Talking Tees Valley Activity Pack

The Victorian Chemist

Tees Valley Museums

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Tees Valley Museums

Talking Tees Valley Activity Pack

The Victorian Chemist

Welcome to another edition of the Talking Tees Valley Activity Pack.

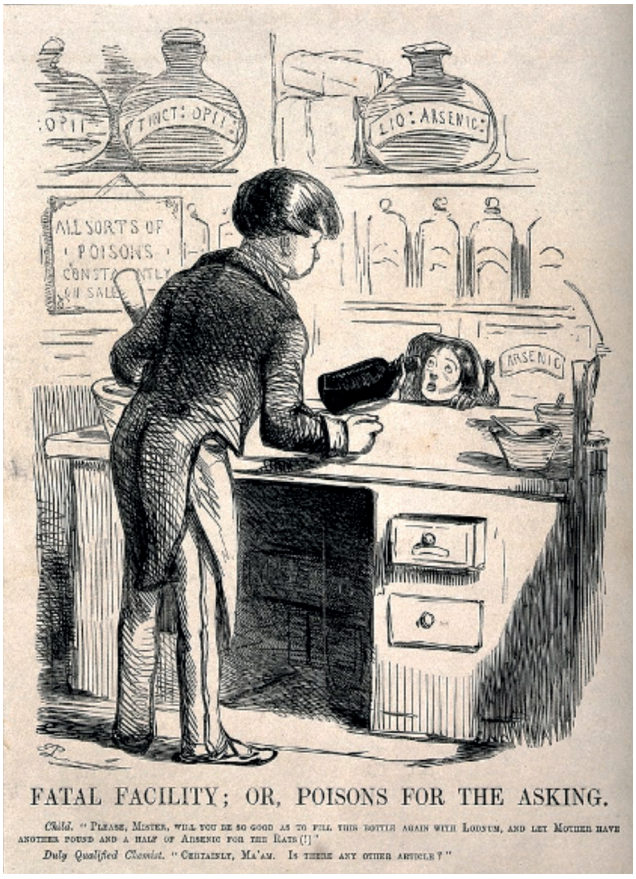
Each month we use objects from one of our museums in the Tees Valley to take a closer look at the lives and stories from people in our area.

This month we visit the Victorian Chemist in Preston Park Museum to see what kinds of illnesses they were treating and what they were selling over the counter.

Victorian England was a dangerous place to live. Diseases such as cholera, TB and syphilis were everywhere, killing rich and poor alike. However, if the diseases didn't kill you, what you took to cure it might well have finished you off!

In the Victorian chemist anyone could buy arsenic, mercury and pure nicotine over the counter.

In this picture from the 1860s a little girl is buying a bottle of Arsenic. It was often the child's job to run to the chemist to buy the family arsenic to kill the rats in the kitchens.



FATAL FACILITY; OR, POISONS FOR THE ASKING.

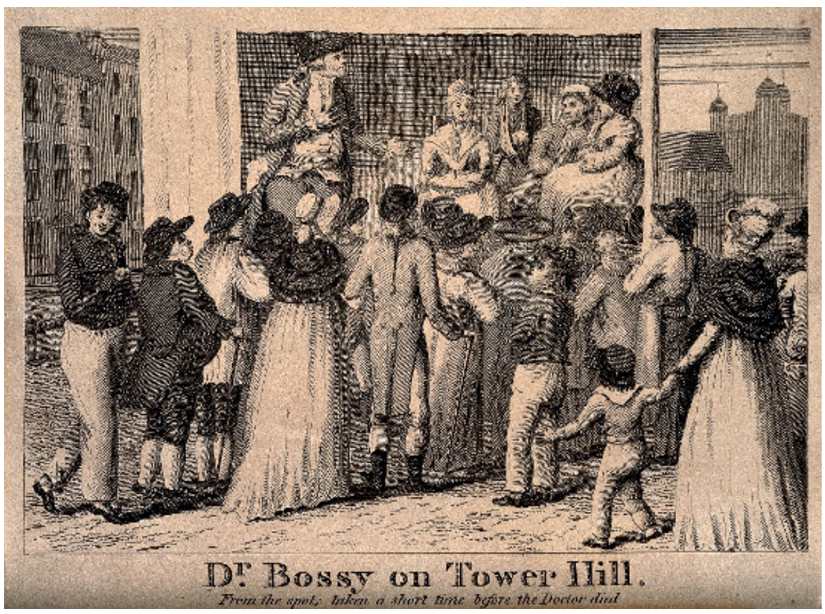
Child. "Please, Mister, will you be so good as to fill this bottle again with Laudum, and let Mother have another pound and a half of Arsenic for the Rats (!)"

