

## II

# JOB DESCRIPTION

The modern concept of “job descriptions” with the legal protection of professional titles did not develop until the second half of the nineteenth century. Today, the dividing lines are so finely drawn that, not only do we differentiate between butcher, baker, and candlestick-maker, but between structural and civil engineers, systems and stress analysts, clinicians, clinical pharmacologists and clinical pharmacists, haematologists, gynaecologists and neurologists, and so on. So imbued are we with these ideas and their importance to us, that it is difficult to relate to a different outlook. The charters of the City of London’s many companies do not help us in this readjustment.

The Gardeners’ Company was established in 1606, its authority extending to a six-mile radius around the City, within which area it was to control, “the trade, crafte or misterie of gardening, planting, grafting, setting, sowing, cutting, arboring . . . fencing and removing of plantes, herbes, seedes, fruites, trees. . . .” It was empowered to search for and destroy any unwholesome or rotten goods in the markets, and no one could set up as a gardener without permission, that is, membership was obligatory. In practice, this was not the case. John Noble of Hoxton, a well-known and successful horticulturalist of the first half of the seventeenth century, was a member of the Tallow-Chandlers’ Company. He had at least eight apprentices, four of whom were admitted to the freedom of the Tallow-Chandlers; they, in their turn, had apprentices, so that in the course of time there grew up a fair number of gardeners within the body of the Company of Tallow-Chandlers.<sup>33</sup> The records of the company do not indicate that these men were gardeners; that information comes from other sources. Thomas Fairchild, also of Hoxton, a gardener of greater fame, was a member of the Worshipful Company of Clothworkers. The chemist George Wilson (1631–1711), as his will attests, was a citizen and haberdasher.<sup>34</sup> There was no company specially formed for the needs of “chymists”, and so the Haberdashers’ Company was presumably as good as any other to Wilson, but one wonders why John Cluer and William Dicey, printers and at a later date patent medicine vendors, chose the Leathersellers’ Company in preference to the Stationers.<sup>35</sup>

There were few societies as meticulous in their records as the Society of Friends, who went to some trouble to secure precision. When, on 23 October 1735, John Sherwin married Mercy Oakey, the scribe was careful to state that John was a “citizen and draper of London, by trade a baker”.<sup>36</sup> Likewise, when John Bell of Lombard Street married Elizabeth Foggs in September 1710, he was described as “A hozier but by company citizen and bowstring maker”. Sixty years later, his great-

<sup>33</sup> Guildhall Library, Company of Tallow-Chandlers’ presentations, MSS. 6152/2 and 3.

<sup>34</sup> He obtained his freedom 27 November 1668 by order of the Court of Aldermen.

<sup>35</sup> The Leathersellers’ Company Freedoms’ Register, “William Dicey, Apprentice of John Sewers by Indenture dated 17 April 1711, he having been turned over to John Cluer, Stationer. Obtained the Freedom on 7th August, 1721.”

<sup>36</sup> Friends’ Library, accumulated records for London and Middlesex, marriages.

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nephew (father of John Bell, chemist and druggist), Jacob Bell of Fish Street Hill, was described in similar terms.

No company was more mixed than that of the Barber-Surgeons. For a period after 1635, in the freedom records the master's trade is frequently given. The term barber-surgeon was scarcely used, but rather barber or chirurgion, but what is very noticeable are the numbers of dyers, innkeepers, distillers, and hosiers, as well as a few box-makers, sheargrinders, grocers, button-makers, wheelwrights, cutlers, upholsterers, and even a gun-maker. There were, at one time, two Peter Watts, one a wire-drawer and the other a carpenter, but their careers are impossible to sort out, as on other occasions they are simply termed citizen and barber-surgeon.

Translation from one company to another was common. "5 April 1709. Sherrington Somerfeild summon'd for keeping a barbers shop not being free of this Company, came and alleg'd that he served his time to a barber free of the Company of Haberdashers and was himself free of that Company whereupon the Court gave him time till the first Tuesday in July to take up his Freedom of this Company at three guineas."<sup>37</sup> A problem is posed by the following type of entry: "7 October 1733. Ed. Ledger who was apprentice of William Serles, Barber, and afterwards of Anthony Bayles, Haberdasher was admitted into the Freedom by Service upon Testimony of said Anthony Bayles."<sup>37a</sup> But was he a barber or a haberdasher?

