

VICTORIAN PHARMACY — PETER SQUIRE'S RECORD BOOKS

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TWO exceptional manuscript volumes have recently been acquired for the Royal Pharmaceutical Society's archives. One is a prescription book and the other is an account book of Peter Squire, a nineteenth century chemist and druggist.

In general, such volumes are a relatively common survival of many long-established pharmacy businesses. It is, however, the simple facts that Peter Squire was the first chemist and druggist to undertake the supply of medicines to the Royal establishment and that these volumes were specifically used to record the prescriptions and accounts supplied to Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, respectively, that makes them of such importance, both to the history of the profession of pharmacy and to the history of Royal medicine. Indeed, they are a particularly appropriate addition to the archives of the Society in the year that marks the 150th anniversary of its formation.

Peter Squire (1798-1884), and the business he ran, was an outstanding representative of a generation of prosperous high class London chemists and druggists who were instrumental in promoting the professional and social status of pharmacy. Apart from his special association with the Royal household he played a leading part in the formation of the Pharmaceutical Society. He was three times president of the Society and was a pioneer in raising standards of practice and education in pharmacy. He was author of various well known pharmaceutical reference works including 'A Companion to the British Pharmacopoeia' (1864 and later editions). Also known as 'Squire's Companion', the copyright of this work was subsequently bought by the Society and incorporated into 'Martindale: The Extra Pharmacopoeia'.

The two acquired volumes appear to form part of his business records. The prescription book is 158 pages in length, dating from June 27, 1837 to November 24, 1844. It is bound in contemporary full green roan, and embossed with gilt crown and lettered "The Queen" on the upper cover. The volume contains a record of medicines prepared and supplied by the firm of Peter Squire for Queen Victoria and contains transcriptions of over 600 prescriptions.

As examples of business records, pre-

Two of Peter Squire's hand-written record books have been acquired by the Royal Pharmaceutical Society. This article, prepared by the curator of the Society's museum, discusses their importance

scription book of a Royal patient cannot be taken as typical of medication prescribed for every rank of society it does offer important evidence of the treatment and therapies prescribed by the leading physicians and surgeons of the time. And, as one might expect, this is an exceptionally lucid and full example of this type of volume which enhances its value as a source of comparison with other contemporary historical material.

Each entry details the formulation prescribed (ingredients, quantities and type of preparation) and directions for use. Occasional marginal annotations provide additional information such as how a particular preparation is to be packaged or where it is to be sent.

The bulk of the prescriptions are those of Sir James Clark (Court physician), although at the periods of the Royal confinements (for the Princess Royal, November, 1840; the Prince of Wales, November, 1841; and Princess Alice, April, 1843) prescriptions of the Queen's accoucheurs, Sir Charles Locock and Robert Ferguson, and her surgeon, Richard Blagden, are also indicated. Two pages are devoted to details of the contents of the Royal medicine chests.

The volume appears to be in the hand of Peter Squire and seems to form part of a continuous series of which at least two other volumes are known to be held in archive collections: a volume dating from 1881-86 is in the Royal Archives, Windsor Castle, and one dating from 1861-69 is in the Royal Pharmaceutical Society's collection. (In addition the Wellcome Institute Library holds a series of Squire's prescription books. These, however, do not relate to their dispensing business as chemist and druggist to the Royal household.)

The entries cover a wide range of preparations (draughts and tonics, pills, lotions, liniments, salves, etc) used for the treatment of various conditions including coughs, headaches, indigestion, constipation and insomnia.

