

THE INTRODUCTION OF HOMŒOPATHY TO ADELAIDE

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(With several updates incorporated regarding the early days of Kidner's practice in Melbourne, and the Kidner and Gould pharmacy, following the results of more recent research.)

Abstract:

This article introduces the reader to three figures in South Australian history who first brought homœopathy to the attention of the residents of Adelaide:- a cured patient, a bookseller-chemist, and Adelaide's first homœopath. Their enthusiasm for homœopathy as a method of medical treatment subsequently led to the establishment of a free homœopathic dispensary in Adelaide.

Adelaide's First Converts to Homœopathy

Two key people were the inspiration for the introduction of homœopathy to Adelaide. Neither was a practitioner. However, significant health events in both their lives led them to become Adelaide's greatest early supporters of homœopathy.

The Cured Patient

Australian homœopaths who are keen followers of Australian Rules football will instantly recognise the name "Magarey", as it is the name of an award, the Magarey Medal, which is presented annually for the best and fairest player in the local South Australian National Football League. However few would realise that the grandfather of the award's namesake was a key figure in the story of the introduction of homœopathy to Adelaide.

Thomas Magarey (1825–1902) migrated from Ireland to New Zealand, and then moved to Adelaide in 1845 where he became a successful miller and pastoralist. It was in New Zealand that he slipped and fell under a cart which ran over his arm and head. His head became very swollen and he was bleeding from his ear, eye, mouth and nose. The doctor bled him and gave him medicines containing opiates. This treatment did not relieve his condition. By 1858 his headaches were crippling. On the advice of a friend, he consulted a "Dr McKearn" in Melbourne, who "founded treatment upon Arnica and Rhus, advised only a little head work, loitering in the garden, no travelling or absences from home, and sitting baths. His health quickly improved under this regime and he was able to return to Adelaide, a wonder to many who thus became interested in homœopathy."¹⁵

It is likely that the doctor concerned was Thomas Mackern, surgeon of the London Homœopathic Hospital. By 1859 Mackern had moved to Melbourne, and he reported that he had migrated to New South Wales ten years previously.¹³ (Later research has shown that this last statement re his migration to NSW was incorrect reporting by the newspaper journalist of the time.)

Magarey was the first to introduce the teachings of the Church of Christ to Adelaide, and helped to found Australia's first church of that denomination. During his frequent business trips to Melbourne, he also visited fellow church members who were establishing churches in the suburbs of Melbourne.⁶ It was through these visits that he came to meet the person who ultimately became Adelaide's first homœopath.

Thomas Magarey became a prominent citizen of South Australia.¹ He was an early joint proprietor of the Register and Observer newspapers, one of the first directors of the Bank of Adelaide, and attended the first meeting of The University Association, a group of “gentlemen favourable to the establishment of a university in Adelaide”. He was twice appointed to the Legislative Council. Because of his religious and social beliefs, he was involved with several philanthropic projects in Adelaide, including the founding of the Adelaide Homœopathic Dispensary.

The Bookseller-Chemist

Edgar Smith Wigg (1818–1899) is also a famous name, associated with the book and stationery business in Australia. Because his wife was ill and needed a warm climate, Wigg migrated from England to Adelaide in 1849. On his arrival in Australia his wife had dysentery and was given mercury by the doctors. Wigg insisted that this “finally sapped her life” and subsequently she died.⁴ His second wife and two of his children also died in the early 1850s. It appears that these disasters gave him a poor impression of the capabilities of the medical treatment provided by allopathic practitioners at that time.

