



NHS Greater Glasgow Archives*

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Sources of dental history in the archives include the records of Glasgow Dental Hospital and School. Among them are:

- Board minutes and other formal decision-making records, 1885-1980
- Annual reports, 1885-1998
- Calendars/prospectuses, 1919-1947
- Final year dinner booklets, 1923-94 (with index)
- Registers of students and staff, 1885-1971
- Files and miscellaneous printed items, 1940s-1990s
- Staff Association records, 1932-91

Beyond the Dental Hospital records we have a range of other material, mostly post-dating the creation of the NHS in 1948. At Woodilee Hospital there was a dental laboratory that served the psychiatric hospitals of Glasgow and, after 1948, of the Western Regional Hospital Board. The Woodilee records include a register of work on patients (much of it involving dentures), 1939-53, and the lecture notes taken by several students of dental mechanics, undated.

Although the primary responsibility for dentistry lay elsewhere, the presence of dentistry in NHS hospitals means that the records of the Western Regional Hospital Board are likely to include some relevant material. One potential source, as yet unused, is the series of circulars issued from the central NHS offices in Edinburgh. These are likely to cover such topics as apprenticeships for dental technicians and Whitley Council determinations regarding remuneration and conditions of service.

The records of the WRHB's regional physics department (later the department of clinical physics and bio-engineering) include a file on services to the Dental Hospital. The personal papers of John Lenihan, director of the regional physics department, include his journal article on mercury poisoning hazards in dentistry. There may be other relevant material awaiting discovery.

The primary responsibility for NHS dentistry from 1948 to 1974 lay with the executive councils. The independent contractor relationship between the general practitioners (of dentistry, ophthalmology and medicine) and the service was managed by these councils. The records of the Glasgow council consist largely of the minutes of formal decision-making bodies and case files. Some of the case files deal with the sensitive question of excessive charging by individual independent contractors: these files are accordingly closed for 75 years.

In 1974 the tripartite division of health management between hospital boards, executive councils and local authorities came to an end. The Greater Glasgow health Board created in 1974 was charged with providing integrated management. Since then there have been a bewildering succession of administrative changes with districts, areas, general management, trusts and re-integration following one another. Despite the difficulties created by such organisational instability there is a good deal in the archives of the GGHB (now NHS Greater Glasgow) itself that is relevant to dentistry. This includes:

- Area Dental Committee minutes, agendas and papers, 1974-92
- GP Committee (Dental) minutes, agendas and papers, 1976-85
- Files on fluoridation of water supplies and other matters.

These are not all currently open for public inspection. A 30-year closure applies to some of these, as it does to most public records. However, if the Freedom of Information Bill becomes law then that will change.

I should emphasise that this description is almost certainly not exhaustive. Anyone interested in finding out more can begin by visiting our [website](#). This is hosted by Glasgow University. The word "Archives" appears on their home page and from there it is fairly straightforward to navigate to the health service archive site.

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* Based on a talk given at the History of Dentistry Research Group, March 2002.

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