

Stonemarche Birthday 2019

Lapis Terras Medicamentum Documentation

(Stone land medicines)

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Introduction

In honor of the 32nd anniversary of the founding of the Barony of Stonemarche, I have assembled 32 ‘remedies’ of Stonemarchian origin. The ‘remedies’ are based on the writings of two first century Roman authors.

Firstly, do please note that over half of these ‘remedies’ are likely to do far more harm than good, thus the usage of ‘remedies’. While some of the remedies are reasonable, most of them range from vile to downright dangerous. The vile-to-dangerous items have been capped with red wax to indicate that under no circumstances should these items be used. PLEASE do not break those seals!

The spreadsheet and the translations are divided up into ‘less awful’ and “pretty awful”, loosely. Each is then listed by author, book or chapter number, and item or section number (eg Pliny 35.28 would be Book 35, Section 28).

Sources

The two Roman authors this entry is based upon were active at very similar times and likely used the same sources and/or each other as references.

Caius Plinius Secundus, more commonly known as Pliny the Elder, was born around CE (Current Era) 23 and was killed in the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in CE 79. He was an upper class (equestrian) Roman citizen. He was a military officer, commander, lawyer, and scholar. He wrote The Natural History in 37 books, beginning around CE 70 and ending with his death in CE 79 (Bostock).

Pedanius Dioscorides was a Greek doctor and scholar who was employed as a doctor in the Roman Army. He was born around 40 CE and died around 90 CE. He wrote On Medical Material in his native Greek (*De Materia Medica* in Latin) just before Pliny began his Natural History (completing it before CE

70). Less is known about his personal life, however his writings did not leave circulation and are the basis for many 'remedies' until fairly recently (Ostbaldeston).

I relied heavily on the most recent translation of Dioscorides' work as I do not read or speak even the slightest amount of Greek; all parenthetical notes in the source material belong to the author of the translation (Ostbaldeston). I have some ability to poorly translate Latin, so relied on prior translations as well as my meager Latin ability to examine Pliny's writings.

Methods

First, I decided on 32 remedies that weren't too insane (or illegal!), with ingredients that could be gathered from within the borders of Stonemarche. Each ingredient (other than olive oil, water, and beeswax) was gathered by myself and prepared according to the source material's recommendations. Ingredients that were potentially toxic, disgusting, or otherwise dangerous were gathered using disposable tools and gloves, and were processed outdoors. For anything that needed to be ground, I used granite stones gathered from my property to both pay homage to the Granite State and Stonemarche, and due to Pliny mentioning that granitoid mortars (since the word granite didn't exist in Latin and rocks and minerals were largely described by color, texture, and source) were best for grinding some kinds of medicines (Bostock). On the spreadsheet, the locality and derivation of each remedy's materials are listed.

Results

32 glass vials have been used, to store each remedy. The dangerous or disgusting ones are sealed with red wax to disallow any potential usage and/or spillage. Some of the remedies had to be remade closer to the date of the competition as they spoiled. Only a few of these remedies are reasonable for usage by a modern person; these few remedies have been made in larger amounts to allow for sampling and examination.

I did not test most of these 'remedies' as to their efficacy, because I can find no medicinal reason for most of them to have any possible benefit whatsoever- the few possibly beneficial ones were mostly food-based and didn't make me feel any *worse*!

Differences between period materials/usage

One of the most significant differences really lies in the sourcing of the materials- a huge number of alleged cures are based on items that would be difficult or illegal to obtain (e.g. fox fat, elephant tusk, pieces of corpses). Of the ones that it is possible to obtain, many just should not be used, ever.

I have access to a hockey locker room, which was the closest I could find to the Roman gymnasium. Clearly the animals and plants available to me are not the exact same as was found 2000 years ago, however, I tried to stay within the letter of the project and gather the closest possible equivalent if not identical.

In addition to the materials, I used modernly available glass vials (mass-produced)- while I have some small skill at ceramics, I do not have the skill to make 32 individual vials before the competition- on a long-term basis, I would like to replace many of the vials with ceramics. I cannot afford individually hand-blown glass such as would have been used in period (see examples).

Thoughts and Notes

In no particular order-

- If these remedies were used on living humans, it's a miracle anyone survived anything- applying human dung to open wounds is just a tiny example of the truly heinous ideas listed by these two authors. It's a little disturbing that half of these 'cures' came from a doctor who treated warriors!
- The most difficult item to obtain was ear wax- I am just not an ear wax making person. The assembled wax was the result of three weeks of scraping!
- The second most difficult item to obtain was actually the frog- I didn't want to kill any higher creature for this project, so I had to find a pre-deceased frog. Fortunately, I found one in my garage who had died and mummified.
- Some of the items I would use myself- I do like a good clam broth, it sure does make my stomach happy!
- Obtaining many of the more disgusting items was difficult because I really didn't want anyone to notice me or ask what I thought I was doing.
- Some of the more mundane items went bad quickly- are they not meant for long term storage? If I changed the amounts and/or processing would they stay 'good' for longer? Is the mold that formed on some of them actually beneficial like penicillin? (We may never know, I'm not running experiments with some of these things).

