



**Training Herbalists since 1949**

Formerly: The International Register of Consultant Herbalists (IRCH)

## *Prospectus*

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The BIRCH School of Herbal Medicine holds a VAT de-registration certificate from Her Majesty's Department of Customs and Excise in respect of being a bona-fide teaching organisation and non-profit making.

All material in this Prospectus is correct at the time of printing. However, the BIRCH reserves the right to make necessary changes and update or upgrade the content of its courses in line with rising standards and without prior notice. The information within is provided for guidance only and does not constitute a contract.



The BIRCH School of Herbal Medicine has been training herbalists since 1949 and offers a professional course in Western Herbal Medicine - DipWHM (formerly the Diploma in Botano-Therapy, DBTh). Additional courses for CPD include Bach Flower Remedy; please contact the Registered Office for further details.

At present the course is not accredited as this gives BIRCH the flexibility to maintain a traditional, holistic approach that is relevant to modern practitioners of Herbal Medicine. However, BIRCH is working towards peer validation. The learning outcomes of the BIRCH diploma are benchmarked at LEVEL 6 (equivalent to a degree with or without honours) against the OFQUAL level descriptors. This demonstrates the depth of study that is required for the successful completion of the BIRCH Diploma in Western Herbal Medicine (DipWHM). Following satisfactory completion of the whole course students will graduate enabling them to access insurance to practice as qualified herbalists.

The BIRCH school is a registered not-for-profit company and, as such, its academy is dedicated to training the next generation of practitioners. While it remains necessary to fund the training, it is the policy of the organisation to keep charges to the lowest viable level to help make the course available to the widest spectrum of students possible

All registered members have received extensive academic and practical clinical training and passed examinations set by the BIRCH School of Herbal Medicine. Members of the Register abide by a strict Code of Ethics and professional behaviour, are subject to a professional disciplinary procedure and are required to hold relevant professional indemnity insurance.

Members may use the title and initials Diploma in Herbal Medicine (DBTh or DipWHM) and the designated letters MIRCH (Member of the International Register of Consultant Herbalists) or FIRCH (Fellow of the International Register of Consultant Herbalists).

The use of these terms is limited by law to members of the Register in order that the public may be aware that those using these letters are fully qualified Members of the International Register of Consultant Herbalists.

## **INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE OF STUDY IN WESTERN HERBAL MEDICINE (DipWHM)**

While traditional medicine, by its very nature, has always been part of our national culture, in recent years, the growth in its popularity has increased. The public's hunger for a natural approach to good health has also been a driving factor behind the explosion of health food shops across the UK. Although establishments of that nature do their best to offer unpolluted organic food, they are unable to provide the benefits of in-depth consultation and prescriptions tailored to the individual needs of the patient. This remains the province of the professional therapist, such as those trained by BIRCH.

The primary philosophy of the BIRCH course is that the "disease" is a symptom, or expression of ill health, which guides the wise therapist to its root cause. The task of the therapist is then to help the patient heal from within by returning the body to its original state of natural balance. This approach promotes a natural state of sustainable health, rather than the evermore-intrusive approach of symptom suppression offered by "conventional medicine," with its self-perpetuating assault on the internal functions of the body.

It is often the case that those who choose to study herbal medicine have already experienced the journey of healing within their own lives. Others may have witnessed the deficiencies of allopathic medicine at first hand and seek something better. In either case, BIRCH training will help to nurture that passion so that the student matures into a powerful healer. The flexibility offered by home study allows students to work at their own pace, but it is recommended that a reasonable degree of momentum be maintained whenever possible.

One of the questions usually asked is "How long does the course take?" Based on completing and returning each lesson and its associated assignments on a three-to-four-week rotation, the course can usually be completed in five - six years, although it is permissible to take longer. As the BIRCH school understands the pressures of life to which its students may be subject, study breaks can be arranged to accommodate the "events" that so often occur in life. While pursuing excellence, the school does not forget the demands of compassion and understanding, without which no holistic therapist can function. The hours expected to be devoted to studying are detailed in the framework chart below.

On completion of the course, the student will be expected to have achieved equivalent to a level 6 or university BSc degree. It is a matter of record that IRCH graduates have later been accepted on to study university master's degree courses.

