Alcohol and Drugs (A&M)

Archive and manuscript sources in the Wellcome Library

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Alcohol and Drugs

Many domestic medicine and receipt books include instructions for the preparations of distilled liquors, brewing, etc.

Delli sonniferi et veneni, con li suoi antidote: early C17th

Sir Theodore Turquet de Mayerne: Virtutes laudani Turqueti Mayerni Archiatri Maiestatis Britanniae, early C17th, includes material on opium

Corbyn & Co.: chemists and druggists, London, records of business, 1726–1910

James Fordice: Lectures on the materia medica, C18th, include ‘Of narcotics’

Van Helmonts own Laudanum: recipe, C18th

Thomas Morson & Son of London: leading manufacturer, wholesaler and retailer of pharmaceutical chemicals and proprietary medicines, first British producer of morphine, business records, 1751–1991

Michel Soulavie: Medical bills: including for treatment with laudanum, 1752

George Washington: An order for household and plantation supplies, 1759, includes laudanum

Account–book: merchant trading to China, including in opium, etc, 1774–7

Christoph Ludwig Hoffmann: Abhandlung vom Opio, late C18th

William Allen: letter from George Dillwyn, 1800, mentioning laudanum use

Martin de Sessé y Lacasta), Vicente de Cervantes, and others: report to Viceroy of Mexico including arguments for use of tincture of opium in various disorders, 1802–4

B Bolton: culinary, domestic, medical and veterinary receipt book, c. 1819, includes recipes for cowslip wine, “geneva”, peppermint cordial (made with gin) and Godfrey’s cordial

Hunterian Society of London: paper by William Howison on the constitutional effects of opium, 1820

Medical notebook and recipe book: 1827–42, includes “medecine to cure drunkenness”

Carta de persona fidedigna delEstado de San Luis—observaciones practicas sobre el cholera: describes therapeutic use of laudanum in cholera epidemic, 1833

Folkestone Grocer/Druggist’s Ledgers: customer orders of wines and drinks, 1839–62

Morrison and Hobson Families: papers of Benjamin Hobson, medical missionary in China, 1839–59, include material on opium addiction and trade in opium

Charles James Blasius Williams: letter to unknown recipient giving medical advice and mentioning opium and morphine, 1849

Watt family, Scotland, chemists: recipe and note book, mid C19th, includes a lengthy section on cannabis
W L Baynes: letter on board HMS *Sybille* at Calcutta, 1854, to Capt Cochrane, mentions the Paymaster’s “horrid attack of Delirium Tremens” MS.9159

Solomon Cummings Wellcome: lectures and sermons on temperance, c. 1865–6 MS.4987

John Dixon: Notes for a lecture on Alcoholic liquors and Tobacco [c. 1865] MS.2150

Ricardo Egea y Galindo: unpublished paper discussing the therapeutic value of opium, chloroform, chloral and alcohol, 1871 WMS/Amer.123

Carl Binz: Alcohol, 1876 (translation) MS.1170

Garnet Joseph Wolseley, Field Marshal, 1st Viscount Wolseley: some letters on temperance issues, including conference on “Native Races and the Liquor Traffic”, 1881–1901 MS.7474

Society Of Medical Officers Of Health/ Society Of Community Medicine/ Society Of Public Health (1856–1997): concerned with various public health issues including alcohol and drugs. See particularly records of specialist groups, also files on drink driving and drug abuse in London, in section L, conference on alcohol abuse in the community, 1985 (J.5/2), leaflet published by the Society in 1970s, ‘Drugs and your children. Doctors talk to parents’ (J.6/3), and articles in the Society’s journal Public Health SA/SMO

Wellcome Foundation. Records of pharmaceutical company deal with procedures under the Dangerous Drugs Act, handling of narcotic substances, and their use in its products (also antidotes produced by them), 1880s–1990s.; some items relating to temperance organisations, exhibitions, etc WF

Frederick Parke Weber: notes, cuttings, reprints, case material, etc, on drugs, addiction, etc, 1890s–1950s PP/FPW

Sir James Cantlie: answers to a Questionnaire for Royal Commission on Opium, 1893 MSS. 1482, 7925, 7933

Sir Frederick Treves: correspondence, 1898–1913, includes a leaflet “Alcohol a Poison” summarising his remarks on the subject MS.7714/1–12

Wellcome Archives: Historical Medical Museum. Some material relating to narcotic drugs, 1899–1985 WA/HMM

Sir Thomas Barlow: his papers include a significant amount of material relating to his involvement in the temperance movement, 1902–32 PP/BAR

Society For The Study Of Addiction To Alcohol And Other Drugs (f. 1884 as Society For The Study And Cure Of Inebriety). Administrative, financial and miscellaneous materials, 1904-1987; Society's remit included raising public awareness about the dangers of drug/alcohol dependence as well as investigation SA/SSA

