



## Newsletter, April 2001

This newsletter is produced under the auspices of the History of Dentistry Research Group, University of Glasgow Dental Hospital and School, April 2001. Excerpts and quotations are permissible providing the usual acknowledgements are made.

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### News Update .....

The information revolution is having far-reaching effects on the world of historical research, but on-line information about dental history is still relatively sparse. Our own web site, however, can claim to be among the most informative, and "certainly leads the way in the United Kingdom," as Carol Parry notes in her survey of web sites in this issue. A "hit counter" has now been introduced, and the score will be recorded in the next newsletter.

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Charlie Downie, who is remembered with great affection, was noted not only as a general practitioner but also for his pioneering work in dental hypnosis in the West of Scotland and for his contributions to dental politics. Henry Noble and Bob McKechnie interviewed him in the course of an enjoyable afternoon in his company only a couple of months before his death early last year. The resulting article is published in this issue as a tribute to his memory as well as a contribution to our series of reminiscences.

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This year's Menzies Campbell lecture will be given by Dr Paul Geissler, curator of the Menzies Campbell collection at the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh. A date in October will be arranged for the lecture.

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To help encourage an interest in dental history among students Dr Noble has invited those who are contemplating an elective connected with this subject to apply for financial assistance. At the meeting of the group last November it was agreed that the Dorothy Geddes fund could be the source of such help.

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Did Robert the Bruce suffer from leprosy? This traditional diagnosis is open to question, and an important part of the argument turns on whether the loss of his upper incisors (and the associated pre-maxillary erosion) occurred before his death or five centuries later when a plaster cast was made of his exhumed skull. The anatomical evidence is examined in this newsletter by M. H. Kaufman and W. J. MacLennan, of the University of Edinburgh, whose recent article in *Proceedings of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh* we reprint in shortened form. We add a note about a Glasgow connection and take a brief look at what some historians have had to say on this subject in recent years.

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From Bruce to Wallace: Pat Lilly has been continuing his investigation of the seal attributed to William Wallace that came to light in the Mitchell Library. The trail has led to northern Germany. After their victories against the English in 1297 Wallace and Andrew Murray, his comrade-in-arms and co-leader, wrote to Lubeck and Hamburg to let it be known that Scottish ports were open for trade with the Hanseatic League. In 1911 this letter was lent by the German authorities for display in the huge historical section of Glasgow's international exhibition. There it was spotted by Wallace enthusiasts, with the result that a Maryhill dental-mechanic-cum-dentist was asked to help to make a positive die from the seal. We look forward to publishing the whole story in a future newsletter.

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The group is sponsoring a visit to Scotland this summer by a young American researcher in dental anthropology. Money from the Dorothy Geddes fund will be used to help finance research by Ms Alma Adler, a postgraduate student at Arizona State University where she has gained an MA for her work on the dentition of modern Finns. Her particular interest is in the morphological features of teeth, a field in which Arizona State University is a leading centre, having developed a system, now widely adopted, for scoring tooth crown and root morphology based on standardised reference plaques. Ms Adler is principally coming to examine the unusually large number of dentitions (972) from the excavation of the mediaeval cemetery at Whithorn in south-west Scotland, but will also look at the mediaeval assemblages from Aberdeen, Perth and Linlithgow.

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John C. Bradley, past president and honorary archivist of the Oral Surgery Club of Great Britain, will give the Lillian Lindsay lecture at the BDA conference in Harrogate early next month. His title is: "Sixty-three Years Young and Still at the Cutting Edge".

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X-ray machines seldom feature in "The Antiques Road Show", but a real museum piece has just been donated to the hospital. The Raydex machine, more than half a century old, is just one generation up from the original X-ray box with wires attached. Manufactured in Ohio, it found its way to a dental surgery in Rutherglen in 1950 as part of the Lend-Lease scheme. Though destined now to be used for display purposes only, and definitely not for active service in the hospital's radiography department, the machine is still serviceable. It has been in regular use until now. Its final resting-place within the university has still to be determined.

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