### **Teaching methods**

BIRCH delivers its courses via a progressive blended learning programme. By offering this modal of training, students are afforded the benefit of a great deal of flexibility to help integrate their studies into the structure of their often-busy lives. The Herbal course is divided into linear modules, each comprised of a series of in-depth lessons on the subject involved.

The student is given a knowledge and understanding of the human body and nature and functions of its integrated systems. With this necessary foundation in place, the student is then introduced to a holistic understanding of health and disease and how to promote healing by natural means. Through following the course, as well as learning to help others, students will also often make a journey of self-discovery and personal healing, which may have been a factor that initially drew them to undertaking the course of study.

Lessons are sent via email, and the completed questions and projects are returned to the module tutor in the same manner, so internet access is a prerequisite for students undertaking this course. As this is a blended learning course in addition to the distance learning provisions, students are also required to attend monthly on-line tutorials, Summer Schools (where they will undertake seminars covering aspects of the module they are currently studying and have access to insights into those to which they will progressively graduate) and the AGM & Conference. This contact provides the opportunity for personal contact between students and tutors as well as other members of the BIRCH school.

Additional field trips and seminars will be offered at other times, to help accommodate the requirements of the student body. During the later stage of training, students will be required to undergo extensive clinical experience under the guidance of several established practitioners, at their clinics, which are available across the country.

## **Tuition**

Each student is allocated a personal tutor to guide them through each module. Tutors are practicing herbalists with a special interest in the area in which they teach. Apart from assessing and marking the students work, the tutor will offer guidance, advice, and answering queries that arise from the coursework. Where appropriate, the tutor will also offer constructive comments to correct any misunderstanding or misdirection displayed in the student's submitted work. The assignments and projects at the end of the lessons are specifically designed to challenge and develop the student's understanding of the subject. It is a matter of the utmost importance that the student develops an understanding of the holistic approach of the BIRCH school tradition and it is the task of the tutor to nurture that development.

## **The Course**

The course is designed to accommodate those with no prior knowledge of the subject and, starting with basic principles, guides students to achieve professional competence.

Students, who have achieved an academic standard at O level, GCSE, A level or degree standard, may find learning easier than those with no academic training. However, whatever the background, the real qualities BIRCH is looking for are a genuine interest in plants and people, a desire to help and an abundance of enthusiasm. If you feel that you have the qualities of a caring person who genuinely wants to assist others to a better and more natural way of life, then this course and profession is for you.

The modules are broken down into fourteen units (see below) and within these a series of progressive lessons accompanied by the necessary reading list. The specified reading list should be regarded as a minimum requirement and further reading recommendations are available. Although many people do research online, students should always be aware that information gathered in that manner could sometimes be unreliable. When submitting written work, the source of information should always be referenced. In the case of internet research, the date of reference should also be included. Guidelines are given at the start of each module.

There is a rolling intake so the course can commence at any time of the year, as this is accommodated within the flexibility of the course.

From the start students will be expected to arrange Clinical Observations in preparation for their clinical training in Module Four Herbal Medicine.

Materia Medica Foundation also starts in Module 1. Presentation of a portfolio along with attendance at summer school, a manufacturing site visit and a botany lesson are required prior to starting Module 3 Materia Medica.

On completion of modules 1, 2 & 3, the student will sit a written exam to demonstrate competence, before moving onto the next module. Failure to meet the required standard will result in the student being required to re-sit the exam having been allowed the opportunity to revise the areas of knowledge indicated necessary by the examination. Where necessary, the student's tutor will offer extra advice. The aim is always to develop students to the required level.

On completion of clinical practice and before graduation, students will be required to submit ten case histories, gathered from friends and family (unqualified students are forbidden to practice before graduation). These will be used to assess the student prior to graduation. The student will also be required to submit a written dissertation on a relevant subject of their choice, subject to it being agreed by the Director of Studies and Dissertation Tutor.

On successful completion of these requirements, the student will qualify for graduation and be awarded the Diploma in Western Herbal Medicine (DipWHM). The graduate will then qualify for full membership of the IRCH and be entitled to use the letters MIRCH after their name.