Holmes, in his study of the medical profession, makes reference to the "bargain-basement" for apprenticeship premiums. "There were a great many barber-surgeons after 1700, in London as well as in the provinces, who still took on apprentices for five, six or seven years at a minimal charge – for anything from £12 down to £5, in fact. It can be safely assumed that they dispensed little in the way of a genuine medical training. . . ."<sup>38</sup> In fact, it cannot be assumed, particularly in London, that these low-priced apprentice-masters, described as citizens and barber-surgeons, were barber-surgeons at all; they were just as likely, probably more likely, to have been hosiers or cordwainers.

The problem is undoubtedly as great in the provinces, but even more difficult to detect. Only London, by far the largest town in England throughout its history, was big enough to support sufficient individual companies to cover the activities of most occupations. In the provinces, it was necessary to group trades together, often apparently in a completely arbitrary fashion, such as the barber-surgeons with the silk-weavers in Salisbury. The apothecaries, on the other hand, were in a Merchants' Company, re-named the Grocers' Company in 1613, which comprised grocers, mercers, goldsmiths, linen-draperies, milliners, vintners, upholsterers, and embroiderers.<sup>39</sup> In many towns, the wealthiest men were the mercers, and it was their title that came first in any composite guild, for example, the Mercers, Ironmongers, Grocers and Apothecaries of Chester, or, as at Lichfield, where an all-embracing guild was simply known as the Mercers' Guild. This could lead to confusion in the description adopted by a trader.

<sup>37</sup> Guildhall Library, Barber-Surgeons' Company's court minutes, MS. 5257/7, f. 30.

<sup>37a</sup> *Ibid.*, Barber-Surgeons' Company's Freedoms, MS. 5265/5, f. 8.

<sup>38</sup> Holmes, *op. cit.*, note 2 above, p. 216.

<sup>39</sup> C. Haskins, *Ancient trade guilds and companies of Salisbury*, Salisbury, Bennett, 1912, pp. 80, 364.

## *A study of the English apothecary from 1660 to 1760*

Whittet has related how Robert Blease, apprentice of Adam Blease, mercer and apothecary, a councillor of Chester in 1582, is sometimes described in the records as mercer and in others as apothecary.<sup>40</sup> John Palmer senior of Coventry, when taking an apprentice in 1722, called himself mercer and apothecary, but although in the Middle Ages mercers dealt in spices and drugs, there is no reason to believe that the two occupations were connected in the eighteenth century. The explanation is that many apothecaries in Coventry were members of the Mercers' Company.<sup>41</sup> This may well be the explanation why on trade tokens a man's stated occupation on one side varies from the company's arms on the other, as noted by Trease.<sup>42</sup>

A man's true title of occupation having been determined, the difficult problem of his job description then arises. This is of particular importance in any discussion of the English apothecary, owing to the unusual manner in which his "art and mystery" has developed in this country.

The most general belief is that in the medieval period he was a preparer and purveyor of drugs, and did not prescribe or directly participate in the patient's treatment, but by the late seventeenth century had wandered increasingly into the attractive fields of medical practice, something that was given legal sanction with the Rose case of 1703; by the end of that century and the Apothecaries' Act of 1815, he was recognized to be a doctor. D'Arcy Power and Rolleston have claimed that the medieval apothecary, besides being a seller of simples and preparer of compounds, was also a prescriber and medical attendant.<sup>43</sup> This view has often been challenged, but some support for it can be found in an inquiry held on 28 February 1354. On that day, the Prior of Hogges, Master Paschel, Master Adams de la Poetrie, and Master David de Westmerland, surgeons, were put on oath to determine whether John le Spicer de Cornhulle had been guilty of negligence in treating a wound of Thomas de Shene.<sup>44</sup> Trease has shown that the terms spicer and apothecary were virtually interchangeable, but what is particularly noticeable is that the spicer's right to give treatment was not being challenged, but only that he had been negligent.

