



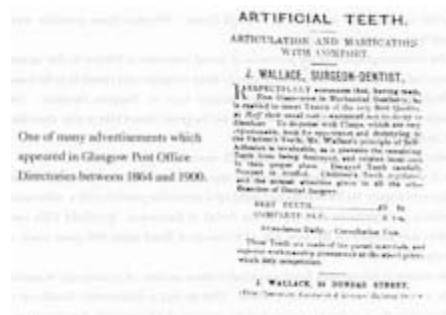
The Life and Times of a Registered Dentist James Wallace 1836-1900

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James Wallace, son of William a Paisley weaver, was born on 27 April 1836 in Paisley. His mother's maiden name was Jean Sim, an epithet which would be used by their youngest son, James Sim Wallace. Oddly enough James Wallace's marriage certificate shows his mother's maiden name as 'Sime'.¹

James was brought up in the parish of Govan, at that time outwith the City of Glasgow boundary and on his marriage certificate, dated 22 April 1859, his occupation is given as an engineer. He was twenty three years of age when he married Jane Smith from Ayr who was two years his senior.² As was fairly common in the Victorian era, they had a large family by today's standards - two sons, James Sim and William and four daughters, Dinah, Jeanie, Euphemia and Annie.³

Four years after his marriage James Wallace had set himself up in practice as a 'Surgeon-Dentist' at 170 Trongate, Glasgow,⁴ and in the following years he is to be found at 22, 36 and 48 Dundas Street, Glasgow. This portion of the street was situated on the north side of Cathedral Street and disappeared many years ago. The advertisement below appeared in the Glasgow Post Office Directory for 1864-65.⁵



Contrary to a notice in the British Dental Journal announcing his death, James Wallace was not an LDS.⁶ The appellation Surgeon-Dentist was commonly used in the 1860s before the 1878 act made this practice illegal, although many dentists not on the Dentists Register introduced in 1879, continued to flout the Act and were subsequently prosecuted. The question arises where did he get his training before the introduction of organised dental teaching?

By 1861, the population of Paisley was 61,229 and a search through Paisley directories reveals a number of 'Surgeon-Dentists' advertising their services during the period 1860 to 1865, which covers the years between James's marriage in 1859 and his appearance as a 'Surgeon-Dentist' at 170 Trongate, Glasgow. Many of these practitioners had been in practice for a number of years and would have gained considerable ability in prosthetics and a degree of empirical

knowledge of fillings and extractions. James probably served an apprenticeship with one of the established men, such as, John Walker of 92 High Street (who moved from this address which was then occupied by another 'Surgeon-Dentist' T R Cameron.) James Dobie M.C.D.E. had an advertisement in Watson's Directory in 1859, a few years before Mr Walker. He too occupied the premises at 92 High Street. Whether these premises were shared by a number of dentists is not clear. 7

An interesting aspect of the provision of dental treatment in Paisley is, that around this period (1860-70) there were some twenty three druggists and chemists to be found in Watson's Directory, many of whom appear later as 'Surgeon-Dentists.' For example, Thomas Cullen who in addition to his Surgeon-Dentist title is also described as 'Chemist, Druggist and Insurance Agent.' Cullen's advertisement reads: "Decayed teeth carefully stuffed or extracted."8

So, it would appear that there were ample opportunities for the newly-married James Wallace to acquire his knowledge and build up a successful practice with a substantial residence in Shawlands, then part of the Parish of Eastwood. Westfield Villa (and stables) was situated on the west side of Kilmarnock Road about 200 yards south of Shawlands Cross. This section of Kilmarnock Road was divided into a number of terraces and Westfield Villa was situated at 42 Darnley Terrace. That he had a comfortable livelihood is evidenced by the fact that his family had the services of a housemaid, Ann Farrell and Barbara, to do the cooking.9 Unfortunately, these terraces were all demolished in 1963 and there do not appear to be any photographs available of this area, except one of Shawlands Cross a few hundred yards from the Villa.

It was in 1890, a year after the Glasgow Dental Hospital opened in Chatham place, that James Wallace offered £100 to provide a prize of £20 for five years to the most successful student in mechanical dentistry and in general hospital practice.