Wigg originally opened a book and stationery shop at 4 Rundle Street. In August 1857 he moved his shop to a new building in the same street (number 12, later re-numbered 14). “Not long after that”, it’s reported, he added a new line of sales within the bookshop: he became involved in the sale of homœopathic medicines, “having become a convert to its principle”.⁴ Later homœopathic publications by Wigg state that this early incarnation of his “homœopathic pharmacy” was established during 1858, possibly around the same time as Magarey’s cure. The first edition of the Adelaide Almanack, Town and Country Directory to mention Wigg’s homœopathic activities was in 1864.²

Interestingly, in the 1867 Adelaide Almanack, Town and Country Directory, Wigg’s full-page advertisement mentioned only his book and stationery business activities. The 1866 advertisement for WD Allott at 134 Rundle Street stated that he was a “chemist and druggist” who sold “Homœopathic Medicines of all kinds”, as well as other drugs and patent medicines. In addition, it is likely that the Heuzenroeder family, who were chemists in Tanunda and at 50 Rundle Street, also sold homœopathic medicines at that time. But this was not specifically stated in the Directory.²

It is reported that “it was not long before the new system of medicine formed a hold on the colonists”.⁴ This side of Wigg’s business grew to the point where a separate shop was necessary. Wigg eventually established a dedicated homœopathic pharmacy and medical bookshop in Adelaide’s King William Street, and he also established a homœopathic pharmacy in Murray Street Perth, along with his book and stationery business.⁷ The family’s memoirs state:

He had established his homœopathic medicine shops, hoping no doubt to provide an alternative medicine to that from which his wife Fanny had suffered and died.⁴

There is no evidence during this early period of there being a homœopathic practitioner (or “homœopathist”, as they were called in those days) in Adelaide. Wigg imported and sold homœopathic texts, and printed small domestic first aid guides to accompany his sales of homœopathic pilules and tinctures.

Wigg created what is commonly known as “colonial editions” of homœopathic texts, where the original title page was removed and a locally-produced frontispiece was glued in its place – exactly the same as the original but with Wigg’s details included above those of the original publisher. An example, in my possession, is an 1883 edition of *The Lady’s Manual of Homœopathic Treatment in the Various Derangements Incident to Her Sex* by E.H. Ruddock.¹¹

Wigg's very small Domestic Homœopathy guide (75mm x 120mm) was designed to accompany the sale of the medicines and his domestic medicine chests.¹⁴ These chests could be purchased for sums from 10 shillings and 6 pence, to 10 guineas, depending on the number of remedies supplied. Wigg advertised "medicine cases of all kinds fitted to any work that may be desired".¹⁴ In addition to pilules and tinctures, the chests included lint, plaster and scissors etc in the bottom drawer. One of these two-tiered chests, labelled Edgar S. Wigg, Homœopathic Chemist, Adelaide, even made its way to the West Australian goldfields and has survived to this day. Veterinary medicine chests were also available.

The Domestic Homœopathy guide states that Wigg was a "Member of the Homœopathic Pharmaceutic Association of Great Britain". It is not known when he became a member, but it may be that this occurred later when he became involved with the Adelaide Dispensary and decided to obtain the additional credentials in order to act as its official dispenser.

Wigg eventually retired in 1892 and sold his homœopathic business to Radcliffe and Tilly, who had a shop next to Wigg's in Rundle Street. C. Radcliffe, chemist, continued to reprint Wigg's domestic homœopathy guide under the title A Brief List of Edgar S. Wigg's Homœopathic Medicines: with simple directions for treatment.¹⁰

Adelaide's First Homœopath

Adelaide's first homœopath did not arrive in the township until two years after the establishment of Wigg's pharmacy – i.e. in 1860. The background to this person was a complete surprise, and at first I did not recognise the church, family, and homœopathic connections for what they were.

Adelaide's first homœopath was the person who established the first homœopathic pharmacy in Melbourne, which was later to become Martin & Pleasance. This was the person I nicknamed "the elusive Mr Kidner", as initially I was unable to find any further details about him, apart from his surname, until I discovered the Adelaide connection and worked backwards in time from there. After I'd done much searching in contemporary Australian records in Melbourne and Adelaide, and pursued extensive correspondence with Kidner's family connections in England, his story gradually emerged.