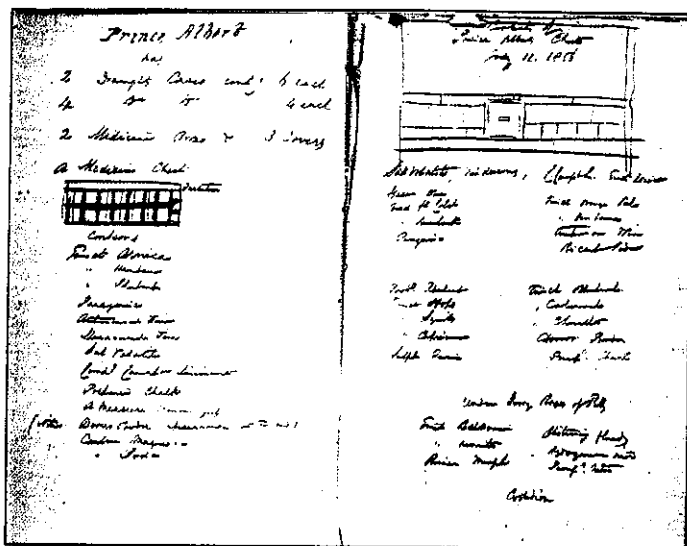
The other volume is an account book kept by Peter Squire for Prince Albert. It dates from February 19, 1840, to December 3, 1861, and extends to 130 completed pages (with the remainder blank). It is bound in contemporary full crimson roan to which is affixed a paper label inscribed



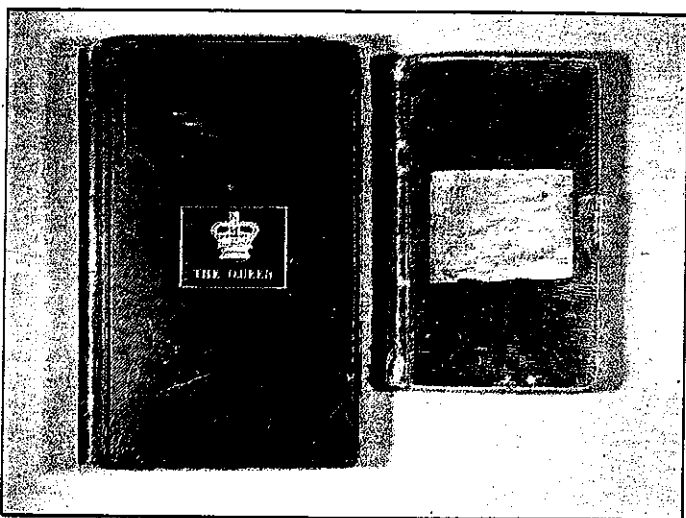
A hand-coloured photograph of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert taken by J. E. Mayall in 1861

scription books of chemists and druggists are not particularly scarce and are well-represented among local record repositories and within specialist collections such as Royal Pharmaceutical Society's own archives. In the 19th century, and earlier, many chemists and druggists kept prescription books recording brief details of prescriptions and in certain cases information about costs and fees. However, books kept for individual customers are extremely rare and are thus of considerable intrinsic interest because of the comprehensive details they provide about a single patient's or customer's medical history. While a pre-