Some eighty years later, in 1433, an interesting case occurred in the city of York. The prior of Guisborough and one of his canons, Brother Richard Ayreton, demanded £40 damages from Matthew Rillesford, leech of York, for malpractice in the treatment of Richard's leg. On 14 September, the three men put the two sides of the case before Robert Belton of York, apothecary. Belton's decision was that during the following eight days Rillesford was to apply his treatment to Brother Richard's leg under Belton's own supervision, and that the clerics were to drop their action against

<sup>40</sup> Whittet, *op. cit.*, note 29 above, p. 258.

<sup>41</sup> Public Record Office (PRO), Inland Revenue apprenticeship records, I.R./1/48 f. 18. Berger has shown that the apothecaries in Coventry were split between the Mercers' and the Barber-Surgeons' companies, see *op. cit.*, note 30 above, p. 42. See also, Joan Lane, *Coventry apprentices and their masters 1781-1806*, Stratford-upon-Avon, Dugdale Society, 1983.

<sup>42</sup> G. E. Trease, *Pharmacy in history*, London, Baillière, Tindall & Cox, 1964, pp. 145, 128. He also refers to Ralph Clark being termed a mercer, but that his inventory of 1631 shows clearly that he was an apothecary.

<sup>43</sup> D'Arcy Power, 'English medicine and surgery in the fourteenth century', *Selected writings, 1877-1930*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1931, p. 43; H. Rolleston, 'History of medicine in the city of London', *Ann. med. Hist.*, 1941, 3: 3. Both cite the case of Coursus de Gangeland.

<sup>44</sup> R. R. Sharpe (editor), *Calendar of the letter books... of the archives of the city of London, 1889-1912*, Letter book G, p. 21.

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the leech for negligence before 14 September. The plaintiffs were not satisfied with this decision and the case went before a jury.<sup>45</sup> The final outcome is not known but the main interest lies in the fact that an apothecary was regarded as being of sufficient status and of sufficient medical experience to arbitrate in a case of alleged medical incompetence.

Roberts, making use of a famous passage of arms between John Woolton MD (Oxon), son of a former bishop, and Thomas Edwards, apothecary of Exeter, has shown that apothecaries were practising medicine in that city from at least the 1590s – and very successfully too.<sup>46</sup> Rook and Newbold, on the basis of a detailed analysis of the medical scene in Cambridge from 1558 to 1642, came to a similar conclusion. They wrote: “. . . the rigid tripartite division of medical activities described by so many historians, though it may well have prevailed in London, was not a conspicuous feature of medical life in Cambridge. . . . It is apparent that in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries almost all medical men whether they were by training physicians, surgeons, or apothecaries, were in effect general practitioners. It may have been true, as was apparently the case in London, that the richer patients tended in the first instance to consult a physician and the poor an apothecary, but even this is questionable since many of the apothecaries were men of great reputation.”<sup>47</sup>

The situation in London may well not have been so very different from that in Exeter and Cambridge. In the battle between the College of Physicians and the Society of Apothecaries, which came to a head in 1634 with a “quo warranto”, the former listed a number of grievances. The third one accused the apothecaries of practising medicine, and specifically named John Buggs, George Haughton, and Richard Edwards. There is no doubt that such well-known men as John Reeve, apothecary and medical adviser to the Earl of Exeter, Thomas Johnson, the botanist, and the detested Nicholas Culpeper all practised medicine.<sup>48</sup> The apothecaries made their point during the Great Plague of 1665 that in future they had to be accepted as doctors, though there is little doubt that they were already well established, otherwise it is difficult to see why Nathaniel Upton, apothecary, should have been appointed master of the City pesthouse in Finsbury Fields. That there were before 1665 two types of London apothecary is made clear by William Boghurst, the apothecary, who did such yeoman service during the epidemic. He wrote, “But those apothecaries which have their work and dependence from the physitian are not, I think, obliged to stay behind when their Masters lead the way: for who shall direct them? They say it is not our business to direct or undertake to give Physick of our own heads; therefore they are to be excused. But those Apothecaries which stand upon their own legs, and live by their own practice, are bound by their undertakings to stay and help as in other diseases.”<sup>49</sup>

<sup>45</sup> W. Baildon, ‘Notes on the religious and secular houses of Yorkshire’, *Yorks. Arch. Soc. Rec.*, 1895, 17: 78. The leech’s denial of negligence makes it plain that internal medicines had been administered.