All practicing members are required to maintain an Insurance Certificate of Malpractice, a copy of which must be submitted each year as a condition of membership renewal.

After graduation, newly qualified practitioners are allocated a mentor to support them during their first year of practice.

## **Modules**

The Modules have been compiled by professional Herbalists and Naturopaths, who run successful practices and their teaching and personal level of support is the result of many years of experience. The coursework is subject to regular revision, to keep in line with rising standards in professional training. It takes into account the students' individuality; as well as learning about natural forms of medicine, the student is learning about themselves.

A student may be exempt from any Module for which they have already studied to a satisfactory standard and for which they can produce suitable documentation. If no certificate is available, an exam may have to be undertaken. Revision course material can be provided at 25% of total cost to assist with examinations. Past papers are available on request. The Diploma in Western Herbal Medicine (DipWHM) consists of fourteen units arranged within five Modules: Anatomy and Physiology (M1), Naturopathic Practice (M2), Herbal Materia Medica (M3), Herbal Medicine (M4) and Practice Management (M5). Included as part of M4 there are Case Studies and the Presentation of a Dissertation. Each of the units has associated Aims and Outcomes detailing precisely what the student is expected to gain through their studies.

The practical aspect of the course consists of Seminars related to the above subjects and are attended during the course of study. Practical Clinical Practice consists of a minimum of two hundred supervised hours of clinical observation and learning at approved Clinics with additional face-to-face, case & clinic related sessions totaling 500+ hours. Attendance of Summer Schools/seminars and the annual conference is a mandatory part of the course. Details of these are sent during the year. There is a required number of contact hours that include attendance of the above seminars/conference and Clinical Training, which must be met in order to qualify.

## **Module 1 - Anatomy & Physiology (AP4) and Anatomy & Physiology Tutorials**

(APT4). It is a requirement that lessons are completed and returned monthly.

A thorough knowledge of the human body is essential to the development of a competent holistic practitioner.

AP4 contains 12 lessons, which will enable students to develop an in-depth knowledge of the intricate physiological processes of the body. This is an essential basis for understanding the disease and treatment processes.

Students will need to read widely around each topic area using the recommended reading list provided and any other available resources. There are set questions which will be completed as course work and forward to the tutor for marking.

The module tutor will provide support to help students to complete course work in preparation for the examination. Tutors will mark and comment on each piece of work. This mark will contribute, along with your examination result, to the overall course mark. A certificate of completion is awarded on successful completion of Module 1.

Students are expected to attend Summer School each year. These are designed to supplement the distance study and will also be an opportunity to meet peers and tutors.

The 12 lessons are divided into body 'systems' but it is important to understand that each of these systems is completely interdependent and cannot be separated in reality.

Lesson 1a: Introduction to A&P	Lesson 1b: The Cellular Level of Organization
Lesson 2: The Skeletal System	Lesson 3: The Blood
Lesson 4: The Cardiovascular System	Lesson 5: The Lymphatic System
Lesson 6: Digestive & Absorptive System	Lesson 7: The Excretory or Purifying Systems
Lesson 8: The Respiratory System	Lesson 9: The Nervous System
Lesson 10: The Special Senses	Lesson 11: The Endocrine System
Lesson 12: The Reproductive System	

Exemption from taking Module 1 can be claimed by an applicant with appropriate qualifications determined on an individual basis. There is not automatic exemption from taking the examination.

APT4 – there are 10 online tutorial meetings per year (none in August or October). These are held monthly one evening per month. Each meeting has a theme (given in advance) for discussion with tutors. Attendance is expected.

## **Module 2 - Naturopathic Practice (NP4) Naturopathic Practice Tutorials (NPT4)**

NP4 has 9 lessons and is a requirement that lessons are completed and returned monthly.

NP4 has 9 Lessons and introduces students to the basic principles of Naturopathy and explains how these differ from conventional medicine. After gaining an understanding of the chemistry of food, its application to improving health is covered together with other lifestyle changes that can help restore good health. Each of the 9 lessons are accompanied by assignments that are assessed by a tutor. An examination takes place at the end of the module. A proficiency certificate is awarded after satisfactory completion of this module.

