



Down the centuries it was used by all and sundry, a general salve for burns, cuts, bruises and all manner of ghastly pimples and pustules. Various apothecaries and chemists tried to claim it for their own, adding or subtracting ingredients, tweaking with the formula - but the essentials remained the same: cinnamon, benzoin, nutmeg, clove and styrax, plus various secret additions.

In Britain it was best known as Butler's Magic Ointment, much used below-stairs by the Victorians, and a nursery staple in all the best houses (there is even a mention of it in the latest *Downton Abbey Companion* book).

And then, one day in the Eighties, it simply disappeared. The company that owned the formula had decided to concentrate on other things. And were it not for the intervention of one very determined woman, these centuries of history would have ended.

Luckily Diana Heimann, former *Vogue* editor (and Debutante of the Year 1962) stepped in and, with the help of her husband David, bought the rights to the cream. Now elegantly repackaged, the potion once used by Marie Antoinette's great granny, Queen Victoria herself, the Mitford sisters and, very likely, Lady Mary herself, is once again on sale.

And trust me, it really is magic. The smell is quite unique, like the inside of a very grand old wardrobe in a very grand old house. I keep my pot by the side of the bed and use it for practically everything: dry skin on my feet, cuticles, sore noses, chapped lips, elbows, ears. It even makes for a rather wonderful night cream when my skin is super-dry - but it also, mysteriously, works on spots. You can find it [here now](#).

There may be little sign of the February gloom lifting, but in beauty-land a few green shoots are breaking through the ice. Namely [Miller Harris's](#) gorgeous new perfume, *Coeur de Jardin*. Such a happy creation, this floral chypre - although by no means simple. Top notes of bergamot, lemon, pear and peach; middle notes of turkish rose, tuberose and jasmine; and a seductive base of orris, amber, musk, moss and patchouli.

It's part of a trio to celebrate 15 years of Lyn Harris's hugely successful British parfumerie. I have yet to try the other two, *Cassis en Feuille* and *Poirier d'un Soir*, but both sound equally intriguing. Just one downside: they don't launch until March 5th. Sorry. And no, you can't have mine.

[Benefit's They're Real Mascara](#) is already a best-seller; but it may be facing some stiff competition - this time from within its own stable. *Roller Lash* not only lengthens lashes, it also lifts and curls them to astonishing degree. There's only one problem: the packaging is quite possibly the most disgusting thing I have ever seen. It looks like something Katie Price might have designed for a downmarket high street chemist. Good as it is, I'm not sure I can bear to have one in my makeup bag. (*Launches 1st March*)

Rather more aesthetically successful is [MAC's Limited edition Toledo range](#). Very Spanish, with its matador reds and Picasso-inspired artwork. Standout is the *Violetwink Eye Palette*, an exquisite array of fiery shades with contrasting, cooling clays. Ole.

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