Samuel Kidner (1809–1883), also known as Mr Kidner, Brother Kidner or Dr Kidner, was born on the south side of the Thames, London. As was the case with Magarey and Wigg, Kidner's involvement with homœopathy started because of ill-health in the family. His wife suffered from consumption and seemed to benefit from homœopathic treatment. He studied homœopathic principles and then established himself as a homœopathic chemist in the London suburb of Bermondsey. Dr John Epps, a famous London medical practitioner and one of England's first homœopaths, took Kidner on as one of his students and assisted him with his medical studies. He tried to persuade Kidner to apply for a certificate of legal qualification as a practitioner, but because of Kidner's home situation (his wife eventually passed away, and all but one of his children died through accidents), Kidner unfortunately failed to take this advice.⁹

Samuel's own health was poor "because of his appalling misfortunes", so he and his only surviving child, Albertina, travelled to Australia, arriving in 1857. He had been promised a position as resident dispenser at one of Sydney's hospitals. His letter accepting the job had been delayed, however, so when he arrived he found that the position had already been filled.⁹ In either December 1857, or (more likely) early 1858, Samuel travelled south to the fast-growing bush township of "St Kilda, near Melbourne".

Sydney's loss was Melbourne's gain.

Kidner's movements in Melbourne were very difficult to trace. Much of our knowledge of him during this period comes from the letters which he wrote from "St Kilda, near Melbourne" to the adherents of Primitive Christianity in England (the forerunner of the Church of Christ), with whom he was eventually ordained as preacher.⁵ From 1859 he also appeared in the rate records of St Kilda as the tenant of a 6 room brick and slate cottage in High Street, which his letters to England identified as being "Erin Cottage". (High Street has now disappeared with the widening of St Kilda Road.)

Interestingly, Kidner's letters were solely concerned with his involvement with newly-formed church congregations at Prahran, Brighton and "at Moorabbin, about two miles from Brighton (quite in the bush, however, and seven miles from this place)".⁵ In none of his letters to England did Samuel make any mention of his activities as a homœopath, apart from a general statement in July 1858 that after he had visited church members in Geelong, he was going to "commence my new business".⁵

It appears that Kidner's first business in Victoria was a homœopathic practice at St Kilda. (See added note below for the results of more recent research) His name was included in the Sands & Kenny Melbourne directory printed in 1860, which listed residents and businesses which were operating in 1859. Kidner was recorded as being a "homœopathist" at 123 High Street, St Kilda, between Argyle Street East and Inkerman Street East. His obituary stated that:

Here [that is, in Melbourne] he gained the esteem and respect of all with whom he associated. At St Kilda particularly there are many who derived comfort from his paternal and professional advice, and his practical assistance.⁹

The Kidner & Gould Pharmacy appears to have been his second business venture. Kidner's pharmacy was listed for the first time in the Sands and Kenny Melbourne directory published in 1861, which recorded businesses which were operating in 1860. The pharmacy's address was 90 Collins Street East, on the south side of the street, between Swanston Street and Russell Street. (See Note 1) Kidner's obituary supports the idea that the pharmacy was established during 1860. (See Note 2) It says:

He started as a homœopathic practitioner, and established, in conjunction with a Mr Gould, a pharmacy in that branch of medicine, in Collins-street.

It is recorded that his Collins-street establishment was the first of the kind in Melbourne.⁹

In fact I discovered that in 1854 T.H. Goodwin had managed a homœopathic dispensary at 17 Stephen Street (now renamed Exhibition Street).⁸ This dispensary didn't rate an entry in the list of chemists and druggists, however, so it appears to have been a small home-based business rather than a commercial pharmacy.

In 1869 the rooms of Martin & Gould's pharmacy (a later name for the Kidner & Gould Pharmacy) were used for the meetings of the planning committee which established the Melbourne Homœopathic Dispensary. Templeton's history of the Dispensary and the Melbourne Homœopathic Hospital states: "Precisely when the plan of establishing a homœopathic dispensary was first broached, we do not know".¹² Therefore there was great excitement when I discovered a previously unrecognised record of their first meeting.¹³ It was held at the Mechanics' Institute (which later became the Athenæum) on 14 April, 1859, ten years prior to the final opening of the Dispensary. Samuel Kidner and Thomas Mackern were two of the gentlemen who attended that first meeting,

and they were both appointed to the committee which was formed to work towards establishing the dispensary. The meetings held at Martin & Gould's represented the ongoing dedication to this task, and it is quite possible that earlier meetings were convened at the pharmacy when it was first established by Kidner.