<sup>46</sup> Roberts, *op. cit.*, note 26 above, pp. 371–374.

<sup>47</sup> A. Rook and M. Newbold, ‘Physicians, surgeons and apothecaries in Elizabethan and Stuart Cambridge’, unpublished paper read before the British Society for the History of Pharmacy Conference at Cambridge in 1974.

<sup>48</sup> Wall, Cameron, and Underwood, *op. cit.*, note 8 above, vol. 1, pp. 283, 301, 43, 44.

<sup>49</sup> T. D. Whittet, *The apothecaries in the Great Plague of London, 1665*, Epsom, A. E. Morgan Publications, 1965, pp. 24, 21.

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Wall has written, "It is clear from literature of the period that the ordinary surgeon could not make a living if he confined his activities to the treatment of external diseases and accidents. He was compelled to keep a shop and to sell drugs, and to practise midwifery . . ." <sup>50</sup> James Yonge wrote in his *Journal* in 1693, "The beginning of this year I had prepared to send my son John to Leyden to travel and study", but when John's secret marriage had been discovered, James had "... stopt his voyage to Holland and put them to live at the dock, furnisht his shop, gave him some money and all the profit of the place, which was a good £100, besides practice." <sup>51</sup> Others had different sidelines, such as Robert Murrell of Enfield, who leased the Greyhound inn and owned a small brewery, as did his successor Joseph Wilson.

Apothecaries and surgeon/apothecaries were in the same situation. John Fage (d. 1694), apothecary of Cambridge, was also a vintner. William Fuller, surgeon and apothecary of Hemel Hempstead, established the Bell in Market Street, where he brewed his own beer and cider, and his inventory of 1671 shows he sold, "Raisins, currans, salt, starch and all other Grocery commodities". <sup>52</sup> There were, of course, such well-known figures as William Cookworthy, the originator and manufacturer of English porcelain; or the master of George Crabbe, John Page of Wickhambrook, Suffolk, more farmer than apothecary. <sup>53</sup> Each of them had an open shop, and the point of interest is, how much of an apothecary's income was derived from it, and how much from medical practice?

Trease has shown that inventories can be used to determine what groceries, sweetmeats, or drugs they sold in their shops, what apparatus they had, the size of their houses, and the value of their furnishings and apparel. Richard Beresford of Lincoln (1607) was appraised at £295; amongst his tobacco, packthread, and groceries, there was a brass syringe, five glister-pipes and urinalls, which suggest that he administered enemas. <sup>54</sup> Samuel Newbould, a Lichfield apothecary, left a much more modest estate, a mere £74, of which the shop and the sweetmeats accounted for £33. There is no suggestion that Newbould was a medical practitioner, and the same applies to John Parker of the same city (1655). Parker's trade goods amounted to £182 (of which "Grocery, tobacco, allam, oyle etc." in the cellar was by far the largest item), a high proportion of the total of £228. <sup>55</sup> A similar balance can be seen in the case of Thomas Needham of Chesterfield (1665), his household goods being worth £45 and

<sup>50</sup> Wall, *op. cit.*, note 24 above, p. 90.

<sup>51</sup> F. N. L. Poynter (editor), *The journal of James Yonge, 1647–1721*, London, Longmans, 1963, p. 205.

<sup>52</sup> T. D. Whittet and M. Newbold, 'Apothecaries in the diary of Samuel Newton, alderman of Cambridge', *Pharm. J.*, 1978, 221: 118. The rating lists of Great St Mary's show that he became the occupier of the Rose inn in 1679; A. L. Wood, 'Hemel Hempstead and its people during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries', in Susan Yaxley (editor), *History of Hemel Hempstead*, Borough of Hemel Hempstead, 1973, pp. 80–81.

