Grantham Apothecaries—Further Notes

John B. Manterfield

Two articles in the last issue of this journal shed light on the historical development of the English apothecary and more particularly on early practitioners in Grantham. These further notes trace the origins and early history of one dynasty, the Clarke family of Grantham.

Dr. Whittet began his dynasty with Ralph Clarke (I), who died in 1631. Ralph was the son of Arthur Clarke, who was buried on 14 January 1583. His inventory, dated 21 January, lists haberdashery, cloths, felts, 'grocerye' and 'riboners' in wares, in the shop and chamber, hall parlour, hall chamber, middle chamber, stable, buttery and kitchen. The evidence of Arthur's practice as an apothecary comes from his shop stock and equipment, specifically from references to two morters and two pestelles —xvs. one by one—xxd. one paver of smale pane balence —iiij. vj payer of smale pane balence —viij. vj li of brasse waytes —iiij. for pothecarye ware in smale portions pyned to —xds.

Among the stock are ingredients such as rock alum, green copperas, brimstone, 'bleydebaye', white lead, rosset and red lead as well as sugars, licorice, almonds, rice, starch, pepper, prunes, raisins, currants, both and honey. The administration of his her husband's estate which was appraised at £288 16s. 10d. was granted to Anne Clarke.

Nearly five years after her first husband's death, Anne married Thomas Osborne on 28 September 1587; he was buried on 10 June 1602. His inventory clearly relates to a different house consisting of hall, buttery, cellar (containing wine, sour wine and vinegar), kitchen, lathe, neither lathe, stable, hall chamber, middle chamber, kitchen chamber, little chamber, loft over the little chamber, parlor chamber and shop. The 'signe poste a bashe a bell and Rayles' were appraised at £1 viij. The shop stock is neither itemised nor totalled which may indicate that Thomas Osborne had sold or transferred the business. The shop however contained one pair of shop shutters and the parlour a brass mortar and pestle. The administration of her late husband's estate, appraised at £132 1s. 10d., was granted to Anne Osborne, widow, with Ralph Clarke, mercer, one of standing surety.

Anne died in February 1605; her inventory describes her as 'Anne Osborne alias Clerk'. She appears to have carried on the occupation of her first husband in her second husband's premises. The shop goods included silks, laces, ribbons, geometry, woollen, velvet, satin, velvets, turkey programs, fustians, holland, cambric, callico, manchester threads, whalebone, paper and card, soap, honey, currants, starch, prunes, 'sack, miskadyme Clarit wine', turpentine, olives, sugar and licorice. Evidence of the apothecary's trade comes from 'druggs brimstone, quick sliver, conserve and other things' and 'a morter pestles shelve bordz chesses' of boxes empty pots and other od things Lilis iiij. Other rooms mentioned were the parlour, thee house and chamber, hall chamber, chambers over the shop and parlour, middle chamber, kitchen, buttery, kitchen chamber, hall, cellar, lathe, stable, hayhouse, neither lathe and kilnhouse. The total value amounted to £421 3s. 11d. The administration bond bound Ralph Clarke to administer his mother's estate.

It is clear therefore that Ralph Clarke's profession as apothecary owed much to his parents Arthur and Anne. Little further of their background is known, although a son of Arthur is recorded as baptised in 1581. It is likely that Ralph was born prior to 1576 as he acted as an apothecary for another mercer, Christopher Fisher, dated 6 and 9 February 1597. Ralph's civic career was probably underway by that date. Having been made free to practise his trade in Grantham, he would have been appointed to a variety of minor posts before election to the Second Twelve. He became a Combursess (member of the First Twelve) between 1604 and 1605, at which point he is styled 'Mr. in the parish records. He was chosen Alderman (equivalent to mayor in other corporations) in 1611 and again in 1621, the office being rotated in order of seniority.

Ralph's eldest son to survive infancy, William Clarke (I), born in 1609, appears to have followed his father's civic career. His admission to the freedom took place before 1634 and he is listed as a commoner for the Market Place ward between 1635 and 1641 holding the office of constable in that ward between 1637 and 1640. Clarke appears not to have held further municipal office until 1646.

At the outbreak of the Civil War in August 1642, the corporation was predominantly royalist. The town was garrisoned on 12 January 1643 by a small detachment of the Earl of Newcastle's army but fell to the rebels in early March. On 24 March, Colonel Cavendish from Newark with fifteen companies of foot and horse recaptured Grantham for the King taking nearly 250 prisoners of whom ninety gentlemen and fifteen townsmen including William Clarke were indicted for High Treason on 11 April 1643. On 22 May 1643, Grantham was taken for Parliament by Colonel Oliver Cromwell and the prisoners released. Grantham remained in parlimentary hands until the end of the War and the corporation was ordered to pay £300 to the rebels, having previously been taxed £125 to support the King. When the war ended, the Alderman and seven royalist Combursesses were imprisoned at Nottingham in November 1643, and not released until September 1644.

