

# From Apothecary to Modern-day Chemist – The journey that Emsworth’s Pharmacists (and their fascinating buildings) have made through the ages by Andrew Butler

For over 200 years Emsworth has benefitted from the presence of several chemists, and their history helps to teach us how the role of the pharmacist has changed dramatically through the decades. Even today, Emsworth is served by ‘The Old Pharmacy’ and the ‘Emsworth Pharmacy’, which are located at each end of the High Street; they both occupy architecturally interesting buildings. But the building on the corner of King Street and High Street that we now call ‘The Old Pharmacy’ has been a pharmacy for barely 20 years; it was a butchers shop, J R Mant & Sons in the 1920s and 30s. His son Len had a cycle and motor business next door fronting the High Street.

The ‘real’ Old Pharmacy is Number 38 High Street, a stone’s throw from the current pharmacy. Now occupied by St Wilfrid’s Hospice charity shop, this building has a fascinating history as a dispensing chemist dating back at least 200 years. The earliest verifiable record dates from 1816, when Dr James Hicks established a dispensary. But there are reports of a pharmacist in this building supplying the local workhouse with lotions and medication dating back to 1771.

The Old Pharmacy underwent much evolution until September 2004, when John Preddy moved the business across the road, and took the ‘Old Pharmacy’ name with him.

That pharmacy is still operating under the same ownership today, while the original building has now morphed into the St Wilfrid’s Hospice charity shop.

The Museum has numerous artefacts from this long-standing facility, dating back to when Edwin Stubbs ran the pharmacy in the 1890s, and Wilfred Slatter in the 1920s. But the origins of the building date much further back – all the way to the 14th century. Over the years, the building is reputed to have been the primary storage for smuggled contraband. Using a network of interconnected cellars and tunnels stretching down to the harbour, smuggled goods came in alongside fish, and were allegedly stored in a secret room underneath the building!

The current Emsworth Pharmacy is also located in the architecturally interesting Central Buildings, on the corner of West Street. This impressive art deco building was erected around 1935. The new building originally hosted Mants cycle shop on the ground floor, and apartments above. It became a Lloyds Chemist in the 1980s, and changed hands only recently when Lloyds sold off their retail stores.

But we have to thank Tony Yoward for the most interesting stories relating to Emsworth pharmacies. Back in 1910, Ernest Hobson bought a shoe shop at 22 North Street, and



*The Old Pharmacy, 38 High Street*



*Central Buildings on the corner of West Street*

opened his own pharmacy the following year. Emsworth was growing rapidly by then, and the coming of the railway had stimulated development along North Street. There was plenty of demand for two operating pharmacies, and they were roughly the same distance away from the doctor's surgery.

Ernest ran the business successfully until 1927, when it was sold to Cecil Williams, who ran the shop alone until 1952. But age catches up with all of us, and Cecil needed someone more youthful to help share the load. A young Tony Yoward, just demobbed from Army active service in Korea, joined the team in 1952, together with his pharmacist wife, Mary. And in 1963, they bought the business outright, and ran it until they retired in 1986.



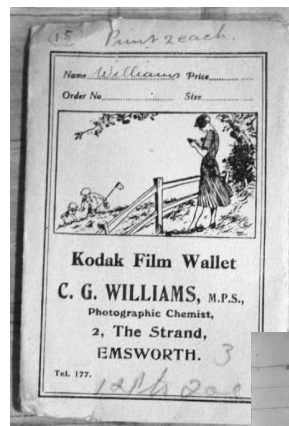
*Mr and Mrs Cecil Williams with their first car bought from Len Mant's garage in West Street in the 1930s*

22 North Street, which is now the Jonathan Ditton hairdressing salon, is an interesting building in its own right. It's one of a row of five shops called The Strand. The shops were built a few years after fire destroyed the original Stansted House in 1900, and reputedly the builders utilised building materials salvaged from that fire. All five shops have a very grand façade, with fancy Corinthian columns that seem very out of place for a modest row of Edwardian shops. These are topped with ornate stone mouldings, and there is an impressive stone balcony on the roof of the whole building. Until World War II, this was capped off by wrought iron railings. But they were removed to support the war effort, and never replaced.

Thanks to Tony (and others who have donated or loaned relevant artefacts), the Museum has an impressive range of evidence that teaches us a lot about how the role of a dispensing chemist has changed over the years. A century ago, chemists sold an abundant assortment of products. Because most medicinal products were created in the shop from various ingredients, chemists would sell both homeopathic and prescribed medicines and treatments, and the target audience wasn't confined to humans! Wilfred Slatter (and his predecessor Edwin Stubbs) both also specialised in medicines for horses, cattle and other farm animals!

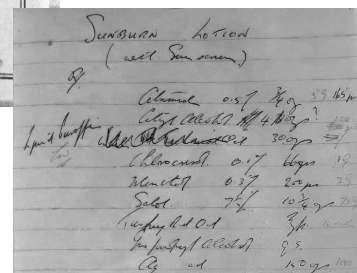
It was also normal for chemists to invest in complimentary skills and services (as many still do today). Cecil Williams was a qualified optician, and both pharmacies operated photographic developing services, and sold photographic equipment.

Today, most of the medicines we take are in the form of pills. And those pills arrive in safety containers or foil packaging that guide us carefully in their use. Back in 1952, when Tony Yoward arrived in Emsworth, nearly all ingested medicines were taken in liquid form, and the responsibility for creating the right dosage and combination of ingredients lay with the dispensing chemist.



*Cecil Williams was a photographic chemist as well as a qualified optician*

*Tony Yoward's ingredient list for sunburn lotion*



Even creams and ointments were typically created by hand, and every chemist would maintain a Chemists Book to remind them of the recipes for various lotions, ointments, powders and creams. On the left is a typical page from the book that Tony used, showing the ingredient list for a sunburn lotion. It was just a typical foolscap exercise book, updated by hand as best practices and scientific achievement evolved. Most pills were also hand made on the premises, by mixing active ingredients with chalk and compressing the mixture in a special pill maker.

So each pharmacy became a mini pharmaceutical factory, with all the stock handling and logistical challenges a factory has today. Tony had to ensure that there was an ample quantity of bottles, corks and protective packaging to meet demand – absolutely no plastics were used back then! A huge amount of water was also used – both as the base ingredient of most mixed medicines, but also to wash the bottles for re-use. People paid a deposit on the medicine bottles, as an incentive to return them. The culpability for administering the correct doses, and maintaining high levels of hygiene, rested completely with Tony – a huge burden of responsibility for a busy local pharmacist.

And the hours were hard, as a pharmacy had to organise its opening hours around the needs of the local community. People couldn't take time off during the day to visit their doctor, so the surgery hours only started at 5 pm, and finished around 8 pm, or even later. As soon as people received their prescriptions, they walked directly to one of the two pharmacies, and expected to pick up their medicine or treatment within minutes. So a pharmacist's daily routine rarely finished before 9 pm.

So next time you are walking past the original 'Old Pharmacy', or The Strand, stop and admire the handsome buildings that once housed Emsworth's two original chemist shops. Observe the over-elaborate Corinthian arches that frame the entrance to

the hairdressing salon, or maybe think about the smuggled spirits and tobacco that might have been a lucrative side line for some of Emsworth's less ethical original pharmacists. And remember the essential service that these places provided – as do their two successors today. In the meantime, what better way to end this article other than the Pharmacist's toast, which is "Moderate good health to you all!"