

## Tracing people and premises in pharmacy

The Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain is the professional body for pharmacists in the United Kingdom. It was founded in 1841. Until this date, there was no organisation for pharmacists, or chemists and druggists as they were usually referred to at this time.

### Tracing individuals

Chemists and druggists became established as a distinct group in the medical profession during the 18th century. The basis of the chemist and druggist's business was the shop, from which customers could purchase pharmaceutical preparations.

Chemists and druggists learned their trade through a period of apprenticeship in a pharmacy business, and were not required to take examinations or register themselves with any organisation. Because of this, it is usually difficult to trace individuals before 1841. The term *apothecary*, often used in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries, does not refer to the chemist and druggist but, in London, to individuals who had passed the examinations of the Worshipful Society of Apothecaries of London, founded in 1617, or to their often less well qualified counterparts in the provinces. Although the apothecary's practice included a strong dispensing element, it was more all encompassing than the handling of drugs and chemicals, and included some medical treatment, particularly from the 18th century onwards. The Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain has some source material relating to apothecaries, but the Guildhall Library in London holds the majority of records relating to the Worshipful Society of Apothecaries.

### Qualifications and related records for pharmacists from 1841 onwards

The founding of the Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain marks the beginning of qualifications for and records relating specifically to pharmacists. From 1841 onwards, the Society kept regular lists of its members, associates, and those who had passed its examinations. These were published in the Society's weekly *Pharmaceutical Journal*. The examinations offered by the Society were the minor examination, a rudimentary qualification for pharmacists' employed assistants, and the major examination, intended for established business owning pharmacists who were, or who aspired to be, members of the Society. However, some non-proprietor pharmacists went on to take the major examination having passed the minor. In 1842, the Society established a School of Pharmacy to teach candidates for these examinations at its headquarters building in Bloomsbury Square, London.

Under the 1852 Pharmacy Act the *Register of Pharmaceutical Chemists*, the first statutory register of pharmacists, was established. The Register was not published, but some details from it were incorporated into the lists of members and associates printed in *The Pharmaceutical Journal*. It included those who were already members of the Society before 1852, unexamined proprietors who had accepted the last opportunity to become members without qualifying, and those who had passed the major examination.

The 1841-1867 lists of members and associates are not comprehensive because, as outlined above, there was no compulsion for pharmacists to register with the Society. Additionally, the early members and associates tended to be concentrated in London. However, this changed when the Pharmacy Act of 1868 required that *all* individuals dealing in or compounding medicines containing poisons must register with the Society in order to practise.

The 1868 Pharmacy Act stipulated that the minor examination was to become the legal minimum requirement for new entrants to the profession. Successful candidates were required to register with the Society, and were listed on the *Register of Chemists and Druggists*, published annually. Before taking their examinations, most candidates spent several years of apprenticeship with a practising pharmacist followed by a course of study, often by correspondence or part time at one of the many schools of pharmacy. Other candidates studied full time at a school of pharmacy. Employees who had qualified before 1868 (ie, associates), and those who had been in business on their own account prior to this year, were included automatically on the *Register of Chemists and Druggists*. Pharmacy

assistants who had been working for three years or more prior to 1868 were able to take a special *modified* examination qualifying them as a Chemist and Druggist. All pharmacists on the *Register of Pharmaceutical Chemists* in 1868 (and after this date) were also automatically included on the *Register of Chemists and Druggists*. The *Register of Pharmaceutical Chemists* was also published annually as from 1868, and the major examination continued, providing a more advanced qualification for those who wished to go on and achieve this.

As from 1954, the Register changed its name to the *Register of Pharmaceutical Chemists*, this title being applied to all pharmacists. This was a result of the Pharmacy Act of 1953, which introduced the Pharmaceutical Chemists Diploma as the new single professional qualification for pharmacists. The category of Chemist and Druggist was abolished, and those registered as Chemists and Druggists were transferred onto the Register under the designation of Member of the Pharmaceutical Society (MPS). Those whose names had formerly been on the Register of Pharmaceutical Chemists were now designated Fellows of the Pharmaceutical Society (FPS). Newly qualified pharmacists registering from 1954 onwards were required to complete one year of practical preregistration training after their three year course of study. In 1967 it became compulsory for all new pharmacists to obtain a pharmacy degree, followed by a year's practical preregistration experience, in order to register. Some qualifying university degree courses approved by the Society had existed since 1924, but 1967 marked the end of the Pharmaceutical Chemists Diploma. From 1997 all British pharmacy degrees have required a four-year course of study.

The information given on the Register includes date of registration, residence, type of examination taken, examination certificate number and qualification obtained. Entries are made in alphabetical surname order. There is no information given about date and place of birth, apprenticeship or place of study. However, in certain of the copies held in the Society's Library the Registrar's annotations indicate deaths, and this sometimes makes it possible to locate obituaries for individuals in pharmacy journals.

### **Researching the history of a premises**

The Society's *Register of Premises* begins in 1936. It lists premises according to place, and is organised by counties broken down into towns and cities. The 1936 Register is arranged by place and then by proprietor's name, but from 1938 onwards entries are made for both the proprietor's and trading name if these are different. Entries are listed alphabetically within each place. Each entry gives the address of the premises. Tracing premises prior to 1936 through the Society's records can be difficult. *Local Lists* of pharmacists supplementing the *Register of Chemists and Druggists and Pharmaceutical Chemists*, organised by place and giving names only, were published in 1935. Before this, the *Register of Chemists and Druggists and Pharmaceutical Chemists* listed either the home or premises addresses of pharmacists, so is of limited use in this respect. Although the Society does have information about some larger firms and their premises, coverage of premises history in general is limited.

Information about premises can often be obtained from trade directories, many of which give traders' addresses, and also from census returns. Additionally, some pharmacies still trading today may have their own premises records.