Sir Bernard Spilsbury: notes on autopsies performed by him 1905–46 include many in which alcohol and/or drugs were a factor PP/SPI

British Medical Association: includes minutes and correspondence (general and with Home Office) on 'Dangerous Drugs', 1914–1950; minutes, cuttings and correspondence of Committee on relation of alcohol to road accidents, 1935–1947; minutes, acts, extracts and correspondence re poisons, 1908–1953 SA/BMA

Walter Pickett Turner: Miscellaneous notes on Alcohol, Temperance [etc], c. 1910 MS.4877

Sir Victor Alexander Haden Horsley: circular signed by Horsley as President of the National Temperance Federation, opposing the Army rum ration, 27 Oct 1914 MS.6031

‘The Expanding Field Of Mental Health In England And Wales, 50 Years Of Progress, 1918–1968’. Includes material on work in alcoholism, etc MS.7913/47, 48

Mary Ethel Corry Knocker: material relating to nursing training at London Temperance Hospital, and brochure of hospital, c.1914–25 GC/258
Edward Morell Holmes: notes, drafts, etc on poppy capsules, opium, kola nuts, yagé, Indian hemp, 1917–1930

Sir Edward Mellanby: material on research into the effects of alcohol, c.1918–1920

Ronald Arthur Sandison: papers relating to his work on psychedelic drugs and their use in psychiatry, including LSD, mescaline, psilocybin and other hallucinogens, Rauwolfia Serpentina, 1920s–2000s; a little material on alcohol-related problems in Shetland, 1979

Carlos Paton Blacker: file on mescaline, including account of his own experience, 1930s–40s; memoranda on alcoholism, 1951, 1960

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Walter Ernest Dixon and (George) Norman Myers: pharmacological research into opium, morphine and heroin substitutes, coramine, 1930s

William Walters Sargent (1907–1988), papers include material relating to Sargent’s early work on bromide intoxication and benzedrine (including addiction) 1930s–40s

Eugenics Society: file of correspondence with the National Temperance League, 1933

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Sir Robert Macintosh: case notes of convulsions following cocaine, 1936–50

Sir William Drummond Paton: material on mechanisms of drug dependence and related questions: cannabis in particular, but also nicotine, opioids, LSD and hallucinogens; records of participation in MRC working parties on drug dependence, and work of other organisations in the field, 1949–93

Francis Crick: correspondence about cannabis with various individuals, 1950s–80s


Sir Edward Wayne: lecture notes and reprints on alcohol and drug problems and papers generated by his involvement with BMA Committee on Alcohol and Road Accidents, Ministry of Health Advisory Committee on Drug Dependence, and International Committees on Alcohol and Addictions, and Alcohol, Drugs, and Traffic Safety, 1950s–70s

Max Glatt: small group of papers, 1950s–90s, including correspondence, reviews, cuttings, relating to his work on alcoholism and drug addiction and allied matters

Marthe Vogt: research on amphetamine, morphine and cocaine, 1950s–80s; correspondence with individuals working on addiction, 1957–82

Ismond Rosen: some material relating to psychotherapeutic uses of LSD, c. 1950s–66

Edith Bulbring: laboratory notebook, 1955–6, with experiments on morphine

Sir Harold Whittingham: draft guidelines on carriage of narcotic drugs in first aid kits of aircraft engaged in international flights, 1957–60

Donald Walton: “Drug addiction and habit formation – an attempted integration” (ts) – “Based on evidence prepared for a Working Party convened by the British Psychological Society in order to present evidence to the Interdepartmental Committee on Drug Addiction” [the Brain Committee, 1958]
Sir (William) Allan Daley: Papers of this Medical Officer of Health include materials relating to the Rowntree Trust Steering Group on Alcoholism, 1958–64, and miscellaneous other papers on the subject

MIND (The Mental Health Charity) (f. 1946 as the National Association for Mental Health - NAMH): includes material on alcoholism and drug addiction, mid–late C20th


Frank Rowntree: papers and slides relating to health education on drugs and alcohol, c. 1960s–70s; see also Institute of Health Education

Camberwell Council On Alcoholism (f.1963, became inactive c.1983): first community council on alcoholism in the UK; though firmly community–based, had national and international importance in the field of alcohol–related problems; involved in problems created by alcohol over a wide field; liaised with organisations doing similar work; material on related issues

Robina Addis: papers of psychiatric social worker include material on drug abuse and drug rehabilitation programmes, 1960s–70s

Ann Dally: material relating to treatment of drug addiction in her practice, and on her prosecution by the General Medical Council over this, 1960s–90s

