

Village Echoes

Good for Whatever Ails You

We are used to seeing “celebrity” endorsements for alternative medicines, diets and remedies. However, looking back, this is nothing new and people have long been willing to put their trust in the health benefits of dubious treatments. This would have particularly been the case before the advent of the NHS when free medical advice became readily available.



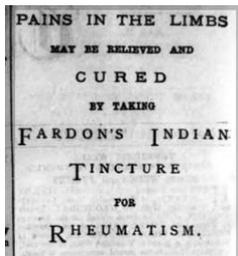
Going back a couple of hundred years, most Goudhurst residents would have obtained information from newspapers and those newspapers were therefore used to advertise various home remedies. One of the heavily advertised remedies was for *Welch's Female Pills*, which, according to an advertisement in the *Kentish Gazette* of 17 March 1801, were available from Mr Apps in Goudhurst (possibly Thomas Apps, 1748-1823). The medicine was said to be “*long known for its very uncommon virtues in removing obstructions and other disorders most especially incidental to the younger part of the female sex; also what is commonly called the Green Sickness, which is denoted by a low or pallid countenance; these pills, however, alter that appearance, as well as create an appetite, correct bad digestion, remove giddiness, and are of distinguished excellence in Windy Disorders etc etc.*” The advertisement was accompanied by testimonials from delighted users. The pills continued to be sold into the 20th century and in 1907 were analysed and found to contain iron, liquorice, turmeric and sulphur.

For those who just felt under the weather, they might have tried *Dr Miller's Sugar Cakes*, available from Mr T Couchman of Goudhurst. These were advertised in the *Kentish Gazette* in May 1804 as being for “*persons having their stomachs disordered, with loss of appetite, giddiness in the head, drowsiness, pains in the limbs, with great lassitude, and an unwilling desire to move*”. If they didn't work, then there was always the option of his “*Antiscorbutic Drops & Restorative Cordial Pills*” or even his “*Worm Cakes*”!

The *Morning Advertiser* of 14 October 1809 made its readers aware of another remedy also available from Mr. Apps. This was “*The Ladies' Family Salve*”. We are told that the proprietor “*wishes it to be made public for the benefit of those afflicted with sore breasts, burns, scalds, chilblains, biles, ulcers, sore legs or hand, eruptions or swellings ... Cancers have never been known by any persons who have applied it to their breasts.*” Quite the miracle cure.

By the 1850s, we find advertisements offering products available from William Apps

Jnr. in Goudhurst. This is probably the William Apps (1779-1871), who is shown on the census records as a grocer. In the Sussex Agricultural Express of October 1857 there was an advertisement for “*Du Barry’s Delicious Revalenta Arabica Food*”, which was available from Mr Apps. The food allegedly cured “*Dyspepsia, constipation, flatulency, phlegm, all nervous, bilious, and liver complaints, hysteria, neuralgia dysentery, heartburn, cramps, asthma, bronchitis, consumption etc*”. As was common, there were various testimonials accompanying the advert, one of which, from Maria Joly of Norfolk, said “*Fifty years’ indescribable agony from dyspepsia, nervousness, asthma, cough, consumption, flatulency, spasms, sickness of the stomach and vomiting, have been removed by Du Barry’s excellent food*”. Poor woman; she must have suffered.



By the 1870s, advertisements for health cures had become a little more restrained. In January 1878 The Kent & Sussex Courier carried an advertisement for “*Fardon’s Indian Tincture for Rheumatism*”. The tincture was made by Fardon & Son a chemist in Maidstone but was available from Mr Eedes the chemist in Goudhurst. George Eedes (1840-1920) lived at Manor House and was a chemist and druggist. It was also available from various grocers in Goudhurst. Unlike previous remedies, the advertisers specifically said that “*Many medicines are advertised as being cures for nearly every complaint the human body is subject to. This is not the case with Fardon’s Indian Tincture; it is only good for rheumatism.*”

Reading some of these advertisements, one wonders how so many people in Goudhurst lived to such a ripe old age. Was it because they took some of these cures or because they avoided them?

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