

## Who is Dr Edward Bach?

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### Early medical career

Edward Bach studied medicine first in Birmingham and later at the University College Hospital, London, where he was House Surgeon. He also worked in private practice, having a set of consulting rooms in Harley Street. As a bacteriologist and pathologist he undertook original research into vaccines in his own research laboratory.

In 1917 Dr Bach was working on the wards tending to soldiers returned injured from France. One day he collapsed and was rushed into an operating theatre suffering from a severe haemorrhage. His colleagues operated to remove a tumour, but the prognosis was poor. When he came round they told Bach that he had only three months left to live.

As soon as he could get out of bed, Bach returned to his laboratory. He intended to advance his work as far as he could in the short time that remained. But as the weeks went by he began to get stronger. The three months came and went and found him in better health than ever. He was convinced that his sense of purpose was what saved him: he still had work to do.

For interesting short videos to watch on Dr Bach and his work hover your mouse over the link below and then Ctrl + Click to be taken directly to the Videos link on the [www.bachcentre.com](http://www.bachcentre.com) website.



### Homoeopathic research

His research into vaccines was going well, but despite this Dr Bach felt dissatisfied with the way doctors were expected to concentrate on diseases and ignore the whole person. He aspired to a more holistic approach to medicine. Perhaps this explains why, not being a homoeopath, he took the offer of a post at the Royal London Homoeopathic Hospital.

Once there he soon noticed the parallels between his work on vaccines and the principles of homoeopathy. He adapted his vaccines to produce a series of seven homoeopathic nosodes. This work and its subsequent publication brought him some fame in homoeopathic circles. People began to refer to him as 'the second Hahnemann'.

### The flower remedies

Up to now Bach had been working with bacteria, but he wanted to find remedies that would be purer and less reliant on the products of disease. He began collecting plants and in particular flowers - the most highly-developed part of a plant - in the hope of replacing the nosodes with a series of gentler remedies.

By 1930 he was so enthused by the direction his work was taking that he gave up his lucrative Harley Street practice and left London, determined to devote the rest of his life to the new system of medicine that he was sure could be found in nature. He took with him as his assistant a radiographer called Nora Weeks.

Just as he had abandoned his home, office and work, Dr Bach began to abandon the scientific method and its reliance on laboratories and reductionism. He fell back instead on his natural gifts as a healer, and more and more allowed his intuition to guide him to the right plants.

Over years of trial and error, which involved preparing and testing thousands of plants, he found one by one the remedies he wanted. Each was aimed at a particular mental state or emotion. He found that when he treated the personalities and feelings of his patients their unhappiness and physical distress would be alleviated naturally as the healing potential in their bodies was unblocked and allowed to work once more.

His life followed a seasonal pattern from 1930 to 1934: the spring and summer spent looking for and preparing the remedies; the winter giving help and advice to all who came looking for them. Most winters were spent in the coastal town of Cromer. Here he met and became friends with a local builder and healer, Victor Bullen.

### **The Bach Centre**

In 1934 Dr Bach and Nora Weeks moved to a house called Mount Vernon in the Oxfordshire village of Brightwell-cum-Sotwell. In the lanes and fields he found the remaining remedies that he needed to complete the series. By now his body and mind were so in tune with his work that he would suffer the emotional state that he needed to cure and try plants and flowers until he found the one that would help him. In this way, through great personal suffering and sacrifice, he completed his life's work.

A year after announcing that his search for remedies was complete, Dr Bach passed away peacefully on the evening of November 27th, 1936. He was only 50 years old, but he had outlived his doctors' prognosis by nearly 20 years. He left behind him several lifetime's experience and effort, and a system of medicine that is used all over the world.

He left his work in the hands of his friends and colleagues Nora Weeks and Victor Bullen, with instructions that they should carry on his work and stay true to the essential simplicity of what he had done. In a letter to Victor dated 26th October 1936, a month before his death, he wrote:

**People like ourselves who have tasted the glory of self-sacrifice, the glory of helping our brothers, once we have been given a jewel of such magnitude, nothing can deviate us from our path of love and duty to displaying its lustre, pure and unadorned to the people of the world.**

Nora and Victor stayed true to those ideals of simplicity and sharing, as does the Bach Centre today.

### **How do the remedies actually work?**

Dr Bach used a metaphor to describe how the remedies work. He said, 'they are able, like beautiful music, or any gloriously uplifting thing which gives us inspiration, to raise our very natures, and bring us nearer to our Souls: and by that very act, to bring us peace, and relieve our sufferings.' Just as a beautiful sunset or a photograph can move us so that we feel more at peace, so taking a remedy uplifts us in a gentle way and helps us be the best we are.