Sir George Godber: lectures, articles, etc, on alcohol consumption and drug addiction, 1960s–90s

Dr R J Hetherington: small group of files on 'Drug Abuse': generally, and with reference to amphetamines, cannabis, Fortral (morphine substitute), heroin, and LSD, 1960s–70s

Philip Willison; papers by Edward Glover on the etiology of alcoholism and drug addiction, c. 1960

John McEwan: GP in South London, file re proposal to set up alcoholism project by local vicar, 1961–2, and files of his colleague John Hewetson as Medical Officer of the Camberwell Reception Centre for homeless men, the majority of whom had alcohol or substance-abuse related problems, 1971–84


Charles E Dent (1911–1976). Correspondence re effects of smoking cannabis, 1960s; letter to Times on Drug Abuse, 1969


Helene Grahame: research notes on literature on health education in connection with alcohol and drugs, 1960s–70s

Medical Women’s Federation: Report of Medical Council on Alcoholism, 1970

Guy Frederic Marrian: notebooks on retirement hobby of brewing and wine-making, 1970–7

Queen’s Nursing Institute: Nurse’s handbook on alcohol and alcoholism for the Medical Council on Alcoholism with the QNI, 1974

Stanley George Browne: a little material relating to his involvement with Temperance Collegiate Association, c. 1978–80
David Hutchison: oral reminiscences of career, c. 1980s, include material on morphine and morphine addictions

Patients’ Association: a little material on patients with alcoholism, 1980s

F. Arroyave: ‘Alcohol Dependence’. Unpublished manuscript on alcohol dependence and approaches to treatment, by Fernando Arroyave [1980s]

Alliance for Cannabis Therapeutics (ACT): papers of this pressure group for the medicinal benefits of cannabis, 1990s–2004, set up in 1992

John Duncan Handyside: one file of calculations and correspondence relating to police figures of breathalyser tests at the Christmas period, 1992


Dr Brian Idden, MP: materials relating to his concerns with government policy on illicit drugs and drug misuse, 1995–2010

Records maintained by dispensing chemists may reveal patterns of dispensing narcotics over a considerable period, in particular before the Dangerous Drugs Act of 1932 placed controls on the prescription of narcotic substances:

John Evans: prescription books of Dublin apothecary, 1752–3, 1802–3

Charles Heygate: Pharmaceutical chemist’s account book, (West Haddon in Northamptonshire), 1752–73


Gilbert Laurie, & Co: of Edinburgh, original Letter–book and Accounts for drugs, etc, 1768–97

J P Gillimore: prescription book, prices of ingredients, etc, c. 1810–63

John Francis Woody & John Thompson: A pharmacist’s ledger of prescriptions (Tamworth), 1824–5

Thomas Henry Holberton: Account–book of a Hampton Court Apothecary, 1829–33

London [Islington?] Chemist: prescription books, 1845–88

William Armitage: retail chemist’s account book, 1847–99

Peter Squire and Co: Trade and personal account–books, 1850–85


Hooton & Yates: Collection of original invoices for drugs and chemicals, 1867–74

T T Nicholson Ltd (London NW1), 1871–1963


Scarborough Chemist: prescription book, c. 1875–1900

Armitage Dispensing Chemist (Blackheath), 1899–1943

Savory and Moore (London SW1), 1912–1944

Peter Taylor: Books of prescriptions, 1914–37
Unidentified chemist: [possibly based in Bristol area] prescription register, 1917–19  MS.8623
H C Croadsell (Cockermouth, Cumberland), 1923–50  GC/75
Faller’s Pharmacy (Lymington, Hants), 1932–1979  GC/13
Norwich Chemist: ‘Poison Book’ relating to the dispensing of diamorphine, 1933–52  GC/29
Harrords Pharmacy Dept Prescription Registers 1935–77  GC/214
Martindale and Co (London W1), 1936–1970  GC/26
Bartlett & Goodall: Prescription books, 1937–61  MSS.1080–4
S Ruthven Mackay: register of Dangerous Drugs purchased by and dispensed in his Southend general practice, 1938–75  GP/65
Tyler Dispensing Chemist (London W12), 1945–1955  GC/102

The Wellcome Library also holds substantial collections of books, pamphlets, reports, journals, ephemera and visual materials relating to alcohol and drugs.

Medical Officer of Health reports deal with alcohol and drugs as a public health issues, e.g. deaths from drug use, analysis of various substances, application of Dangerous Drugs Acts, addiction, etc: MOH Reports for London are now available online: London’s Pulse: Medical Officer of Health reports 1848-1972 http://wellcomelibrary.org/moh/

Attention is also drawn to Moving Image and Sound Collections’ online playlist of films about the dangers of drinking