

## The founder of the Bach Flower Remedies – Dr Edward Bach

Dr Edward Bach (1886-1936) was born in England, but his ancestry was Welsh, and he spent significant parts of his life in Wales. Nora Weeks called him “acutely intuitive and sensitive”<sup>1</sup> and this combined with a deep sense of the spiritual and compassion to all other living beings probably drove Bach to find a new philosophy of treating his fellow human beings.

Following school, Bach worked for a while at his father’s brass foundry, but hated indoor life and became convinced that there must be a simple method of healing the sick whom he saw around him. He decided to become a doctor, and entered Birmingham University at the age of 20 in 1906. But even during his training, he preferred observation to theoretical study, noting that one remedy did not suit all patients with the same disease.

The practice of medicine which ignored the personality of each patient at the expense of identifying and treating the signs of disease became anathema to Bach, and he turned to the study and practice of bacteriology in 1913. After considerable study of various bacilli which were prevalent in patients with chronic disease, he made a vaccine which was injected into patients with excellent results. However, the system of injecting was not to Bach’s liking, as it involved pain and inconvenience, and it was only a few years after that he discovered homoeopathy.

A severe haemorrhage in 1917 led to him having an operation which he was not expected to survive, but he did, and this event appears to have galvanised Bach’s determination to find the simple method of treatment which he so desperately wanted to discover in order to revolutionise medicine. He also took from it the lesson that if one has a strong wish to live, then good health is likely to be achievable.

Bach had already had an effect on the practice of medicine, as his vaccines were by 1918 being routinely used in hospitals, and he was allowed to inoculate the troops in certain home camps against the influenza epidemic. The death rate in those camps was a fraction of those in the others.

In March 1919, Bach accepted the post of pathologist and bacteriologist at the London Homoeopathic Hospital. There he read Samuel Hahnemann’s *Organon*, and recognised the similarities with his own beliefs and discoveries, particularly in respect of treating the patient and not the disease. Also important was the fact that Hahnemann had found many remedies in nature. Bach wanted to combine his own work with that of Hahnemann, and he returned to examining the nature of chronic disease in the light of Hahnemann’s writings.

Bach prepared seven nosodes from intestinal bacilli. He adopted the homoeopathic method potentising the vaccines, and of oral administration, from which he gained excellent results. Bach’s work was becoming respected by many of his peers. He left the Homoeopathic Hospital in 1922 and moved into research as well as continuing to consult in his rooms. He also became interested in nutrition, and in the fight to reduce the incidence of intestinal toxæmias, he recommended a largely raw diet of fruits, nuts, cereals and vegetables.

Bach was becoming very well-known, through his writings, speaking at conferences, and the results of his treatments of patients. Yet despite this success, Bach was unhappy that he was using the products of disease in his cures, and wished to find a purer remedy. By November 1928, he foreshadowed this process in a paper entitled “The Rediscovery of Psora”. Bach had in fact been collecting various plant and herb specimens from his days out which he potentised homoeopathically, but was unhappy with the results. During his ponderings he attended a dinner and suddenly realised that those around him consisted of various personality types. From keen observation, he noted the types, and extrapolated a hypothesis that those of a particular personality type would react in the same way to any type of illness.

By 1930, Bach was prescribing remedies based on observation of personality, and achieving a degree of success. That year he discovered Impatiens, Mimulus and Clematis, potentised them and treated a number of patients very successfully. Bach knew that he was on the right track, and would have to find other remedies so he gave up his London practice and turned his attention to finding them. At the same

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<sup>1</sup> Nora Weeks. *The Medical Discoveries of Edward Bach Physician*. Essex, C.W. Daniel, 1973. p. 9

time, he discovered his tactile healing abilities and knew that he had become a real intuitive and what we would consider to be an energetic healer.

A mistake in taking a suitcase full of shoes to Wales instead of his mortar and pestle proved fortuitous, as he needed the shoes to walk around to collect the plants, and he was forced to consider a new method of producing the remedies. This occurred to him when he observed that a dewdrop in the sun must contain some of the properties of the plant upon which it rested. He tested this by collecting the dew from certain plants and taking it himself. His extraordinary sensitivity allowed him to feel the full power of the plant, which at times caused him pain and distress. However, he was convinced that the sun's power would be the method he had been seeking to potentise the remedies. In this way, the sun method of preparation was born.

