

Gunpow

How a shepherd's sandwich helped

by John Morgan MR.Pharm.S, MFHom, FSHom



John qualified as a pharmacist in 1975 and made the move into homeopathic pharmacy in 1979. He qualified from the College of Homeopathy in 1985 and set up Helios Pharmacy in 1986. Now in its 34th year, Helios is known worldwide for its commitment to producing high quality remedies from source material, the development of new remedies by supporting new provings, and the resurgence of LM potencies. John is also a member of the Faculty of Homeopathy, a fellow of the Society of Homeopaths, still practises as a homeopath, and is a well-known lecturer.

Gunpowder, or black powder, was invented in China in the 10th century where it was used for medicine, firecrackers and a primitive short-range gun. The *huo qiang* or fire lance used gunpowder and bamboo tubes to forcibly eject arrows and bits of metal along with an impressive jet of flame. Its use was further developed in the Far East and Arabia before making its way to Europe via the silk road some 300 years later.

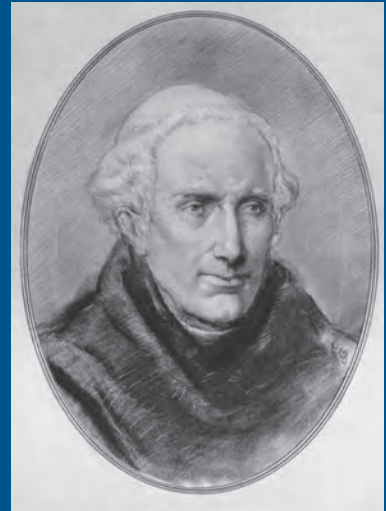
The Franciscan monk and scientist Roger Bacon was the first European to describe how to make gunpowder using the three ingredients still in use today. However, he had to hide the formula for fear of the inquisition, so hid the secret in ciphers and codes. Even though gunpowder had been used in warfare since the 14th century it wasn't until 1904 that a Colonel Hime deciphered a Latin anagram written by Bacon, which revealed his

formula of 7 parts saltpetre, 5 of young hazelwood and 5 of sulphur.

There are many different formulas for gunpowder, depending on the country of origin and its use. Different ratios of ingredients give different burning rates. For example, firearms need a very quick burn whereas cannons and rockets need a slower burn. The most well-known formula used in the UK is Charcoal (*Carbo veg*) 15%, Sulphur (*Sulphur*) 10%, and Potassium nitrate (*Kali nit*) 75%.

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heal the wounds of war



Roger Bacon

Roger Bacon (1214-1294) was born into a wealthy family. He was an English scholastic philosopher who was also considered a scientist because he insisted on observing things for himself instead of relying on what other people had written. (<https://micro.magnet.fsu.edu>)

The charcoal is the fuel, Sulphur spreads the burn and the Potassium nitrate provides the oxygen so that gunpowder can burn at supersonic speeds, in a confined space, without atmospheric oxygen. When it burns it dissociates into the gases carbon dioxide and nitrogen according to the formula $2 \text{KNO}_3 + \text{S} + 3\text{C} \rightarrow \text{K}_2\text{S} + 2\text{N} + 3\text{CO}_2$. It is the sudden expansion of gases in a sealed container such as a firework or bullet casing which creates the bang.

Gunpowder is classed as a low burning explosive in contrast to a detonating high explosive. Several homeopathic remedies are derived from explosive substances. Other low burning ones are *Picric acid* and the metal picrate salts which chemically resemble trinitrotoluene (TNT). Others are detonating, such as nitro-glycerine (*Glonoine*), which explodes on impact.

The antiseptic properties of *Carbo veg* and *Sulphur* already give an indication as to their use. *Carbo veg* has septic states due to a lack of good blood supply, a general lack

Leo Tolstoy wrote *War and Peace* against the backdrop of Napoleon's invasion of Russia in 1812; it is a celebration of life, depicted in all its aspects.

of reaction, wound healing not holding and other skin conditions such as septic ulcers, boils and carbuncles. *Sulphur* is the best-known remedy for injuries that suppurate easily and won't heal, and crops of boils and pimples.

In the traditional materia medica *Kali nit* has few symptoms, with the main keynotes being mange in cats and asthmatic symptoms. So-called 'nitre' papers were burned and the vapours used to help asthma.

Gunpowder's use as a medicine in folklore included native American Indians using it for snake bites, soldiers for gonorrhoea and the London police force 'taking as much as would cover a sixpence' for recurrent boils. Culpeper

Roger Bacon was the first European to describe how to make gunpowder

mentions the use of gunpowder tied in a rag and put close to an aching tooth to relieve the pain. In the 17th century, saltpetre (*Kali nit*) was used as a diuretic, to heal gunshot wounds, reduce the pains of sciatica and lower fevers.



