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> **Benzoyl peroxide cream or gel** is the most effective treatment available to buy from the chemist and it works by killing bacteria and reducing inflammation. Start at 2.5% and apply a thin layer every day. It tends to be very irritating and drying, so you may need a little moisturiser. Your skin should get used to it and you could increase to 5% or even 10% if necessary. It can bleach your clothes so be careful. Most mild acne will improve with this product.

If this does not help then your GP can prescribe a topical antibiotic e.g. erythromycin which you apply twice a day.

Retinoid creams, e.g. Retin-A (a vitamin A type cream), can be extremely useful. It improves skin shedding and inflammation and is especially useful if many blackheads are a problem. It is also useful for people with acne in their 30s and 40s as it can improve some sun-damage (i.e. wrinkles!) It can also be especially effective in combination with an antibiotic. This can be a little irritating and drying at first, but your skin will adapt.

Treatment by tablets (oral treatment)

If your acne is more severe or over a wide area, e.g. the back and chest, then tablets may be a better option.

Antibiotics. These must be taken for 6 months. The most commonly prescribed ones are the tetracyclines which are taken twice a day before food. A newer antibiotic lymecycline has recently been found to be most effective. Antibiotics are useful for very inflamed acne. Once the spots are improved then a recent study has shown that long term control can be just as good with a retinoid cream.

Generally antibiotics are very safe, though resistance of the bacteria can be a problem.

Dianette. This is a type of contraceptive pill which can be highly effective in controlling acne and obviously is conven-

ient if contraception is needed. Other varieties of the Pill have no effect on acne.

Roaccutane. Even severe acne can be virtually cleared by this drug. It is related to Vitamin A, and is highly effective. However, it is not an easy drug to take – most people will experience some side effects of dry skin and lips, mild joint pains and headaches. It will harm an unborn baby and so pregnancy is forbidden whilst on this drug. It can only be prescribed by a dermatologist and so your GP will need to refer you. However, a 4 month course can transform even the worst cases for months or, more often, years.

Other treatments

Mild chemical peels. These use the most gentle natural, lactic and salicylic acids which penetrates oil ducts well. They unblock pores, reduce inflammation and help the skin shed more normally. I have had great success with the Agera Peels, especially if combined with an antibacterial agent. If you are having trouble clearing your acne these can improve your skin enormously.

Light therapies. These include IPL (intense pulsed light) and laser treatments. It is known that acne bacteria absorb and are killed by blue light. This will lead to a temporary improvement. Unfortunately, bacteria and, therefore, spots re-grow in a matter of weeks making this a very expensive treatment. At the moment, most dermatologists would agree that IPL and laser treatment is not effective in treating acne – a laser study which showed good initial results was repeated and found to show no improvement. More research is being done and hopefully in the future the right light therapies will be established and could be extremely useful.

So now you are all experts in acne treatments – the take-home message is: be conscientious with your treatment, persist with your treatment and your acne will improve.

Belmont School was a boys' preparatory boarding school, founded in 1904 in two houses in a cul-de-sac in Brighton (from which it took the name), just off the Dyke Road between the Seven Dials and the Old Shoreham Road.



by Dale Vargas



Prize Giving at Sports Day, 1956

Hidden scars and happy memories... Down Belmont Lane

The first Headmaster was Gilbert Evans, an Old Etonian and Classical Scholar of Corpus Christi College, Oxford. In 1920 he moved the school, by then comprising 43 boys, to the Clayton Wickham estate in Hassocks. The estate consisted of a large Victorian house in 21 acres of land. Access was down a lane, now Belmont Lane but then known as Hog's Pudding Lane, leading off Wickham Hill at a point then called The Crossways. At the head of the drive leading to the house was a lodge that later provided accommodation for bachelor Masters.



Rugby XV, 1953

An 1899 map of the estate shows the layout of the garden and grounds to be almost exactly as it remained until the late 1970s. Hog's Pudding Lane went right through to Burgess Hill.

Gilbert Evans and his wife ran this school, whose numbers varied between 35 and 50 boys, for the next 14 years. Playing fields were created and a swimming pool was built in 1925. Nearly all boys went on to English Public Schools, the most popular at this time being Lancing, Brighton, Eton and Charterhouse.