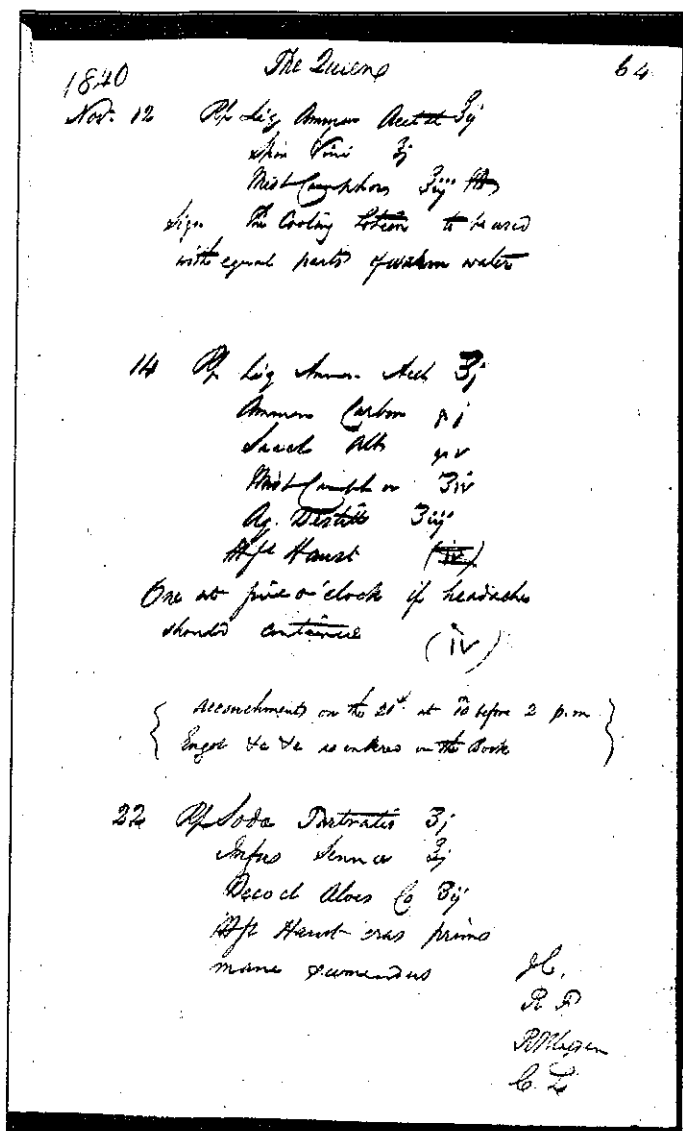
Courtesy of the Trustees of the V&A



These pages from Prince Albert's book outlines the contents of his medicines chest. It was written a few days before his death



Queen Victoria's prescription book (left) and Prince Albert's account book



This page from Queen Victoria's book refers to the birth of the Princess Royal in November, 1840

"HRH The Prince Albert Acct. Quarterly signed by Sir J. Clark to the Honble. Sir C. B. Phipps, Buckingham Palace". [Sir Charles Beaumont Phipps, keeper of the Queen's purse, private secretary to Prince Albert.]

The volume lists medical preparations and pharmaceutical items with costs supplied to Prince Albert. The entries are organised into monthly accounts, with individual items dated daily and comprise both medicinal and non-medicinal pharmaceutical products including prescriptions (usually indicated in abbreviated form), toilet requisites, proprietary (trade name) medicines, and supplies for the Prince's medicine chest (the volume also contains a plan and list of its contents).

Like the prescription book the accounts appear to be in the hand of Peter Squire, whose initials or signature appears at intervals to indicate that the account has been settled. Various names appear within the accounts, either those of physicians or of members or guests of the Royal household for whom items seem to have been supplied.

This account book is a unique record, offering an extremely detailed and intimate description of the medical and pharmaceutical requirements through virtually all of

Prince Albert's life as Prince Consort. Notable is the significant quantity of non-prescribed medication and domestic medical items that are listed, supplied on a regular basis. This provides valuable evidence of the habits of self-medication within the context of the Royal household, a practice popularised in the 19th century through the vast range of published literature on domestic medicine, and to which this volume adds an interesting and original insight.

From a biographical viewpoint these volumes offer a previously unpublished source of information on the health and medical treatment of both Queen Victoria and Prince Albert. In particular they illuminate and complement other known Royal papers (journals and letters) of the period, which, in the case of Queen Victoria, stretch from one week after her accession through the births of her first three children, and for Prince Albert from one week after his marriage until 11 days before his death.

Previous historical accounts of the Queen's medical history are based on sources of limited detail about the actual medication she was prescribed and thus Squire's volume undoubtedly supplies important new and objective evidence as to

the treatments and therapies she underwent at this time. The account book of Prince Albert, while providing detail of a different complexion, also gives valuable information concerning not only his regime of prescribed medication but the wide range of treatments for minor conditions that were supplied directly by his chemist and druggist.

These volumes are exceptionally fine examples of a form of record central to the history of pharmacy practice and dispensing. As such they complement the Society's extensive collection of similar volumes, and add significantly to existing material on Squire, who was a key figure in the Society's history.

□ The acquisition of these volumes has been assisted by a generous grant from the V&A purchase fund.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Material on Squire within the Society's collection has already been the subject of historical research. See, for instance:

1. Todd R. Peter Squire: 1798-1884. *Pharm J* 1984; 232: 419-24
2. Tallis N. Portraits of Peter Squire. *Ibid* 1988; 241: 375-6

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