



Newsletter, April 2001

Web News Carol Parry*

The world of historical research is seeing a great information revolution with many more resources becoming available on the World Wide Web. In a few months' time collection descriptions of the archives of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons will be published on the web at the College website <http://www.rcpsglasg.ac.uk>, thus making our archives more accessible for the serious historical researcher. While compiling the descriptions of our archives for the web I realised how very few private papers the College holds relating to dentists. In fact we have only two collections, the papers of Mrs Margaret W. Menzies Campbell and the papers of Professor T.C. White. The College does, of course, have examination registers and Dental Council/Faculty material within the College records (details of these were published in a History of Dentistry Research Group Newsletter of April 1997). Private papers do, however, fill in many of the gaps that official records cannot supply and we are particularly interested in acquiring the papers of former Convenors of the Dental Council/Dental Deans in order to make our archive holdings more representative of the dental membership and fellowship of the College.

There are a number of sites on the world wide web that may be of interest to those wishing to find out more about dental history. Within the UK, a hospital records database, hosted by the Public Records Office has recently been published at <http://hospitalrecords.pro.gov.uk>. This provides the administrative details of hospitals, their status or type and the location and covering dates of administrative and clinical records. Nearer at home, details of the Glasgow Dental Hospital and School's records held by the Greater Glasgow Health Board Archive are available at <http://www.archives.gla.ac.uk> and details of the records of the Edinburgh Dental Hospital and School can be found at the Lothian Health Services Site at <http://www.lhsa.lib.ed.ac.uk/catalog/records/az.html>. The Scottish Cultural Resources Network (SCRAN) is a tremendous resource at <http://www.scran.ac.uk/>. It's simply laid out and easy to use and includes about half a million pages consisting of photographs, objects and works of art, including dental material.

On a world wide basis, there are some dental museum sites that are worth a visit. The Adler Museum, South Africa, at <http://www.edoc.co.za/dhw/history/> gives a good general overview of dental history, beginning with ancient history and continuing through to the end of the twentieth century. It even includes a history of toothpaste. The Dr Samuel D. Harris National Museum of Dentistry at the University of Maryland at <http://www.dentalmuseum.umaryland.edu> is a very graphic site with images of the inside of the museum as well as a useful article on women in dentistry. On a rather less flashy scale, there are pictures from the Museum of the History of Dentistry in Helsinki at http://www.helsinki.fi/~hkl_hamm/Frames/Other/uk_museo.html.

The International College of Dentists, US section, have produced brief biographies of over 40 key figures in dentistry of the twentieth century in America as a result of a project "Outstanding leaders in Dentistry – An Audiovisual History Series." These can be found at <http://www.icd.org>. The video recordings that were produced as a result of the project have been placed in the U.S. National Museum of Dentistry (details given above). Information on the history of dentistry is still, however, fairly sparse. Perhaps one of the most informative sites, now that the newsletter has been published on the web, is the History of Dentistry Research Group Site at <http://www.rcpsglasg.ac.uk/hdrg>. It certainly seems to lead the way as far as the United Kingdom is concerned.



An interesting addition to the hospital museum has been acquired in a somewhat unusual way. A bottle of silver amalgam, produced in Germany before the First World War, was handed in to the hospital along with an anonymous letter. "Dear Sir/Madam," wrote the donor, "if the enclosed item is of some interest as a 'dental antiquity' please accept it for your collection – if not, would you kindly arrange for its disposal?" A donation of £5 for the hospital funds was also enclosed. It's not every museum that is fortunate enough to have well-wishers turning up on its doorstep bearing gifts and banknotes.