to resist poison. "Takes away the blackness and bitterness of a stroke". A. p.314

Orris: a Flower call'd also Iris. L.

Benjamin (sic): Benjamin. Cure for dysentery and worms. D. p.30

Benjamin: a Drug much used in Perfumes or sweet Bags. L.

Storax: Used to alleviate skin irritation. F. p.881

A fragrant Drug, helpful for a Cough or Hoarseness. K.

Prescribed internally as a detergent or diuretic; and externally to prevent mortifications. N. p.3083

Laudenum: Tincture of opium - an analgesic and narcotic used extensively in the past.

Spermacaeti: Used for coughs and other disorders of the breast, also used externally in liniments. N. p.3022

Mastick: Used for coughs, spitting of blood, strengthens the stomach, assists digestion, and stops vomiting. N. p.2035

Cantharides: A painful blistering agent. D. p.46
Cantharides, or Green Spanish Flies, used to raise Blisters. K.

Antimony: Used in the treatment of bronchitis but a toxic drug. D. p.17

Champhor (sic): Camphorated oil was used as a chest and back rub in painful conditions and for colds. E. p.122

Balaustius: No medical reference found.
Balaustium. VID

Coraline: Could be coralwort which was believed to cleanse the bladder and eased abdominal pain. C. p.80

Zedoaria: VID. Used for fevers, as an expectorant in disorders of the breast arising from a tough phlegm, and "it is also good against flatulence." N. p.3500

Gallingall: Used to treat stomach pains. A. p.313
Galangales, an Herb, whose root is hot and dry in the 3rd degree, coming from East India, and much used in Physick. K.

Syrops (sic))
Conserves) Apothecaries often sold groceries etc required by housewives.
Oyles (sic))

Electuaries: Unpalatable medicines mixed with honey or syrups. D. p.81

Unguents: Ointments

Embasters: No reference found

Waters: Possibly various flavoured waters.

The following are all self-explanatory:

Pills, Cordials, Spices and seeds, Thred (sic), Tapes, Pins, Cards and dice, Sweet meates.

Manna: A sugary substance used as a mild laxative for children. F. p.590

Rootes, barks and stones: Roots and bark can be used in medicinal preparations to make teas or cordials - see Chinese medicine.

Isinglasse (sic): No medical reference found. Used to preserve eggs.

Quicksilver: Another name for mercury. Apothecaries sold quills filled with quicksilver to help fight illness. It was also believed to be effective against witchcraft. D. p.174

Rice

Bezor stone: Bezar-stone of the East-Indies; Bezar-stone of the West-Indies, VID.
Bezoar: a Destroyer of Poison, a stone taken out of the Maw of a Persian Goat. Preparation of Butter of Antimony. L.

Callamus: VID

Stecados: Stechados VID.

Cetrach: Certerach, a genus of plants, spleenwort. M.
“The leaves of the plant are of use in healing wounds, and in preventing inflammation of them; they are also used against the spleen, the root is aperients and diuretic.” N.p.1966.

Epitheum: Epithymum VID.

Harts Horne: The horns of the common male deer distilled into a salt and given in fevers. Also used “to bring people out of fainting by its pungency.” N. p.1566

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