Students are expected to attend Summer School each year, which is conducted over the course of a weekend. These are designed to supplement home study and will also be an opportunity to meet peers and tutors.

Lesson 1: Introduction to Naturopathy

Lesson 3: Biochemistry of Diet- Macronutrients

Lesson 5: Environmental Nutrition

Lesson 7: Dietary Treatments part 2

Lesson 9: Exercise & Movement

Lesson 2: The Cause of Disease

Lesson 4: Biochemistry of Diet - Micronutrients

Lesson 6: Dietary Treatments part 1

Lesson 8: Hydrotherapy

NPT4 – there are 10 online tutorial meetings per year (none in August or October). These are held monthly one evening per month. Each meeting has a theme (given in advance) for discussion with tutors. Attendance is expected.

**Module 3** - Materia Medica Foundation (MMF4), Materia Medica (MM5) and Materia Medica Tutorials (MMT5)

MMF4 has 13 lessons.

MMF4 starts when the student embarks on the course and completion is a requirement prior to starting Module 3 lessons. This is an introduction to botany and how the plants are used in herbal medicine as well as the sustainability of our approach to herbal medicine and incorporates traditional western herbal energetics. It involves the creation of a personal Materia Medica. This Materia Medica will be a collection of individual studies or monographs on a wide range of herbs. As a personal learning tool, the materia medica is a cross between a herbal journal and a study aid, growing as each herb is studied in-depth. This will prepare the student for study in Module 3 where learning extends to many more herbs. It can also act as a revision aid for the M3 exam. At the end of each lesson in the first two modules - AP4 & NP4 - a herb will be given to study which is connected specifically to the lesson just completed. This work will not be marked; however, presentation of the Materia Medica portfolio forms an essential part of the studies and progression onto module 3 can only be undertaken upon presentation of it. Students may, should they wish, send any part of their work to the Director of Studies for comment or advice at any time.

Additional requirements of this unit are the completion of a lesson – 1a Botany & 1b Sustainability, a visit to a herbal manufacturing site (usually arranged by BIRCH) and annual attendance of plant science seminars at the summer school. There is a total of five seminar days to be completed by the end of the course.

It is a requirement that MM5 lessons are completed and returned monthly.

MM5 begins with an explanation of the history and philosophy of Western Herbal Medicine. It provides a comprehensive Materia Medica before giving a description of the methods by which herbal remedies are prepared. Each lesson is carefully planned and arranged so that the knowledge gained by the student may be put to practical use.

The Module offers grounding in various classes of medicinal herbs and a broad application of each remedy is discussed. At the end of each lesson, there are several short assignments with a longer assignment, both of which are submitted for tutor assessment. There is also a study tip that students are recommended to complete for their own use. An examination takes place at the end of this module. Students are expected to attend Summer School each year. This is designed to supplement home study and will also be an opportunity to meet peers and tutors.

Lesson 1a: Introduction to Materia Medica	Lesson 1b: History of Western Herbal Medicine
Lesson 2: Western Herbal Energetics	Lesson 3: Chemistry
Lesson 4a: Cardiovascular system	Lesson 4b: Nervous system
Lesson 5: Digestive system	Lesson 6: Urinary system
Lesson 7a: Muscular-Skeletal system	Lesson 7b: The Skin
Lesson 8: Respiratory system	Lesson 9: Endocrine system
Lesson 10: Immune system	Lesson 11a: Reproductive (male)
Lesson 11b: Reproductive (female)	Lesson 12: Medicinal Fungi
Lesson 13: Preparing & Using Herbs in Practice	

MMT5 – there are 10 online tutorial meetings per year (none in August or October). These are held monthly one evening per month. Each meeting has a theme (given in advance) for discussion with tutors, some advance preparation is required. Attendance is expected.

**Module 4 - Herbal Medicine (HM6), Clinical Observations (CO5), Herbal Medicine Tutorials (HMT6), Live Cases (LC6), Dissertation (DI6) and Clinical Practice (CP6)**

It is a requirement that lessons are completed and returned four to six-weekly.

