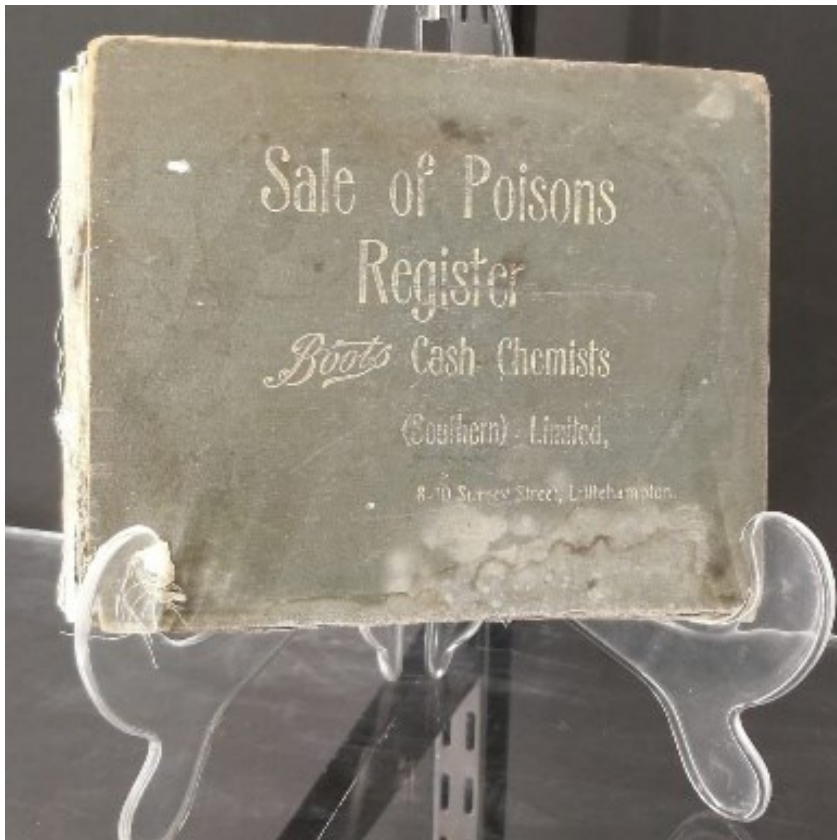


Sale of Poisons Register by Clare Willetts



As my hand reaches out, the same feeling overtakes me, that sinking feeling, that warning alarm shouting for me not to touch it.

But my hand continues, taking over, and feels the familiar delicate thin pages fall through my fingers as they automatically flick to the very last entry in the book.

As the pages fall back the smell of dust and a mustiness hits my nose. But there is a smell that isn't in the room, it is a smell and taste that my memory takes me too, a smell that makes my heart race and a light film of sweat break out; it is the smell and taste of fear.

My heart is pounding, and a drip of sweat traces its way from my neck down my back and I freeze. I marvel at how a small A5 sized book, that has grown so tatty in age and overuse, with its yellowing delicate pages, can feel so heavy in my hands and create such a fear.

I pause for a moment, gathering my thoughts. I should close the book and put it back, but I can't. I run my fingers over the imprint of the words written in that final sentence, I feel sick.

If only I could turn the clock back, if only it hadn't happened, but it had. I close my eyes trying to shake the memory, and as I do I slam the book shut. The bang echoes around the room, and as I open my eyes, I see the dust from the book dancing in the light. I stare down at the words on the front of the book, knowing what they say without having to read them - 'The Sales of Poisons Register' book, the chain to my past.

To be continued....