There are many theories about the mechanism the remedies use to achieve this. Most believe the active ingredient in the remedies is a kind of energy or vibration that is transferred from the living flower to the water during the process of making the mother tinctures. Some believe the energy forms a pattern in the water; others talk of quantum mechanics and spiritual vibrations. Attempts to capture this energy have produced beautiful Kirlian photographs showing distinct patterns and colours for different remedies - but little hard research has been done. Any firm conclusions are just speculation.

The real proof that these flower energies exist, however, is the effect they have on people. Taking *Mimulus* when we are afraid is just a more specific form of the emotional reaction we feel when we listen to Beethoven or gaze up at the stars.

### **Dr Bach's work was fine in the '30's - but don't modern times call for modern remedies?**

It's true that times have changed and that we have new things to be afraid of and new freedoms and responsibilities. People in Dr Bach's day did not have to fear AIDS and nuclear warfare, or worry about global warming and genetic engineering.

Does this mean that we need new remedies? We don't think it does, because the remedies don't treat the triggers for our emotions but the emotions themselves. Fear is the same now as it has always been; and so are love, understanding and kindness. Our modern emotions are no more complex than those described by Shakespeare, Dante and the authors of the Bible.

Many of the best things about new age spirituality are rediscoveries of old beliefs and practices that bring us more in touch with our roots and remind us of our relationship to the world and to nature. The remedies can be seen in that context: not as something outmoded but as something eternally renewed and timeless.

The 38 remedies put us in touch with our higher, spiritual self - and in this way give us the freedom to develop at our own pace, whatever that pace may be, in perfect freedom from our ego's greed for immediate enlightenment.

### **Why doesn't the Bach Centre support dowsing and kinesiology as ways of selecting remedies?**

Dr Bach made his system simple and easy to understand. He wanted people from all walks of life to use it as a way of healing themselves.

When a practitioner uses the basic consultation technique for selecting remedies - which amounts to listening to what the client has to say - this is something that everyone can understand. Once the client sees that the remedies are chosen on the basis of how he feels and the sort of person he is, then he can go on treating himself in the future.

When dowsing, kinesiology or any other mechanical or purely intuitive selection method is used this introduces a barrier. Most people do not know how to dowse or muscle-test, so they feel obliged to go back to the practitioner every time they want to select a remedy.

Also, if the dowsing etc. works it will go straight to the heart of the problem before the client is necessarily ready to go that far. This means that self-knowledge, which is one of the aims of using with the remedies, is never attained properly.

We believe growth should go at the client's speed, not the practitioner's, and this is why all practitioners registered with the Bach Centre have signed a Code of Practice which commits them to select remedies using the classic interview technique that Dr Bach preferred.

### **Why doesn't the Bach Centre approve the use of other flower essence systems?**

Dr Bach wanted his work to be kept simple so that everyone could use it. Before he died he warned that attempts would be made to change his work and make it more complicated, and his assistants promised always to uphold the simplicity and purity of his methods.

We believe the 38 remedies are enough when used in combination to treat every conceivable range of human emotions. This is why the current team at the Centre continue to work only with the 38 remedies in the original system.

This isn't a criticism of other flower remedy systems; everything useful will find its place. But we believe the simplicity of the original system is something worth preserving.

### **What promises do Bach Foundation Registered Practitioners make regarding how they work?**

A short summary of the main points is that BFRPs promise to:

- Work with the remedies using Dr Bach's own methods
- Present the 38 remedies as a separate system - i.e. not confuse it with other approaches to health, including other flower essence systems

- Teach their clients how to use the remedies for themselves
- Talk about and use the remedies in a simple, straightforward way

All of these promises reflect Dr Bach's ideals of self-help and simplicity.

### **I've read things Dr Bach wrote about helpers and healers and possible links between remedies and astrology - why doesn't the Bach Centre talk about these things or republish these writings of Dr Bach?**

Dr Bach considered many theories and ideas during his career, and wrote notes, articles and letters on them. But at every stage of his work he was keen to leave behind anything that was no longer relevant.

For example, he discontinued the use of succussion in preparing remedies, investigated and discounted links between remedy types and astrology, gave up diagnosis by physical symptom, and abandoned as unnecessary the idea of different remedies working on 'higher' and 'lower' planes.