<sup>53</sup> George Crabbe's father paid £70 to John Smith for the privilege of this doubtful apprenticeship for his son. After two years, he was removed and bound to John Page of Woodbridge for four years, the premium being only £10 on this occasion. See PRO, I.R./1/57, f. 5 and I.R./1/58, f. 9.

<sup>54</sup> Trease, *op. cit.*, note 42 above, p. 127. The administration of enemas was a recognized part of the apothecary's practice, see *The gentleman apothecary: being a late and true story turned out of French*, London, [for H. Brome], 1670.

<sup>55</sup> D. G. Vaisey (editor), 'Probate inventories of Lichfield and district, 1568–1680', *Collections for a history of Staffordshire*, 4th ser., 1969, vol. 5, pp. 156–161, 99–102. It should be noted, however, that Parker's inventory was not completed and he is known to have leased furniture with his house.

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those of the shop £120. Besides two stills, a three-bit gimblet, crucibles, and a press for oil, he had also leeches, lancets, urinals, fifty-one glisters pipes, and breast glasses, which seems to indicate small-time manufacturing and medical practice.<sup>56</sup>

Although the sums of money for some apothecaries were low, for example, Henry Mawe of Epworth (1677) and Richard Cotterall of Alford (1679) with £31 and £63 respectively, the general impression is that most apothecaries were comfortably placed. Indeed, some could be described as wealthy. The inventory of John Inkersall of Boston (1684) came to £1,140, and that of William Franceys of Derby (1703) to nearly £800, his drugs alone amounting to £300.<sup>57</sup> Like other wealthy tradesmen and merchants of the period, as banking was still in its infancy, apothecaries often acted as financial middlemen. By the post-Restoration period, merchants had become familiar with the use of bills of exchange and used them for raising money. Some who wished to lend money for a short period would even buy them, but if the transactions did not proceed smoothly, then great difficulty might be experienced in recovering the cash. A safer vehicle, and one which was for the longer period of six months to a year, was the bond; in this case the penalties against the defaulters were more severe and far more enforceable. After the 1640s, mortgages became commoner, as the penalty of immediate foreclosure was no longer invoked if the defaulter could prove that he could make regular and sizeable interest payments.<sup>58</sup>

The goods in the shop of the Bristol apothecary, Richard Kerwood, in 1693 amounted to £5 out of his estate of £316. He had £101 in ready money but the next biggest item was, "One mortgage of a house in Ballance Streete in Bristoll of one John Tugwell – £70." There was also the matter of a "Debt due by Mr Danyell Phillips by bond – £12."<sup>59</sup> William Bossley of Bakewell, Derbyshire, was even more involved in financial transactions. The appraisers in 1714 placed his total estate at £396, of which £80 was accounted for by, "In the shop: Counters boxes bottles potts druggs and all materials for or belonging to his trade there or elsewhere." The money he had out on loan either upon bond or note was considerably more, being £209 in sums varying from £9 to £120. His successor in the town, John Denman, although not so rich (he was worth £188 15s.), still had £80 in "Money due upon Bonds and Book Debts" as compared with £60 for drugs and equipment in the shop.<sup>60</sup> From where this money originated is but rarely indicated, possibly it was from a trade surplus, or possibly it was money deposited with them. The appraisers usually grouped all debts together, using some phrase such as "Debts due and oweing both sperate and desperate".

Philip George has made effective use of the inventory of Henry Hayes of Wisbech, who died 1702, and the well-thumbed 1721 pharmacopoeia of Jeremy Cliff of

<sup>56</sup> Lichfield Record Office, Thomas Needham, inventory, 1666.

<sup>57</sup> Trease, *op. cit.*, note 42 above, pp. 126–128, 143; Lichfield Record Office, William Franceys, will and inventory, 1703.

<sup>58</sup> C. Wilson, *England's apprenticeship, 1603–1763*, London, Longman, 1971, pp. 209, 155. Wilson stated that these early bankers were recruited from a number of trades and professions, the commonest being the scriveners and goldsmiths, but Trease remarked that he and others have noted that it was not unusual for apothecaries to undertake banking. He cited the case of the substantial loans made by Richard and Edward Wood of Chesterfield. Richard (apprentice-master of Thomas Needham) must have been a man of substance, as he bought Dickfield Bridge smelting mill in 1655 for £1,100. See G. E. Trease, 'Manufacture of apothecaries' tokens', *Pharm. J.*, 1966, 197: 324.