Although the Sands directory which listed Kidner's new pharmacy was published in 1861, it is known that by that time Mr Kidner had already moved to Adelaide, leaving the pharmacy to be managed by Gould.

Kidner's move to Adelaide came about because of the intensely religious beliefs of Thomas Magarey, which he shared. In a letter from St Kilda dated 16 March 1860, Kidner reported to the church in England:

Since I last wrote you we have had a visit from Bros. Magarey and Santo, from Adelaide; and I am happy to inform you that their presence has been the means of stirring us up, and causing us to make fresh efforts in the cause of Jesus.⁵

Magarey and Kidner had many things in common: their religious beliefs; their strong support for the temperance movement (Kidner was a speaker both in England and Australia, and Magarey became President of the South Australian Temperance Alliance); the unfortunate health problems of their family members, and as a result, their interest and dedicated support for homœopathy. Because Kidner had close associations with both Thomas Magarey and Dr Thomas Mackern, it is possible that it was Kidner who was the friend who had advised Magarey to consult Mackern for treatment of his crippling headaches during one of Magarey's many visits to Melbourne.

Towards the end of 1860 Kidner visited Magarey in Adelaide, "where there was no resident homœopath". In Adelaide he was

waited upon, shortly after his arrival, by such a large number of applicants for professional aid, that he consented to stay for 12 months, until a qualified substitute could be obtained from England.⁹

But he eventually decided to stay in Adelaide.

Melbourne and St Kilda's loss was Adelaide's gain.

Kidner's obituary in 1883, which described him as a "well-known homœopathist", provided a glowing report of his capabilities as a physician.

Allegedly marvellous cures were effected by his mode of treatment, even in cases regarded by many members of the allopathic school as absolutely incurable. One of these so relieved stood beside the grave of the departed physician on 13th August, a living testimony to the rare skill and patience of Mr. Kidner.⁹

Also:

Another such case occurred in North Adelaide, where a gentleman had been a sufferer from supposed rheumatism, and his case abandoned by his medical attendant as a hopeless case. On hearing of the arrival of the "new doctor", the ailing man requested the favour of a visit. As a result, the patient was, in a few months, so far recovered as to be able to walk from his home to the heart of the city. This patient's adulation of his benefactor was unbounded.⁹

In 1868 Samuel left Australia to return to England to apply for a medical certificate. Kidner hoped for assistance in this matter from his mentor, Dr Epps, who was described as "the only person from

whom he could obtain a certificate”⁹ By the time Kidner arrived, however, Dr Epps was already terminally ill, and died shortly after.³ Therefore, upon Kidner’s return to Australia in 1869, he continued to practice without the official medical qualification which he had sought. It appears from the obituary that this lack of official recognition by the Medical Board was no hindrance to his success and local acceptance as a highly capable practitioner. He subsequently practised in the vicinity of Bowden, followed by a practice at Hindmarsh, where he was also one of the pastors at the local church. He was described as having a “benevolent disposition”.

Samuel Kidner was buried at West Terrace Cemetery. During the funeral nearly all the places of business in Hindmarsh were partially closed out of respect to his memory and his many contributions to his community, including the many improvement societies he had originated during his lifetime.

Kidner’s obituary concluded: “He may be aptly termed the father of Homœopathy, so far as South Australia is concerned.”⁹

Samuel Kidner, along with Thomas Magarey and Edgar Smith Wigg, were instrumental in bringing homœopathy to Adelaide. They were also key figures in the move to establish the free Homœopathic Dispensary in Adelaide in 1867. But that is the topic of a further article.