At this point the book *Heal Thyself* was written, and published in 1931. Bach expounded upon his philosophies, his abhorrence of suffering, the lessons we can learn from disease, the eradication of mental states such as ignorance, pride and greed, and the way in which we can live a life of purity and unity with humanity and the Creator. One of his central tenets is that "disease is a kind of consolidation of a mental attitude and it is only necessary to treat the mood of a patient and the disease will disappear."<sup>2</sup>

Another of Bach's desires was to keep the remedies as simple as possible so that everyone might obtain them without having to be prescribed them by a doctor. That meant that the plants must be available, and the methods of potentising and administration easy. This devolution of power from the medical profession to the hands of the patient was an issue which the Medical Board took issue with on a number of occasions in subsequent years, but which Bach defied with all the energy of a true believer and revolutionary.

So treat the patient's personality; treat the state of mind or the moods and have a variety of remedies to treat changing moods summarises Bach's treatment philosophy. He noted twelve major mental or emotional states, but only had three remedies by 1930, so he had to find some more. This he did by traversing the countryside, collecting, testing and discarding until he found Agrimony, Chicory and Vervain. Centaury and the Tibetan flower Cerato followed, and then Scleranthus. It was into 1932 before he completed the first twelve remedies: Water Violet, Gentian and Rock Rose, and his book *The Twelve Healers*.

While Bach had a great deal of success treating patients with these twelve remedies, he had not completed his quest for what would ultimately be thirty-eight remedies. The next, Gorse, was discovered in 1933, and shortly after found Oak Blossom, Heather and Rock Water (the only non-plant remedy) which he entitled "The Four Helpers". Bach began to use these, and treated many people free of charge. He also continued to write about his discoveries. In early 1934, he found an excellent combination of remedies for emergency use which came to be known as "Rescue Remedy". Meanwhile, Wild Oat, Olive and Vine had been discovered, bringing the total to 19, or half the eventual total of remedies. Bach had first thought that 19 were enough, but he later found that there were other mental states for which he felt compelled to find remedies. It was also that year that he moved to Sotwell in Oxfordshire.

During the years since leaving London, Bach had travelled a good deal, and had spent various times at Cromer, on the coast. His psychic powers had become stronger, and he was well known in the area for being able to foretell events, and occasionally to save people through this, as well as what some would have regarded as "miracle cures" from the flower essences.

Discovery of the second 19 remedies began in March 1935 with Cherry Plum, and Bach seemed to develop the state which each remedy would cure just prior to the appropriate discovery. He also found that some remedies would not be suitable for the sun method of preparation, so he developed another method of boiling and straining the plant material. All of the other 18 remedies were found in the following six months.

By October 1836, Bach seems to have reached the end of his strength, and while he continued to see patients, it was not long before he died in November that year.

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<sup>2</sup> N. Weeks, p. 57

Like homoeopathy, Bach Flower Remedies treat a mental or emotional state, and Bach operated from a deeply spiritual stance. He wrote “the main reason for the failure of modern medical science is that it is dealing with results and not causes.”<sup>3</sup> This differs significantly from allopathic medicine, where the signs and symptoms (the results) are the predominant means of determining treatment, and there is rarely emphasis placed on natural remedies or nutrition which might address the causes.

Bach also regarded disease as a karmic lesson, illustrated in the following passage:

... we, as we know ourselves in this world, are personalities down here for the purpose of gaining all the knowledge and experience which can be obtained through earthly existence, of developing virtues which we lack and of wiping out all that is wrong within us, thus advancing towards the perfection of our natures.<sup>4</sup>

It is in this “perfection of our natures” that Bach’s gentle remedies excel; he acknowledges the physical causes of disease, such as toxins and accidents, but states that “not only must physical means be used, ... but we ourselves must also endeavour to the utmost of our ability to remove any fault in our nature; because final and complete healing ultimately comes from within”.<sup>5</sup> With their emphasis on the psychology of the individual, and the subtle nudging of our emotions from imbalance to balance, the Bach flower essences do assist the true art of healing.

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## **Bibliography**

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<sup>3</sup> Edward Bach. *Heal Thyself. An explanation of the real cause and cure of disease.* Essex, C.W. Daniel, 2003, p.

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<sup>4</sup> E. Bach, p. 6

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