He could be quite emphatic about such excess baggage! When he decided in 1930 to leave London and devote himself to flower remedies, he made a bonfire of all his outdated pamphlets and papers. Later, at Mount Vernon, when the system was finished, he built a further bonfire in the garden there to destroy what he referred to as 'scaffolding'.

In the same vein, he issued strict instructions to his publishers to destroy old editions of *The Twelve Healers* each time that a new edition was ready for the press. He didn't want old editions republished because they contained remedy descriptions and concepts that he no longer used in his work. He felt that these discarded descriptions and ideas would be seized on by people who might look to complicate the system for their own reasons.

The Bach Centre's role in all this was set out in a letter Dr Bach sent to Victor Bullen shortly before his death. 'Our work is steadfastly to adhere to the simplicity and purity of this method of healing,' he wrote.

The Bach Centre and practitioners try to remain true to Dr Bach's wishes. Books like *The Original Writings of Edward Bach*, published with the Bach Centre's blessing, are presented as historical documents with the context explained - and old remedy descriptions edited out, as Dr Bach wanted. Despite best efforts older versions of the *The Twelve Healers* were in fact republished in the 1980s and are now widely available. As Dr Bach predicted these out-of-date concepts are occasionally referred to by writers and Bach therapists, and not always in a proper historical context. All we can do is point to the system as Dr Bach left it and remind people that the finished system is more perfect - and far simpler - than its earlier incarnations.

### **How can 38 remedies cover all known states of mind?**

A useful analogy is with the world of colour. There are only three basic colours (red, blue yellow), yet every visible colour can be produced when they are combined.

In the same way there are 38 basic states of mind. Combining them gives hundreds of millions of variations.

### **Has the efficacy of the remedies been proven scientifically?**

When Dr Bach entrusted his work to Nora and Victor, and in so doing set up the Bach Centre, he instructed them to keep their lives simple and their work with the remedies simple as well. The Bach Centre doesn't see it as their role to 'prove' that the remedies work, then - instead they simply demonstrate how to use them and let people prove the effect on themselves.

Having said that, people have done studies on the remedies over the years, although all of them are of limited value due to their small scale and, sometimes, significant methodological inconsistencies.

Nelsons have produced a useful [overview of research carried out up to May 2006](#), which contains information on a number of studies. Since then a [US double-blind study into the emergency formula](#) has also been published, and in 2015 the BFVEA completed a pilot study into [the impact of Bach remedies on stress](#). More links are on another US site, [bachflowereducation.com](#). [Links zu Studien zu erforschen](#).

## The philosophy of the Bach Centre, in their own words

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### Mother tinctures

It's early spring, and the Cherry Plum tree in the Bach Centre garden is almost in full flower. In the next few days it will be time to prepare the Cherry Plum mother tincture.

The remedy maker will collect enough flowering twigs to fill two pans. He will pour water into the pans and set them to boil on the stove. When they have been bubbling for half an hour he will lay them out in the garden to cool.

Later, he will filter off the liquid and pour it into one-litre brown medicine bottles, mixed half and half with brandy. This is the mother tincture: it will be labelled and stored away.

When the time comes to dilute it into a stock remedy it will be mixed with further brandy in a bottling facility in London - two drops to thirty mls. of brandy - and shipped around the world.

It's a simple process, and doesn't require special preparation or special abilities. All that's needed is sunshine, water, brandy, bottles, and the right plant on the right day.

While waiting for the tree to flower there are other things to do. The Bach Centre team receives emails from around the world, most of them asking how to use the remedies. People get confused by the many different ideas and selection methods and beliefs attached to them, and even straightforward matters like how many diluted drops to take at a time can seem confusing when different writers recommend everything from two to 16 drops at a time.

In fact taking the remedies should be as simple as making them: all you need to do is read the indications in *The Twelve Healers* and take the ones you think you need.



### History

We spend a lot of time talking about simplicity, which perhaps shows that many people feel simplicity is a difficult, complicated subject. Certainly the history of the remedies suggests that it can take a long time to achieve.

Dr Edward Bach qualified as a doctor in 1912, saying as he received his diplomas, 'it will take me five years to forget all I have been taught'. In fact it took longer. It was eighteen years before he finally turned his back on orthodox research, smashed the glassware in his laboratory, and left London.

The discovery of the 38 remedies took another five years. Along the way Dr Bach perfected two entirely new methods for preparing medicines from plants - the sun and boiling methods, which are still used today.

