



**Introduction to The History of Dentistry Research Group
David A McGowan ***

The value of history has been promoted - "Those who know not their own history are condemned to relive it" (anon) - and challenged - "history is more or less bunk" (Henry Ford) - but in every generation its study has an attraction to at least a few and for some, like the late J Menzies Campbell, it is a life long passion. The History of Dentistry Research Group provides a focus for our enthusiasm, and we would hope also a growth centre for activity in the field. Historical study seems particularly relevant to a time when the nation has reached a nodal point in its political governance and when changes seem sometimes to be unchecked and unchallengable. There are surely "lessons of history" for our profession at a time when the organisation of the National Health Service is changing once again and perhaps more fundamentally than ever before. Its direction begins to look circular. General dental practice is increasingly private again and the hard won lessons of the generation before last are perhaps more relevant to our near future than to our recent past. Fashions in therapy and technique are coming round again having already been invented, promoted, discredited and abandoned in previous cycles. How much has today's complementary medicine in common with yesterday's quack nostrums? Through this newsletter we hope to encourage more colleagues to become involved with the history of our profession. If you have ideas please contact us. There are rich resources available to us and we wish to exploit them. Whether or not you believe with Oscar Wilde that "our duty is to rewrite it" do come and join us. We would be glad to hear from you.

*** David A McGowan MDS PhD FDSRCS FFDRCSI FDSRCPSG**

Professor of Oral Surgery, University of Glasgow and Consultant Oral Surgeon. Glasgow Dental Hospital and School and Glasgow Royal Infirmary. First Director of the West of Scotland Centre for Postgraduate Education. Dean of Dental Education and Head of Dental School Planning Unit from 1990 - 95 and Member of the General Dental Council.