HM6 has 16 lessons and deals with the clinical aspects of herbal medicine and includes diagnoses and case taking. Knowledge previously assimilated is synthesised and broadened enabling its application in various clinical cases. This is an in-depth case-based approach working through the various body systems, discussing in some detail the pathological conditions that may be encountered in the course of the practice of a trained Herbalist. Each lesson is supported by actual case histories to be analysed and prescribed for.

Lesson 1: Philosophy & Practice	Lesson 2: Case Taking
Lesson 3: The Art of Prescribing	Lesson 4: Digestive System
Lesson 5: Circulatory System	Lesson 6: Respiratory System
Lesson 7: Female Reproductive System	Lesson 8: Male Reproductive System
Lesson 9: Nervous System	Lesson 10: Urinary System
Lesson 11: The Skin	Lesson 12: Diseases of Childhood
Lesson 13: Care of the Elderly	Lesson 14: Iatrogenic Disease
Lesson 15: Health Psychology	Lesson 16: First Aid

Students are expected to attend Summer School each year, which is conducted over the course of a weekend. These develop Clinical Skills including case taking and non-invasive diagnostic techniques. There is a short practical test at the end of the course.

CO5 Clinical Observations begin when the student embarks on the course. It is expected that the student will independently arrange a minimum of 100 hours of observations within any BIRCH approved complementary practices that offer health related treatments. This is to prepare the student for BIRCH Clinical Practice as well as give a wide-ranging view of how practices work. The hours should be completed over the first three years and prior to starting the Herbal Medicine module. Presentation of a portfolio detailing attendance is required.

HMT6 – there are 10 online tutorial meetings per year (none in June or October). 20 attendances are required. These are held monthly one evening per month. Each meeting will be case-based, and/or clinic focused. Students will be expected to prepare work in advance and present original ideas as it constitutes part of their clinical training. Attendance is expected.

LC6 gives the student the opportunity to develop their case taking skills through the presentation of ten live cases. These are taken using family and friends. Students are guided in taking a thorough case, analysis, prescription, justification, and prognosis. They will be encouraged to use knowledge gained from previous modules to develop a healing strategy for each case. Students are not permitted to offer any treatments to their cases. Presentation of a portfolio is required.

DI6 gives the student an opportunity to develop their research and analytical skills in an approved subject of their choice. The dissertation is 15,000 words. Presentation of a bound copy to be kept by the BIRCH school as a learning resource. Full guidelines and support will be given.

CP6 is where it all comes together! Clinical Practice is undertaken at a minimum of four BIRCH approved clinics. Students will observe and be observed taking live cases, be involved in discussions and prescription preparation. Each clinical tutor will set homework relevant to the cases seen and this will form part of the overall assessment.

### **Module 5 - Practice Management (PM5)**

PM5 has 8 lessons and are returned alongside those in HM6

The purpose of this Module is two-fold. It not only aims to prepare the student for the ethical and practical aspects of running a Clinic, but to deal with legal and financial matters, premises, planning permission and publicity. It assumes that the student has no previous experience of running this type of business and will teach through the experience of practitioners who are running successful clinics and in great demand in any area they have chosen to work. The success of BIRCH depends on its future and that future is with its students. The BIRCH school aims to educate practitioners to their highest ability and is committed to their success. For practicing therapists, there is an exemption from some lessons with only those relevant required

Lesson 1: Starting up, legal structures

Lesson 3: Storage of Medicines, Patient records

Lesson 5: Financial information

Lesson 7: Health and Safety

Lesson 2: Setting up the Clinic

Lesson 4: Advertising

Lesson 6: GDPR, Medicine Acts, CPD

Lesson 8: Working with patients

### **More Information**

If you would like more information, or to discuss the course with the Director of Studies please contact us by email.