At the same time his sensitivity to nature and to the people who came to him for help grew. Towards the end he would suffer himself from the same symptoms and mental agonies as his patients. During the finding of the last nineteen remedies in 1935 he suffered to an extreme degree from the nineteen mental states for which he needed a remedy, and only found relief when he found the right plant.



### Completion

Dr Bach declared the system complete when he had all the remedies he needed - 38 preparations in all. The 38 could be combined into nearly 293 million different combinations, yet were so simple to make and use that anyone could do it.

Bach enjoyed many years of successful research in London. His work brought him fame and a high professional standing among both orthodox and homoeopathic doctors. Now he had founded an entirely new approach to healing that concentrated exclusively on the emotional and spiritual health of people rather than their physical symptoms.

We might expect that on his death he would leave behind shelves full of notes and published writings. But here too he was determined to leave things as clear and uncluttered as possible. Throughout the process of finding new remedies, he stripped out from his practice unnecessary ideas and theories. The laboratory and orthodox research were the first things to go, but more followed.

For example, he discontinued the use of succussion, investigated and discounted links between his remedy types and astrology, gave up diagnosis by physical symptom, and abandoned as unnecessary the idea of different remedies working on 'higher' and 'lower' planes.

Towards the end he built a bonfire in the garden at Mount Vernon where he burnt many of his early notes, determined that they would not survive to lead people astray in the future. All that needed to be said was said in the 32 pages of *The Twelve Healers*.

In his mind the discarded work, like the abandoned theories, was scaffolding: useful while the walls went up and the roof was put on, but cumbrous and unnecessary once people were ready to live in and with the finished house.

In 1936 a few people began promoting the idea of combining the 38 remedies into one elixir and so solving everyone's problems with a single mix - an idea that Dr Bach had already tried and abandoned.

'I think now you have seen every phase of the work,' he wrote to his friend Victor Bullen in October of that year, a month before his death. 'It is a proof of the value of our work when material agencies arise to distort it, because the distortion is a far greater weapon than attempted destruction.'

In the same letter he sets out the path that his successors should follow. 'Our work is steadfastly to adhere to the simplicity and purity of this method of healing,' he writes, 'and when the next edition of *The Twelve Healers* becomes necessary we must have a longer introduction, firmly upholding the harmlessness, the simplicity, and the miraculous healing powers of the remedies.'



### Values and change

Simplicity and purity: the Bach Centre exists because Victor and Dr Bach's long-time helper Nora Weeks promised Dr Bach that they would continue to uphold those values.

*But times change, people say. Things are more complicated. There are all sorts of powerful techniques available now that were not available in Dr Bach's day - techniques that he might have used himself if he had had access to them. Every week we hear of a new way of selecting or applying or making the remedies, or of new remedies that could be added to the original 38 - surely some of these ideas must be valuable, and worth incorporating or supporting in some way?*

Anyone is free to look for other ways to work with the remedies, or prepare new essences, or build up theoretical or religious constructs of their own. Our path is a different one.

In Dr Bach's day it was possible to read *The Twelve Healers* and experience directly the simplicity and purity of the original conception. Thanks to the efforts of Dr Bach's heirs - our predecessors at the Bach Centre - people today have that same opportunity. Our duty now and tomorrow is to make sure that the simple heart of the work beats on into the future.

This means more than keeping Dr Bach's books in print, and keeping his house open to visitors. It also means being here, as Dr Bach was and as Nora and Victor were, to talk about his work and stress its simplicity in the face of every complication and addition. There are gurus and high priests everywhere for those who want them. Ours is a low church, with little formality and less ritual, where the simple original system remains as it was in the 1930s.

*Which means that you want time to stand still. You don't want to add to the work even though additions can make it more useful.*

The secret of great sculptors is that they release the figure that is already in the stone, and once it is released they put down their tools. Like the figure in the stone, the remedies were not created by Dr Bach but discovered by him. He consistently spoke of them not as a personal achievement but as a gift from nature, and from God. 'Once we have been given a jewel of such magnitude,' he said, 'nothing can deviate us from our path of love and duty to displaying its lustre, pure and unadorned to the people of the world.'



### A gift

It is because they are a gift and not a human creation that the system of 38 remedies is perfect and complete in itself. We rest that claim on two facts:

- first, that human emotions have not changed since the 1930's, even though the *causes* of our fears and worries and jealousies and enthusiasms are different;
- second, that in over sixty years we have never had to turn someone away - and in that time people have not only received remedies, they have learnt to use them, which they could not have done if the system had been more complicated.