Duly Qualified Chemist. "Certainly, Ma'am. Is there any other article?"

Did you have to buy anything from a shop in your younger days that would be frowned upon now?

Quack doctors were rife at this time. They bought their ingredients from the chemist and made dangerous cheap pills and tonics.

In this drawing a Quack Doctor is selling his dodgy 'cures' on a street.


Dr Bossy on Tower Hill.

From the spot; taken a short time before the Doctor died

What 'cures' were you given that might seem odd today? Butter for a bump on the head or butter, sugar and vinegar for a sore throat?

Have a go! Design your own Medicine Label

Look at the adverts for Victorian medicines on the next page, then use the template below to create your own medicine label!

We have some key words used in Victorian 'cure-alls' for you to cut out and stick on or to copy. We have also included some questions you might want to consider.

What's it called?

Does it have a slogan?

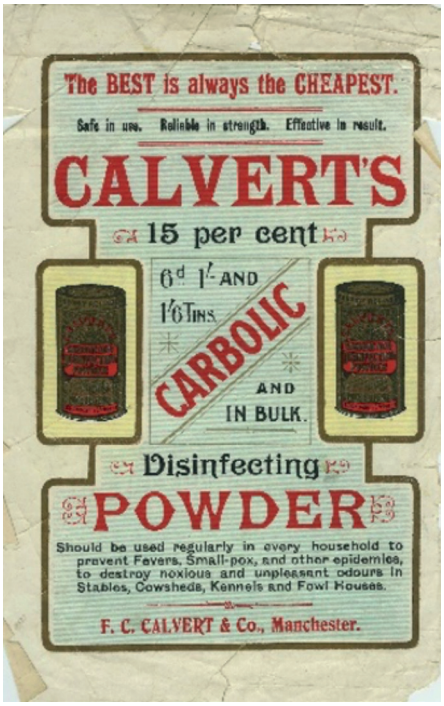
As the chemist will you put your name on?

Is it dangerorous?

What's it made from?

Who is it suitable for - babies, children or adults?

How much does it cost?



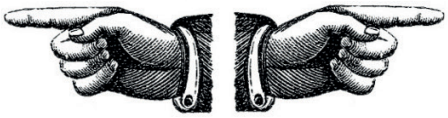
A lot of what was sold to 'cure' often ended up making things worse and many people were poisoned.

Medication	What it was believed to 'cure'
Opium, strychnine	Constipation
Morphine	Menstrual Cramps
Heroin	Children's coughs, cancer
Arsenic	Babies teething, anaemia
Tobacco	Asthma, bronchitis
Belladonna	Colic
Laudanum (mix of opium and alcohol)	Labour pains, aches, headaches etc

Can you solve these anagrams of names of Victorian 'cures' mentioned above?

alanudum	emirphon	abccoot	arinsec
adellabonn	ehiron	ioump	certshinny

Cut out these words and Symbols to decorate your medicine label!



Safe

CURE

MEDICINE

Pills

COLD

AIDS

Liquires

Tonic

ILLS

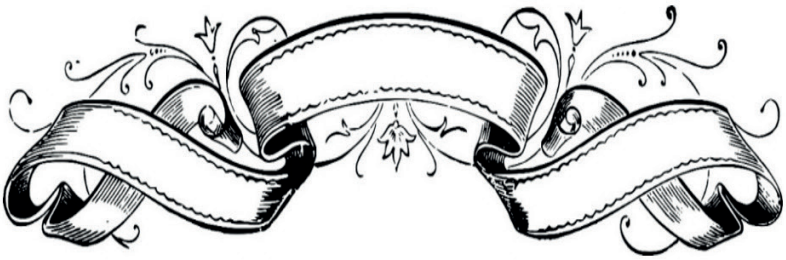
Courdil

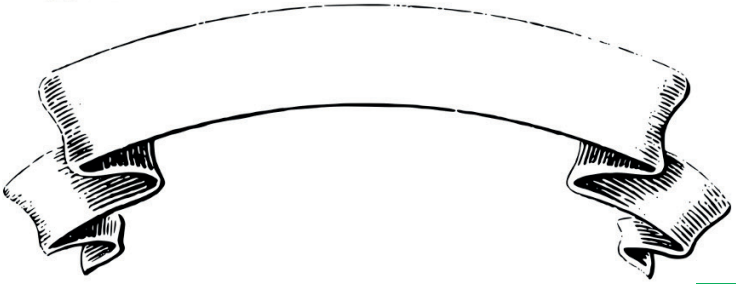
Mixture

FEVER

COUGHS

DIGESTION





Poison