# The Diploma Course in Western Herbal Medicine (DipWHM)

## BIRCH Course Framework Level 6 Diploma

Module	Unit	Level	GL Hrs	IL Hrs	Total Hrs	Credits	Assessment Method
<b>M1 Anatomy &amp; Physiology</b>	AP4	4	32	418	450	45	Assignments/Exam
	APT4	4	10	40	50	5	Attendance Report
<b>M2 Naturopathic Practice</b>	NP4	4	32	368	400	40	Assignments/Exam
	NPT4	4	10	40	50	5	Attendance Report
<b>M3 Materia Medica</b>	MMF4	4	50(M1 & M2; pre-requisite to MM5)	100	150	15	Portfolio/Assignments/ Presentation/Attendance Report
	MM5	5	32	568	600	60	Assignments/Exam
	MMT5	5	10	90	100	10	Attendance Report
<b>M4 Herbal Medicine</b>	CO5	5	100(M1, M2 & M3; pre- requisite to HM6)	50	150	15	Portfolio
	HM6	6	64	636	700	70	Assignments/Practical Assessment
	HMT6	6	20	180	200	20	Assignments/Adv Cases
	LC6	6	30	180	210	21	Assignments
	DI6	6	10	390	400	40	Viva/ Presentation
	CP6	6	100	100	200	20	Portfolio/Attendance Reports
<b>M5 Practice Management</b>	PM5	5	8	142	150	15	Assignments
<b>Totals</b>			508		3660	366	

**Key:** GL Hrs Guided Learning Hours (face to face, attended), IL Hrs Independent Learning Hours (lessons, research, reading etc)

**Unit codes:** AP = Anatomy & Physiology, NP = Naturopathic Practice, AP/NP/MM/HM +T = (online)Module Tutorials, MM = Materia Medica, PM = Practice Management, CO = Clinical Observation, MMF = Materia Medica Foundation, HM = Herbal Medicine, LC = Live Cases, DI = Dissertation, CP = Clinical Practice. The number following each unit refers to the credit level which is equivalent to university qualifications (Ofqual).

## **Practice opportunities following qualification**

It is not only the Course that is flexible, but the student's future as a practitioner. Setting up as a therapist is a very rewarding occupation and has all the advantages self-employment offers. A qualified practitioner can decide to work full-time or part-time, from home, within an established clinic or set up their own.

There is great satisfaction in life in helping others, especially when helping them to regain their health. The IRCH membership has a great deal of experience in being able to demonstrate how to bring this about.

With a course and tuition service as thorough and effective as this, the student has every opportunity of becoming a successful practitioner. There are no rules on how to become a good practitioner.

## **Two-tier system: Professional and Lay Course**

The Modules are designed to suit both the aspiring practitioner, who wishes to choose the professional path leading to a Diploma in Western Herbal Medicine (DipWHM) and the person who wants to acquire knowledge about health matters, learn about our medicinal heritage through plant remedies and know more about the natural workings of their body without becoming a therapist. No examinations are required with Seminars and Clinical Practice being optional for home-study without intention to practice. Only those who have graduated from the professional course will be entitled to the practitioner diploma. Those who have taken the lay course will be eligible to apply for associate membership of the IRCH but would not be entitled to use the letters MIRCH after their name. There is always the opportunity to convert from the lay to practitioner course if desired.

Whichever path is chosen, the tutors will guide the student through the different courses by marking assignments, making suitable comments, and answering any queries that arise. The BIRCH school hopes that all students will enjoy their work and benefit personally in every way. All members abide by a Code of Ethics ensuring the highest standards of integrity and service with ethical business practices, a professional attitude and commitment to both patients and fellow practitioners.

The desire to follow a course of natural medicine demonstrates an interest in plants and natural medicines; becoming a healer will bring out the caring, sensitive side of the person. The BIRCH school is here to guide the keen student to a successful completion of their ambitions.



## **Benefits of IRCH Membership**

In today's complex world, with an ever-increasing number of therapies on offer, those seeking traditional medical treatment have become discerning and demanding about the qualifications and professionalism of the therapist they choose to consult.

Membership of the International Register of Consultant Herbalists not only gives the practitioner the status of belonging to a long established Professional Register but also allows the public to have confidence in consulting a competent, bona-fide, professionally Registered Practitioner, who conforms to a Code of Ethics and holds a valid Malpractice Insurance Certificate.

## **Professional Indemnity**

A valid Malpractice Insurance Certificate is obligatory for members of the IRCH and a copy of the certificate must be produced when applying for full Membership.

## **AGM & Annual Conference**

Every October, the BIRCH school holds a Conference on relevant topics for both students and full Members. It is a unique opportunity for an exchange of ideas and mutual support.