Nicholas Culpeper

Nicholas Culpeper (1616-1654) was a renowned herbalist who took on a medical stronghold and challenged the idea that medical knowledge should be just for physicians. He translated the *Pharmacopoeia* of the Royal College of Physicians which was published in 1649 but he also included recipes alongside their healing properties, which meant the public no longer had to entirely rely on the expertise of physicians. His text was also full of funny and insulting remarks directed at the Royal College, highlighting the failings of the original text. He later published his most famous book *Culpeper's Complete Herbal* (1653), first published under its original title *The English Physitian* (1652).

(<https://www.kew.org/read-and-watch/nicholas-culpeper-and-his-herbal>)

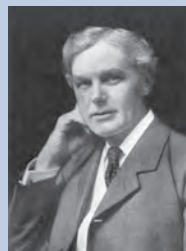
Gunpowder was introduced to homeopathy by Dr John Clarke after reading an article in *Homoeopathic World* in 1911 by the Rev Roland Upcher called 'Notes on the use of Gunpowder'.

In this article the Reverend described how shepherds, on his father's farm, all got blood poisoning from sheep with foot rot. As they 'pared' the feet the shepherds would get scratched and their arms would swell and even get a purple discolouration of the whole limb from the infection. However, one of the shepherds never got symptoms and the farmer was curious to know why. When he asked, the shepherd replied, 'Come and see me at my fourses' (afternoon tea-break). There he saw the shepherd eating sandwiches with a grey line of butter containing gunpowder.

Gunpowder's use as a medicine in folklore included native American Indians using it for snake bites

Dr John Henry Clarke MD

(1853-1931) was one of the most eminent homeopaths of England. He was a prodigious worker, as his published works testify, to say nothing of the host of private patients from all parts of the world. He was also a consulting physician to the London Homoeopathic Hospital. He was the editor of the *Homoeopathic World* for 29 years. He published numerous famous books, including: *The Prescriber – A Dictionary of New Therapeutics*, *The Dictionary of Practical Materia Medica*, *A Clinical Repertory to the Dictionary of Materia Medica*, *Gunpowder as a War Remedy*, and he introduced several new remedies, such as *Pertussin*, *Carcinosinum*, *Ephysterinum*, *Baccillinum testicum*, *Morbillinum*, *Parotidinum*, *Scarletinum*, and *Scirrhinum* to the homeopathic materia medica, and he was involved in the provings of homeopathic nosodes. (www.wholehealthnow.com)



John Henry Clarke

Clarke went on to use the remedy extensively, writing up many cured cases including: a tendency to septic wounds, blood poisoning, boils, carbuncles, septic tonsillitis, osteomyelitis, tapeworms, vaccinosis, acne, ulcers, eczema and

abscesses, whether septic or not. The shepherd's story shows also its prophylactic powers against infection which Clarke regularly used gunpowder for.

Clarke's remedy relationships are: *Arnica*, *Hamamelis*, *Calendula*, *Ruta* and *Symphytum* – nearest in wounds and bruises; *Anthracinum* and *Tarentula cubensis* in carbuncles and boils; and *Lachesis*, *Variolinum*, *Syphilitinum* in blood poisoning. In his cases he used, and recommended, low trituration potencies such as 3x and 6x one daily as a prophylactic; one every two hours in cases of wounds or blood poisoning with fever; two, three or four times a day in wounds without fever, whether septic or not.

A small *Gunpowder* proving done by Rajan Sankaran is published in his mineral book *Structure* under *Kali nit*. As the remedy is a 75% nitrate salt compound it is not surprising that the nitrate themes – think *Arg nit*, of sudden danger, suffocation and explosion – were present in the proving, with symptoms such as:

Suffocated by people around me. Feel that they are not good and that I am not safe here.

Feeling that I should reach home as early as possible because anything wrong can happen where I am, and there is safety only at home.

Angry and abusive, expressing anger whereas I normally only mumble.

Nervousness and anxiety about the future, about not being sure what will happen and not being stable.

There were many prolific and vivid dreams (*Sulphur*) in the proving and some characteristic symptoms of *Carbo veg* such as:

Fear of ghosts in the evening.

Visions on closing eyes.

Roger Morrison, in his book *Carbon*, says:

Gunpowder shows many similarities to *Glonoinum* and other explosive remedies. The patient experiences a sense of danger or catastrophe, especially focused upon the family (or perhaps from the family). Especially there may be strong and explosive disputes with

the family when the patient attempts to assert his own opinions which the family interprets as eccentric or unjustified – making the patient feel as if his opinion does not count. Images related to burning, explosion, rockets, etc, are likely to emerge during the interview.

Today *Gunpowder* is a remedy with only Sankaran’s proving and Clarke’s clinical information to guide its use, but it is a significant remedy which is still regularly used 100 years on. In my own practice I use its low potencies, repeated daily, for stubborn cases of acne, especially when they suppurate or create the painful blind red bumps which don’t come to a head.

It is thanks to their enthusiasm and desire to help relieve suffering using homeopathy that Dr Clarke, the Reverend Upcher and his wise shepherd brought this most useful remedy to our attention. Keep it in

mind when these conditions and themes come along in your cases.

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