<sup>59</sup> Bristol Archives Offices, Richard Kerwood, inventory, 1693.

<sup>60</sup> Lichfield Record Office: William Bossley, inventory, 1693; John Denman, inventory, 1753.

Tenterden. He came to the conclusion that Cliff, in contrast to Hayes, made even the most complicated preparations. His annotated pharmacopoeia indicates that he prepared at least eighty-seven out of the possible 464 preparations, including theriac. andromach. and theriac. lond., but that the emphasis was on simple ointments, plasters, electuaries, waters, and distilled spirits. On the other hand, George estimated from Hayes's inventory that it would have been impossible for him to have compounded the more complex recipes, although he made unguenta, emplastra, electuaries, emetics, opiates, and treacle water. Hayes also made considerable use of chemical drugs, which seem to have been almost completely absent from Cliff's armamentarium.<sup>61</sup> To what extent the surgeons and apothecaries made their own preparations is impossible to decide. They may have had busy laboratories, or they may have bought from firms of druggists such as Estwick and Conygesby in West Smithfield, or from other apothecaries, as several did from Thomas Bott of Coventry, or directly from the London Society of Apothecaries.

In order to define more exactly the apothecary's practice, his account books, business letters, and ledgers are required, but few have survived. The day book for 1706 and 1707 of an unnamed Shrewsbury apothecary recording the cash received for goods sold over the counter or in payment of an account, gives us an idea of his business. It is apparent that he had a very brisk counter-prescribing practice, in which he sold gargles, draughts, mixtures, lochchs, ointments, and other preparations. He sold patent medicines such as "scots pills" (9*d.* a box) and "sylverlocks pills" (eight for 4*d.*), oils both volatile and fixed, gums and resins, cochineal, isinglass, spermaceti, and musk. He had a ready sale for spices, soap, and oil of lavender, as well as sago, an invalid food. He carried out phlebotomies, which varied in price from 6*d.* to 2*s.* 6*d.* There were regular entries for chemicals, for example, saltpetre, arsenic, borax, vitriol, white and red lead, and for the metals gold and silver, sold by the leaf or the shell. The sale of pigments was important to him; ivory black, vermilion, carmine, lake, umber, and Dutch pink, together with brushes, crucibles, varnish, and pencils, all figured in the records.<sup>62</sup> On the evidence of the cash book, the Shrewsbury apothecary sold a fair range of goods, was a busy counter-prescriber, and performed phlebotomies, but it does not give any information as to whether he dispensed physicians' prescriptions, or left his shop to make domiciliaries, either alone or in the company of a physician.

Thomas Bott of Coventry has left us rather more information. His records run from 1711 to 1734 and consist of a day book and an account book. He was by no means a cash chemist and had a large number of account customers and patients who could run up horrifying bills.<sup>63</sup> Each day in the day book he listed the articles supplied to each customer and gathered them together under the debtor's name in the account book. When the account was settled, it was boldly crossed through, and another

<sup>61</sup> P. George, 'A Wisbech chyrurgion', *Chem. Drugg.*, 1955, 163: 713–715; *idem*, 'Jeremy Cliff', *ibid.*, 1954, 162: 211–213. George tried to make a comparison between the practices of a provincial surgeon (Hayes) and an apothecary (Cliff), but it is very likely that both men were, as was usual at that period, surgeons and apothecaries; certainly this title was used by Jeremiah Cliff when taking an apprentice in 1736.

<sup>62</sup> 'An apothecary's cash book', *M. & B. Pharm. Bull.*, 1956, 5: 90–94.

<sup>63</sup> Derbyshire Record Office, Gresley MSS., D. 77/Bott. Lord Craven ran up a bill of £69 12*s.* 1½*d.*, a figure which, however, fades into insignificance when it is noted that Bott presented to the executors of Lady Dugdale (his half-sister) a bill for over £134.