At the Annual General Meeting, the Council report on the various activities of the organisation during the previous year. Proposals for future projects and activities are heard and far-reaching decisions relating to the future of Herbal medicine are taken. For those students pursuing the Professional Diploma, the ensuing program of lectures and workshops constitutes another period of training and attendance is obligatory. Full Members are encouraged to attend as part of CPD (Continued Professional Development) as well as to take an active role in the organisation. Lay students are welcome to attend.

Families and friends of both Practitioner and Student Members are cordially invited to this venue, which takes place over an October weekend, conveniently situated in a hotel at a central venue.

## **Newsletter**

Members and student members receive occasional Newsletters, keeping them up to date with changes in the fields of Herbal medicine, the general activities of the Registered Office and its Executive Council.

## **Professional Journal**

The BIRCH publishes The Journal of Natural Medicine for practitioners of Herbal Medicine. It is provided free to all members and student members and regularly features news and views from the profession, Materia Medica of Herbal medicine, details of upcoming books, up-to-date reports of research and case histories, as well as major articles by some of the leading practitioners and researchers in our allied professions. Contributions from all full and student members are most welcome.

## **Register Of Members**

The IRCH publishes a Register of its Members on its website: [birchshm.co.uk](http://birchshm.co.uk) Anyone wishing to consult an IRCH member may telephone for details of their local practitioner.

Information about the IRCH and the BIRCH school with its address and telephone/email regularly appears in relevant periodicals, books, on various databases and other information resource facilities, including online.

## **Student Membership**

Becoming a Student Member is a prerequisite of the BIRCH school. The membership includes free subscription to the Journal of Natural Medicine and help and advice on any relevant student matter. Information on Seminars organised both by BIRCH and other relevant professional bodies with preferential attendance fees, where appropriate, is regularly made available.

## **Associate Membership**

Associate Membership is open to the public and all friends of the IRCH and BIRCH school, who would like to show their support to a professional, traditional medicines organisation. It includes free subscription to the Journal of Natural Medicine and invitation to Annual General Meetings.

## **Summer School and Seminars**

The BIRCH school holds a 3-day Summer School that covers all modules and is also open to members. Additional seminars are also arranged when required. The annual conference provides a further venue for learning through lectures and workshops. Attendance at the Summer School and conference is a mandatory component of the training for students.

## **Examinations**

The student's progress is evaluated by continuous assessment and formal written examinations, which are held throughout the year. All question papers are based on the lesson text and set textbooks. The examiners' decision is, in each case, final and not negotiable. Proficiency certificates are issued upon successfully completing examinations of each Module. Examinations are for modules one, two and three only.

No examinations are required, and seminars and clinical practice are optional for home-study without intention to practice. Whichever path is chosen, the tutors will guide the student through the different courses with equal consideration. BIRCH hopes that all students will enjoy their work and benefit personally in every way.

## **Practical Clinical Training & Practice**

In addition to the theoretical work undertaken by home study and clinical skills seminars, the student is required to attend a minimum number of clinical practice hours under close supervision of a qualified Tutor.

## Contact Hours

There is a required amount of contact hours (GL – guided learning) that includes attendance of Summer School/seminars, AGM & Conference, and clinical training. This must be completed to graduate from the practitioner course. IL – independent learning is time spent studying.

More information on all these aspects of training, particular course contents and structures can be found under the individual course entries of this Prospectus.

## Application Requirements

BIRCH believes that the most important qualities in the prospective student are an eagerness to learn, the ability to dedicate sufficient time to study, maturity and an enthusiasm for safe traditional medicines.

Thus, previous formal academic qualifications are not required for entry into courses run by the School of Herbal Medicine. It is, however, necessary for students to have a degree of IT literacy and an internet connection to receive their lessons and submit their written work through email as well joining monthly on-line tutorials.

Delivery is in English and so a level of language competency is required.

## Tuition Fees

BIRCH operates a 'pay-as-you-learn' scheme for students, making monthly transfer payments allowing them to commence their studies without an excessive financial burden. Full details of current tuition fees will be found in an attached document. Fees are non-refundable. As the BIRCH is a not-for-profit organisation all student fees are already costed at the lowest possible rate to deliver this quality of training. In special cases of hardship, discretionary arrangements may be applied for via the Company Secretary or Director of Studies. All such arrangements require substantiating evidence of hardship and will be subject to review, during which the student's diligence and application of study will be taken into consideration.