Dr Bach had the gift of healing by laying on hands, but he understood that this gift was not shared by everyone, and that it could not easily be learned or passed on. The remedies and the simple methods of working with them place this same power of healing in the hands of all.

'Think once again the joy this brings to anyone who wants to be able to do something for those who are ill,' he urged at a public lecture given in Wallingford two months before his death. 'It gives to them the power to be healers amongst their fellows.'

This is Dr Bach's central message: *we are all healers*. Everyone can use the remedies. Everyone can heal and in the process understand who they are and take charge of their own destinies. *In that case, says our critics, why does the Bach Centre train professional practitioners?*

The Centre hasn't created professional practitioners - they exist already, and people go to see them because they find them helpful. Some professionals choose to work in ways that people find difficult to understand, which fosters both a sense of mystery and dependency. For our part we train people to work as educators, so that their clients can be taught about the remedies and learn to use them for themselves. Our best practitioners lose all their clients, and are happy to do so.

Dr Bach worked for several years in hospitals and was well aware of their negative effect on the human spirit. After leaving London and starting his work with the flower remedies he dreamed of a different kind of hospital, where people would go freely to find themselves and learn the lessons their life is teaching them.

He dreamed of doctors who would understand people as individuals and study human nature rather than test tubes and lab results. And he imagined patients taking charge of their own health by understanding and accepting the needs of their souls, rather than attending to the needs of the body alone.

When you think about these things you come to a startling conclusion: the hospital and the doctor and the patient that Dr Bach describes are all the same thing. They are all in each and every one of us. The hospital is not a building somewhere, but a state of mind inside us, an angle of the soul. The doctor of the future and the empowered patient are you and me, each of us helping ourselves and each other with these remedies.



### Remedies and lettuces

*Fine words: but the remedies are sold like vegetables in the market. Where is the self-help in that?*

Anyone can make their own remedies, which is why the instructions for making them were never patented, but instead published, first in the earlier editions of *The Twelve Healers* and latterly in Nora and Victor's book *Illustrations and Preparations*.

For obvious reasons most people find it easier and more convenient to use remedies prepared for them by someone else. To meet this need Dr Bach and later Nora and Victor prepared their own stock remedies for distribution to patients, and supplied mother tincture to a select few pharmacies in London with instructions that they dilute them into stock bottles and distribute them through their shops.

Today the tinctures made with the plants in the Bach Centre's garden go to one of those original three companies, Nelsons, which distributes remedies all over the world. In addition there are other companies making their own brands of the 38 remedies. Instead of being sold in only a select number of places they can be bought easily in ordinary shops. You can find them in airport shops; you can buy them in supermarkets.



### What would Dr Bach think?

This availability doesn't appeal to everyone. *Dr Bach would turn in his grave*, we sometimes hear.

But the idea of Dr Bach as an ethereal, esoteric mystic who was repelled by ordinary people is a long way from the man we know. The real Dr Bach used to lead sing-songs in the village pub and play football with the local kids. The real Dr Bach defied the General Medical Council by placing an advertisement in the newspapers, and when they wrote to censure him answered with the words: 'The advertisement was for the public good, which, I take it, is the work of our profession.'

Dr Bach would be delighted to see the remedies brought to market along with the cabbages, because that makes it easier for people to get them and use them. 'I want it to be as simple as this,' he used to say to Nora Weeks, 'I am hungry, I will go and pull a lettuce from the garden for my tea; I am frightened and ill, I will take a dose of *Mimulus*.'

People in cities who don't have gardens buy their lettuces from supermarkets; an age is coming when they will be able to get their remedies just as easily.

We have never hid it: simplicity is as hard for us to maintain as it was for Dr Bach to achieve. Since 1968, when Nora Weeks obtained the original medical licenses for the remedies, our desire to keep the system both unchanged and available to as many people as possible has taken the remedies into strange areas that seem a million miles from bowls and pans and flower heads: from European Community Council directives and regulations, to official inspections, quality control, British Standards, fire insurance.

Occasionally we have seen conflict and disagreement. On the one side are those who want the remedies to be mysterious and magical and exclusive. On the other are those - just as enthusiastic - who want to sell them like soap, with little regard to the basic values of the original system.

But the bowls and the pans and the flowers are still there. The 38 remedies and the message of self-healing are the same as when Dr Bach walked down to Wallingford in 1936 to give his work to the world. The hospital of the future is there too, a sanctuary of peace, hope and joy. It's in us now, if we choose to discover it.