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started a few pages further on – simple but effective book-keeping.

Bott supplied a greater quantity of groceries than did the Shrewsbury man, “currans”, raisins, starch, coffee, candied orange and lemon, jam, and Naples biscuits figure largely in his accounts. He sold spices, and the household of the Rt Hon. William Bromley Esq., was in receipt of large quantities of dried herbs. Medicines played an important part, particularly electuaries, vomits, purges, drops, and enemas; occasionally in the day book the whole formula is given, as with Mr Grove’s bolus and potion. There is no doubt that Bott practised surgery. The day book records for 26 November 1733, “Mr Waren. Curing yr: Hand Head and attendance”, and the account book shows that the charge was 5s. The cost of drawing a tooth was 12d., and a phlebotomy could be had for the same sum. Lord Craven’s leg required considerable treatment. Bott made frequent visits to Craven’s seat at Comb, even on occasion staying the night. For these he did not charge, leaving them all “at pleasure”.

At the end of the account book Thomas Bott wrote the names and addresses of his druggist suppliers in London, and it can also be seen that he acted in a small way as a wholesaler to other apothecaries. His accountancy is not always entirely clear. It seems strange that he should have supplied Mr Bromley of Baginton with quires of writing paper, or six pigeons in August (12d.) and twelve herrings the following November (6d.); and stranger still that Mr Denham should be charged 2s. for the making of a bed gown and another 2s. for a blue damask gown. Every detail was noted. Bott’s asses, presumably kept for their milk, cost him a shilling a week, at Ned Stafford’s, and his mare, necessary for visiting Lord Craven and other patients, went into Mr Hall’s grounds from Lammas 1731 to the following Michaelmas for 10s. The misfortune of having to pay 12d. for a trespass, and even more to the chamberlain (constable) and pinlock (keeper of the pinfold), probably decided him to move the mare to a more expensive but safer place.

Geographically, his practice covered a surprisingly wide area. He supplied or treated people as far away as Kenilworth and Stoneleigh, Atherstone, Griff, and Dunchurch; farthest away of all were Rowland Berkeley Esq., in Worcestershire, and his relations, the Armesteads, in Yorkshire. The impression is gained from these account books that Thomas Bott had a busy shop with a wide range of groceries and drugs, and a flourishing medical practice as well.

Not far away at Stafford was the apothecaries’ practice of Thomas and Lewis Dickenson, father and son, for which we have account books dating from 1707–22 and 1736–55.<sup>64</sup> Thomas Dickenson’s accounts show that, like Thomas Bott, he had a large number of account customers, although bills do not seem to have been allowed to run on for such long periods. He supplied the usual confections, juleps, draughts, and electuaries, as well as olive oil, huge quantities of manna, cream of tartar, smelling salts, and cinnamon water. His groceries were very much less, mostly tea, coffee, sago, and sugar candy, also saltpetre, bay salt, and sal prunella, probably used as food preservatives. His medical practice was busy; he bled patients, dressed their arms, prescribed “two plaisters for Mrs Hicks’s breasts”, and charged Benjamin Cotton 2s. 6d. for “Dressings for Sally’s leg and making an issue”. He applied fomentations and

<sup>64</sup> William Salt Library, Stafford, Hand-Morgan collection, H.M. 27/3 and 4. At one time, it was believed that the two account books belonged to one man, but it has now been established that the earlier belonged to Thomas and the later to Lewis, his son.



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administered enemas, for which he charged 1s. 6d., but also supplied “arm’d pipes”, presumably for self or home administration, a view supported by the frequent entries for “*Ingred. pro Enem. 6d.*”.

The account book of Lewis Dickenson does not greatly differ. He still supplied treacle water and diacodium, boxes of pills, aethiops mineral, opodeldoc, and mixtures “for a Glyster”. Groceries were, however, noticeably less, primarily sago and barley sugar. Lewis had a younger brother, Thomas, who was a grocer in Worcester, and it is interesting to compare his account book of 1740–50 with that of the apothecary. Thomas sold, as would be expected, several varieties of tea, coffee, cocoa, sugar, and chocolate. From letters sent to him, one learns that he was regarded as a good judge of hops; tobacco, raisins, currants, almonds, jam, candied lemon, pepper, cloves, treacle, soap, nuts, and starch all figure in his accounts, but the only true pharmaceutical products were brimstone and ague powders. As far as the two Dickenson brothers were concerned, the split between apothecary and grocer was complete.