Whatever interruptions or hardships Clarke's business and municipal career may have suffered in the early 1640s, it is clear that from 1645 until the Restoration it saw spectacular advances. By a deed poll of 14 September 1646, William Clarke, described as apothecary, purchased a house in the Market Place from his half-brother Benjamin, described as a mercer, and Elizabeth his wife. The house lay adjacent to William's house close to the George Inn. Included in the price of £90 paid for the house was an annuity of £4 17s. 6d. which was Benjamin's share under his father's will of the Well Lane Mill rent. Benjamin was made free to practise his trade on 20 October 1646 having served his apprenticeship. Benjamin appears therefore to have followed the mercer trade, whereas William had specialised as an apothecary.

At the beginning of the civic year in 1645, William is listed as a commoner. A year later, he was given precedence at the top of the Second Twelve list. Following the Act of Parliament of 9 September 1647, royalist sympathisers were removed from civic offices. In Grantham six Combursesses, three of the Second Twelve and seven commoners either resigned or were dismissed. William Clarke was chosen to the First Twelve on 24 September 1647, having risen in two years what may previously have taken ten.

Following the declaration of the Commonwealth in May 1649, the act for the sale of former crown lands was passed on 16 July, with provision for minimum rate of purchase at three times the years of the improved rents. The Township of Grantham, formerly part of the Queen's jointure, were accordingly surveyed and valued during April 1650. The George Inn and ten adjacent messuages, cottages, shops and other land, had reserved rents totalling £14 12s. 8d. improved to £57 10s. William Clarke moved quickly to purchase these properties using Edward Southey of the Strand as his agent on 3 June 1650. The purchase price, calculated at thirty times the old rents plus eight or sixteen times the improved rents,
amounted to £1,078, 12s. Half of this sum including commissions was to be paid within eight weeks and the balance within six months. These arrangements were made against debentures which were cancelled by 23 February 1651.16

William Clarke thus became the leading freeholder in Grantham. His pre-eminence undoubtedly influenced the choice of him as Alderman on 1 November 1650. Clarke served a second term as Alderman for the year from 31 October 1656 to 1 November 1657 as one of three Comburegges who served twice as Alderman during the Commonwealth.17 It was during the period from 1655 to 1660 that Isaac Newton lodged with Clarke whilst a pupil at the Grammar School. Joseph Clarke (I), William's younger half-brother was Usher (second master) at the school until 1662.18

At the Restoration, William's financial and political fortunes waned. The sales of crown lands were declared void and new leases were issued to former tenants. Simultaneously, five royalists were restored by mandamus to the Corporation in March 1661, a further four more in June and on 3 October 1661 a commission headed by Sir William Thorold and Dr. Thomas Hurst came to examine certain matters concerning the Corporation. Two comburegges Mr. William Clarke and Mr. Maurice Dalton were asked by them to leave and resign.19 From then until his death, William Clarke (I) appears not to have taken any further part in borough politics or government.20

Whereas William's eldest son, Joseph Clarke (II), practised as an apothecary in Loughborough, his brother, William (II), born in 1640, was apprenticed to his father in Grantham and was admitted to the freedom on 11 March 1670. He subsequently held the office of constable on two occasions (elected 1670 and 1672) for the Market Place ward where he is listed as a commoner until 1676. In that year, he was elected to the Second Twelve and held that position until 1680. Thereafter, he too appears not to have taken any part in the borough council.21 The family's financial status is evidenced in a constable's assessment of 29 September 1679. William Clarke was assessed for 3s. 9d. in land and 2s. 3d. in goods, his total assessment was the sixteenth highest in the town—his goods and stock having been valued at £72.22 Although not insignificant, this is likely to have been an underassessment.

In the eighteenth century the Clarke family, as Dr. Whittet has demonstrated, continued in the medical professions. From its early history as Elizabethan mercers, the family epitomises the changing role of the apothecary in the history of the profession.

NOTES
4. L.A.O. L.C.C. Admon. 1602/95, dated 27 August 1602. The appraisers were Mr. William Browne, Mr. John Haskard, Peter Willson and Randall Jessopp.
6. Foster, Parish Register, 26 November 1581, p.9.
7. L.A.O. L.C.C. Admon. 1596/46. Ralph Clarke was also an appraiser in the inventories of Anne Cooke 28 January 1607 and Gabriel Grub, grrazier, 10 December 1610, L.A.O. Ins. 101/413 and Inv. 109/479.