## How To Apply

Please use the Application and Booking Forms provided with this Prospectus. All details should be completed and the declaration signed where appropriate. This should be sent with a full CV, one recent passport-sized photograph and a letter of application detailing why you wish to study with the BIRCH school to the Director of Studies. Once received and processed, all applications are submitted to the BIRCH Council for consideration. ***Acceptance to study with the BIRCH is not automatic and a formal interview may be required.*** Applicants will be notified should this be necessary. For most people, a telephone or online interview will suffice. Following a successful application full enrolment details will be sent and the membership fee becomes payable.

## Overseas Students

The BIRCH school is increasingly attracting students who reside outside the United Kingdom and who can take the home study courses (which must be paid for in sterling) on the same terms as UK resident students, while enjoying the option of undertaking all practical aspects of the course work concurrently. Students with limited or non-attendance of Seminars, Clinical Training or the Annual Conference abide by the rules and regulations of their own country but cannot practice in the UK. Further details may be obtained upon request from the Registered Office

## **A Brief History of Herbal Medicine**

Herbal Medicine is the oldest form of medicine and has, at one time, been the dominant healing therapy throughout all cultures and peoples world-wide. The first examples of the use of herbs as medicines date back to the very dawn of mankind. Archaeologists have found evidence of the use of herbs by Neanderthal man in Iraq some sixty thousand years ago. All the ancient civilisations - the Mesopotamian, Egyptian, Greek, Chinese, Indian and Roman used herbs as an integral part of their various medical systems. The first famous Herbalist, who stressed the importance of nature in healing, was Hippocrates, known as the 'Father of Medicine' (460 BC).

Two other well-known figures in Medical Herbalism known to us in the UK are Culpepper and Gerard, who both produced 'Herbals' in the 17th century. Herbal medicine, due to its rich folk knowledge and the unpleasantness of orthodox remedies, continued to grow and thrive as the main traditional medicine over the next two centuries.

By the Middle Ages, herbalists were being persecuted by the then orthodox profession and it was during the reign of Henry VIII that Parliament passed the Herbalists Act of 1542, allowing herbalists to practice without interference from the medical establishment. The name Herbalists Act was officially given to the old statute as recently as 1948, when Parliament passed a law known as The Statutes Law Revision Act.

It was not until the end of the 19th century that orthodox medicine became the dominant form of treatment in the West. In fact, it is only in the last seventy-five years that the majority of medicines used by orthodox doctors are now synthetic chemicals, although initially these too were extracted and prepared from herbs. Until very recently, herbalists were the only traditional medicine practitioners to have recognition in British Law, with statutes dating back to the sixteenth century.

In 1968, herbalists, unique among the unorthodox practitioners, were given legal protection under the Medicines Act of that year, legislation which, in a revised form, is still in operation today. In more recent times, November 1994, herbal medicines came under serious threat through oppressive legislation, but thanks to a massive national campaign both our rights and heritage were saved again.

In the middle of the 19th century, the National Association of Medical Herbalists was formed, an association, which later gave birth to today's most prominent registers of medical herbalists, of which the International Register of Consultant Herbalists (formerly the General Council and Register of Consultant Herbalists) is one of the foremost in the UK with both Members and Students throughout the world.

It is on the long and continuous history of herbs as medicine, together with knowledge taken from modern scientific research, that today's Herbalism is based.



*The rays of heaven, the pulse of earth,  
Have brought the humble herb to birth;  
Its deep'ning roots in mould wil cling,  
To Bring its Blossom to the spring,  
A little rain, a little sun,  
So is the wond'rous task begun,  
By God designed for Man, to be,  
From pain, disease and hunger free,  
In every leaf a healing balm,  
In every flow'r a happy charm,  
A natural blend of stars and dust,  
Pervading al implicit trust,  
Could we but only live and trust like this,  
To mortal life would come immortal bliss.*

**James Hewlett Parsons**

**Founder of the original training course in 1949**