The later day book of Maximilian Grindon of Olney (died 1784) and the accounts ledger of his son George, who practised into the nineteenth century, have a completely medical bias, unless the sale of three lemons and twelve grains of cochineal in 1789 can be regarded as evidence of a lingering interest in the sale of groceries. The two doctors sold their patients blisters, pills, balsams, and mixtures, and simple druggist lines such as creta praecip. and Glauber’s salts; they also charged up to 2s. 6d. for a journey.<sup>65</sup> It seems that by the last quarter of the eighteenth century, the provincial apothecary had divorced himself from the sale of household commodities, whether for the bathroom, kitchen, or first-aid cupboard. He was still a dispenser of medicines, but of those prescribed by himself. He charged for his journeys if not his advice, and also sold chemist’s sundries such as glister pipes and dressings. In some cases, he still had an “open shop” with heavy counter-prescribing and a ready sale in “own lines”.<sup>66</sup> His medical practice was mixed and comprised that of surgeon, physician, and midwife.

There is also the man whom Holmes dubbed the “‘‘pothecary-physician’’”.<sup>67</sup> The phenomenon of the apothecary-turned-physician who proved his respectability by brandishing some fairly easily-won MD, is well known. The reasons for the transformation are not far to seek. It was not only a matter of status, and it is likely that the monetary returns were little better, but quite simply an easier and pleasanter life, especially for a man of advancing years. When Henry Nunn, surgeon and apothecary, and William Silk, apothecary (in later indentures called surgeon and apothecary), both of Manningtree, drew up an agreement that they were to become co-partners and “. . . joint dealers in the profession, art and business of a surgeon and apothecary in buying and selling all sorts of Drugs and Medicines necessary and incident to the Business and in administring the same and in giving advice to patients”, certain conditions were written in. One was “. . . that William Silk shall at all times . . . take upon

<sup>65</sup> Cowper Museum, Olney, Grindon MSS. George, and probably his father too, were doctors to the poor of the parishes of Emberton and Yardley.

<sup>66</sup> As late as 1832–8, William Sturton LSA owned the shop alongside his home and surgery at Greenwich in which he employed his druggist brothers. The unpublished Sturton letters, copies of which are in the writer’s possession.

<sup>67</sup> Holmes, *op. cit.*, note 2 above, p. 204.

### *Job description*

himself the active and laborious parts of the partnership and more particularly the apothecary's part of the business, and that Henry Nunn shall from time to time as often as he thinks proper absent himself from and shall give such attendance and application only as shall be agreeable and convenient to him."<sup>68</sup> In other words, Henry Nunn had decided to "take it easier", and this is just what some 'pothecary-physicians did.

Becoming a physician meant one could be more selective, but not necessarily that all future practice in surgery and pharmacy was eschewed. It is not known with any exactitude what comprised the medical practice of a newly elevated physician. Edward Spry, when he took an apprentice in 1756, called himself an apothecary, but subsequently, on gaining his Aberdeen MD, he understandably used the title "practitioner in physic". With his contemporary and neighbour, John Mudge, it was quite otherwise. He did not receive his Aberdeen MD until 1784, but he had already given himself the title of physician in 1767 when signing the indentures of William Cookworthy, and three years earlier still, that of "practitioner in physic" when becoming the master of Bartholomew Dunsterville. It would be interesting to know at what date Mudge charged substantial fees for diagnosis and advice alone, and if his general practice and shopkeeping ceased.

From data such as these, it is clear that, despite the general tendency of the apothecary to acquire more specifically medical functions during the course of the eighteenth century, caution must be exercised in the acceptance of glib titles and the over-simplification of the convenient categories used to describe medical practitioners and their practices in earlier times.

<sup>68</sup> Essex Record Office, MS. D/DHW B. 10.