Bibliography

C. Plinius Secundus (Pliny the Elder), *The Natural History*. Translated by John Bostock, M.D., F.R.S. H.T. Riley, Esq., B.A. London. Taylor and Francis, Red Lion Court, Fleet Street. 1855.

Dioscorides, Pedanius: *De materia medica*. - five books in one volume: A new English translation, T.A.Osbaldeston, R.P Wood. IBIDIS Press, Johannesburg, South Africa, 2000.

NUMBER	NAME	CURES	INGREDIENTS	DERIVATION /LOCALITY	SOURCE(S)
I	Saprotēs Xylon	Skin Ulcers	Rotten wood	Bow, NH (All items listed as Bow are from home garden/woods/property)	Dioscorides (1-112)
II	Echinos Thalassios	Skin ulcers and diseases	burnt sea urchin shell	Rye Harbor Beach, NH	Dioscorides (2-1)
III	Muakes	Eye medicine	Washed like lead**, honey	Rye Harbor Beach, NH	Dioscorides (2-7)
IV	Tellinai	Stomach/Bowel	Clam broth	Hannaford (no shellfish license) Concord NH	Dioscorides (2-8)
V	Karkinoi	feet cracks, chillblains, corneal diseases	Burnt crab shell, honey	Rye Harbor Beach, NH	Dioscorides (2-12)
VI	Batrachoi	Toothaches	dessicated frog, water, vinegar	dessicated driveway frog, homemade honey wine vinegar (previous a&s entry), Bow NH	Dioscorides (2-28)
VII	Tettiges	bladder problems	roasted grasshopper	Bow, NH	Dioscorides (2-56)
VIII	Kuamos Hellenikos	Black eyes	broad beans, wine	Bow, NH	Dioscorides (2-127)
IX	Thermos Emeros	Skin Problems, boils	Lupine seed, vinegar	Bow, NH	Dioscorides (2-132)
X	Aspharagos	soothes intestines, diuretic	Asparagus stalks	Bow, NH	Dioscorides (2-152)

NUMBER	NAME	CURES	INGREDIENTS	DERIVATION /LOCALITY	SOURCE(S)
XI	Arnoglosson	dog bites, burns, skin issues	Wild plantain leaves, salt	Bow, NH	Dioscorides (2-153)
XII	Daukos	spiderbites, venom	Carrot seed boiled in wine	Bow, NH	Dioscorides (3-83)
XIII	Libanotis	jaundice	boiled rosemary	Bow, NH	Dioscorides (3-89)
XIV	Melissophul lon	scorpion, spider, or dog bites	lemon balm, wine	Bow, NH	Dioscorides (3-118)
XV	lon	throat problems	wild violet flowers, water	Bow, NH	Dioscorides (4-122)
XVI	Rupos Gymnasion	Cuts and Skin Growths	"Gym Wall Grime"- Hockey Locker Room Grime	Men's hockey locker room, Hooksett, NH	Dioscorides (1-36)
XVII	Silphe	ear aches	Cockroach Insides, Olive Oil	Feed Supply, Concord NH	Dioscorides (2-38)
XVIII	Kampai	Venomous Bites	Caterpillars, Oil	Garden caterpillars, Tomato Hornworm, Bow NH	Dioscorides (2-64)
XIX	Enterages	Toothaches	Earthworms, oil	Dessicated Driveway Worms, Bow NH	Dioscorides (2-72)
XX	Apopatos	Baldness	Burnt Goat dung, vinegar	Domestic, NH	Dioscorides (2-98)
XXI	Apopatos	Bleeding	Burnt Horse dung, vinegar	Domestic, NH	Dioscorides (2-98)
XXII	Apopatos	Cleanses Bowels	Fresh dog dung, wine	Domestic, NH	Dioscorides (2-98)
XXIII	Spittle	Removes Lichens and Leprous Spots, Eye issues	Fasting Spittle	Self	Pliny (28.7)
XXIV	Ear Wax	Human Bites	Ear Wax	Self	Pliny (28.8)

NUMBER	NAME	CURES	INGREDIENTS	DERIVATION /LOCALITY	SOURCE(S)
XXV	Human Hair	Dog Bites	Human hair, vinegar	Self	Pliny (28.9)
XXVI	Burnt Woman's Hair	Wart Removal	Burnt hair, honey	Self	Pliny (28.20)
XXVII	Cat Dung and Mustard	Head Ulcers	Cat Dung, Mustard seed	Domestic, ground mustard seeds	Pliny (28.46)
XXVIII	Goats Dung and Wax	Eye Problems	Goats dung, beeswax	Domestic, commercial beeswax	Pliny (28.47)
XXIX	Burnt Horse Dung	Diarrhea	Burnt horse dung in water	Domestic	Pliny (28.58)
XXX	Horse/Ass Urine Mud	Shoe Blisters	Mud from where a horse urinated	Domestic	Pliny (28.62)
XXXI	Cat Dung with Wine	Thorn Removal	Cats Dung and wine	Domestic, old wine	Pliny (28.76)
XXXII	Foot wash water	Colic	Foot wash water	Self	Pliny (30.20)