As there was no laboratory in the Hospital the first condition was impracticable and when this was pointed out Wallace suggested that the first £20 be spent on equipping a laboratory and the prize be given for four years. Thus the Hospital acquired its first rudimentary laboratory.10 Some time between 1885 and 1887, James Wallace left his family at Westfield Villa in Shawlands and moved to Braehead, Glenifer, Paisley to live with his 82 year old mother.11 The only other occupant was a servant according to the 1891 census.12

There is something of a mystery here as this census gives his mother's name as 'Mary' aged 87, whilst James's marriage certificate showed his mother's name to be Jane, perhaps she decided to call herself Mary Jane. James's occupation is now given as Surgeon Dentist and Farmer. This house too was demolished some time between 1938 and 1954, the exact date has not been ascertained.

A further twist to the story is given with the announcement in the Glasgow Post Office Directory for 1900 intimating that the partnership between James Wallace and his son Dr William Wallace had been dissolved with effect from 15th May 1899. (According to entries in the Glasgow Post Office Directories, father and son practised together from 1880 to 1899.) The announcement goes on to say that James Wallace would continue to practise at 36 Dundas Street "where I have practised for nearly forty years." 13

James Wallace died on 25th April at Braehead Paisley, leaving personal estate valued at £29,499.13s 2d, on which duty of £1,329 16s 9d was payable. 14 According to the Central Statistical Office the equivalent purchasing amount today (1999) would be a staggering £1,531,339.15 It is only speculation but one cannot help but wonder if the move from Westfield Villa was connected to the dissolution of the partnership. Further evidence for some deep division between father and son appears when the will made on 24 March 1888 was registered in the Court Books of the Commissariat of Renfrew on 2nd August 1900.16

Dr William Wallace declined to be appointed a trustee and executor for his father's estate, but nevertheless purchased the dental practice at Dundas Street valued at £1,000. He continued to practise there until his death at the age of 86 on 19 May 1950. He never married.

The inventory of the estate reflects a comprehensive portfolio of shares, shrewd investments and properties. 17 Shares alone totalled £1,135 3s6d. Loans over £1100 including £400 to a former pawnbroker, another to a cab driver of £300 and a confectioner in Johnstone received £100, all secured against their properties.

His catholic taste in choice of shares is reflected in his holding of shares in a sailing ship - The King David, to 10 shares in Shawlands Bowling Company. The inventory records that his son William took over the goodwill of the practice at 36 Dundas Street at the testator's value of £1,000 plus book debts valued at £200. Income from annual rents in respect of properties at 71-79 Jamaica Street, 25-31 Cowcaddens and 154 West Regent Street amounted to several hundreds of pounds. In Paisley he owned property in Moss Street, St James Street, St James Place, School Wynd and Braehead. Apart from the shares already mentioned he had also others purchased through English sources in gold mines and railways in South African companies. Household furniture in Braehead and Westfield villa were valued at £546 13s 9d and included carriages, silverware and implements. His personal and moveable estate amounted to £8,412 19s 8d.

It can be seen that Wallace, formerly an engineer became a registered dentist and without academic training built a successful practice, acquired two homes and left a considerable amount of money. Yet, parts of his life remain a mystery and probably always will.

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1 General Register Office, Edinburgh. Old Parochial Register for Paisley 1836, Register of Births and Baptism ; Extract of Register of Marriages.

2 Ibid.

3 Enumerator's Census returns, 1881. Book 562/12

4 Glasgow Post Office Directory 1863-64.

5 With acknowledgements to Dr H Noble.

6 Br Dent J 1900; 21:285. There was another James Wallace who was an LDS but his date of birth and residence distinguished him from our Wallace. The Journal also wrongly states that he was 70 years of age.

He was 64.

7 Watson's Directories of Paisley* Hinshelwood's Commercial Directory and General Advertiser 1859-60, 1861-62, 1864-1884. Appendix quotes Registrar for Scotland, census return for 1861.

8 Watson's Directory of Paisley 1869-70.

9 Enumerator's copy of census return, 1881; book Vol. 562/12.

10 T Brown Henderson, History of Glasgow Dental Hospital and School 1879-1979 (2nd ed). p!7. privately printed Glasgow 1979.

I am indebted To Dr H Noble for pointing this out.

11 Post Office Directory for Glasgow 1886, shows for the first time Braehead House as residence but also retains Wesfield Villa.

12 Enumerator's census return 1891. Vol. 573 Distict 104.pl 1.

Obtained with the kind assistance of David A Roberts, Assistant Keeper of Local History, Paisley Library and Museum.

13 Glasgow Post Office Directory 1900-01, p267 (adverts)

14 Paisley and Renfrewshire Gazette, 18 August 1900.

15 Central Statistical Office, Great George Street, London SW1 P3A.

16 Scottish Record Office. Ref: SC58/45/11 pp181-186.

17 Scottish Record Office, ref: SC58/42/60pp549-554*