In 1933 Gilbert Evans took on as Assistant Headmaster

Max de Wharton Burr, then aged 25, and his even younger wife, Petronilla or 'Nilla as she was universally known. Within months Max Burr had bought Belmont. Immediately he breathed new life into the school, increased the numbers to 80 in five years, brought in extra teaching staff and built three new wings onto the house. He also built a chapel in 1935, still standing but now extended and converted into a private residence.

When the war broke out in 1939, the Clayton Wickham estate was requisitioned by the military and Belmont had to be evacuated. Max Burr's plan had been to take the school to the Bahamas where he had managed to 'borrow' a house owned by an acquaintance of his, Sir Harry Oakes of gold mining wealth and fame. Unfortunately, as plans were being laid, a ship carrying evacuees to North America was sunk by U boats in the Atlantic with considerable loss of life and parents began to lose enthusiasm for the idea. In the

event just 14 children went.

An alternative arrangement was then made to transfer the rest of the school to a safer place than Sussex, and Lichfield in Staffordshire was decided upon. Stowe House, beside Stowe Pool, became Belmont's temporary home for the war years.

When the school returned to Clayton Wickham in 1944, they had to work hard to return the abused buildings and grounds to normality but the military had not only caused damage: Belmont Lane had been tarmacked and a new and larger water main improved the supply – not least to the swimming pool which had previously taken some days to fill.

The post-war years were the apogee of Belmont School: numbers of pupils remained high, scholarships were being won to



Main school building, 1937

the top public schools in the land; there were successes in cricket, football and rugby; music and drama were of high standard. But there was a dark side: although Max Burr was an inspirational maths teacher, he was also a bully who took pleasure in caning small boys and made life a misery for a good number of them. In 1954, aged just 47, he had a heart attack and died.

Max Burr's widow 'Nilla, who incidentally had become Ladies World Archery Champion in the meanwhile, decided to keep the school going and appointed a bachelor Headmaster, Christopher Barlow, educated at Stowe and King's College, Cambridge. Barlow was a paedophile and it is extraordinary that he managed to remain in post for the next 18 years without anyone making any serious charges against him. Esther Rantzen's Childline and the Children Act were some years away. He also enjoyed caning but often preceded or followed the assault with some form of physical embrace.

In spite of Barlow's disgraceful behaviour – which seriously damaged several boys in his care – one has to grudgingly admit that he ran a good school. One of his former victims, now a senior paediatrician wrote: "He was a committed Christian, an excellent Latin teacher, a fine musician who was an inspiration to the choir, and a shrewd judge of Public Schools... Above all he instilled in me the qualities of honesty, of admitting that you are in the wrong, of saying you are sorry, of keeping a promise – these are invaluable and timeless."

When Belmont closed in 1972 it came as a shock to many. It was partly a failure to adapt to changing times but in a privately owned school, inevitably there had been a lack of investment in the building and in the end it came down to money. The old building was seriously in need of re-roofing, plumbing and wiring and 'Nilla Burr and Christopher Barlow were both reaching retirement age. After one or two attempts to sell the estate as a school, they gave up. Like so many prep schools along the south coast, Belmont became just a memory. The estate was sold and the main building demolished.

So if you see elderly or middle-aged gentlemen pottering about aimlessly in the region of Clayton Wickham, be gentle with them: they are probably former Belmont boys reliving some memories.

To purchase 'Belmont Hassocks' call: 020 8872 8522 (office), 020 8423 9560 (home).

Enjoying music and the grounds

Under Christopher Barlow, the music at Belmont flourished and the choir was invited to sing at several cathedrals. For many years the popularity of the Carol Service was such that a second service was held in St George's, Hurstpierpoint.

The grounds at Belmont were a delight for small boys and they were endlessly inventive in their appreciation of them. A spring near the chapel produced a lively stream after wet weather and happy hours were spent creating waterways, lakes, dams and aqueducts. The trenches left by the military provided another source of play and led to a network of camps and underground tunnels. And archery was a perfect counterpoint for boys that were disinclined to team games.