Note 1: It should be noted that the street numbering system for Melbourne completely changed in the late 1800s. Originally the numbering system for the ‘Paris End’ of Collins Street (Collins Street East) started from Elizabeth Street, with the highest number at Spring Street, the reverse of what it is today. Therefore ‘number 90’ in 1860 is not the same as ‘number 90’ today.

Note 2: During the extensive research for this article I discovered that the details of the date and location for the establishment of Kidner’s pharmacy (1855 at 85 Collins Street), which are often quoted in various websites and journal articles, are not substantiated by the records of the time. The original source of the errors appears to have been statements in *“Victoria and its Metropolis Past & Present”* by Alexander Sutherland, which was published many years after the event, in 1888. Because of the early date of this publication, the details within it have been assumed to have had an authoritative, contemporary basis. However this information must have been published according to what the author had been told, based on the memory of later arrivals and not on a thorough cross-examination of contemporary records. In 1855 Kidner had not yet arrived in Australia, and it appears that he did not arrive in Melbourne until probably early 1858. Searches of the contemporary *Directory* records from 1857/8 to 1860 record that 85 Collins Street East was occupied by George Robertson, bookseller & stationer. When Robertson’s moved, the building was occupied by William Edwards, a gold and silver plate manufacturer and F. Bailliere, importer of medical and scientific works. By 1862 number 90 was occupied by E.G. Gould, homœopathic chemist and S.R. Robinson, homœopath and dentist.

A possible explanation for the discrepancy regarding the initial address for Kidner’s pharmacy is that for a short period, prior to Kidner establishing the business with Gould at 90 Collins Street East, a portion of 85 Collins Street East was sublet to Kidner. This is purely conjecture, however, and is not substantiated by any records discovered to-date. (See note below for results of later research)

UPDATE - Results of recent research:

Since writing this article, I have discovered that Kidner first arrived in Melbourne around February 1858. At that time he advertised as a homœopathic chemist at 44 Elizabeth Street, a premises which he shared with Henry Biers and Co, an estate agent. He sold domestic medicine cases and books, and provided advice daily from 9am to 5pm. It appears that soon afterwards, however, he moved to St Kilda, where he set up practice as a homœopath and where he ran a homœopathic dispensary.

Recent research has also proved that Edward Gardiner Gould was one of the sons of the Edward Gould who established Edward Gould & Son in London. Dr James Emery Gould, who also came to Australia at a later date, was another son. The English Census records imply that the English pharmacy was established some time between 1851 (when Edward senior was listed as a porter) and 1861 (when Edward senior was listed as a homœopathic chemist). The London business went on to publish several books on homœopathy.

Soon after Edward Gould's arrival in Melbourne in May 1860, Kidner announced that he was going into partnership with him and establishing a homœopathic pharmacy in Collins Street East.

I have also discovered that, for about four months before moving to 90 Collins Street East, Kidner & Gould's business was located at 102 Collins Street East. Interestingly, at that time a William Gould, lithographer, was also located at 102 Collins Street. Perhaps he was a relative of Edward Gould.

In 1863 Edward Gardiner Gould also opened a homœopathic pharmacy in Geelong. In the 1870s Edward Gould returned to Europe, where he studied medicine in Ireland, and then practised medicine in several locations in England.

Regarding the information in Sutherland's book concerning the location of F. Bailliere's business and that of Kidner & Gould: Bailliere's business moved from 85 Collins Street East to 104 Collins Street East, next-door to the location where Kidner & Gould conducted their business for a short period. Therefore, it is probable that the error in Sutherland's book came as a result of a mixed recounting of old business addresses.

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(9) Men of Mark, No. 23 (Samuel Kidner). Supplement to *Frearson's Weekly*, Saturday August 18 1883. Versions of this obituary also appeared in the *Adelaide Observer*, 18 August 1883 and the *Register*, 13 August 1883. (Note that during that period street names were usually presented as per the example in this text – e.g. “Collins-street”.)

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For more information about the history of homœopathy in Australia, see the website of the Australian Homœopathic Association: www.homeopathyoz.org.

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