



Memories of Dr Margaret Menzies Campbell

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The interesting and kindly reminiscence by Dr Malvin E. Ring of his correspondence with John Menzies Campbell has stirred in several members of the History of Dentistry Research Group fond memories of his widow, the irrepressible, feisty and charming Dr Margaret W. Menzies Campbell, MB ChB, HonFDS. It was just not in her nature to stand idly by when she learned of an event which would certainly have attracted her husband's interest and so it was hardly surprising that, on the occasion of the preparation for the celebration of the centenary of Glasgow Dental Hospital and School in 1979, she offered her assistance. A display featuring the concurrent centenary of the 1878 Dentists Act and the appearance of the first Dentists' Register was mounted.

She continued to devote herself to her husband's mission to popularise the serious study of the history of dentistry by publishing, at her own expense, a revised and enlarged edition of "Dentistry Then and Now", complete with an index. The proceeds of the sale of these volumes went equally to the BDA benevolent fund and the BDA library rare book fund. Following the donation of Menzies Campbell's collection of rare books to the library of the Royal College of Surgeons of England in 1969, an eponymous lecture had been established at the college. Margaret Menzies Campbell now set about establishing, by donation, similar Menzies Campbell lectures on the history of dentistry at each of the three Scottish dental schools, insisting in each case that the aim was not so much to perpetuate her husband's name as to encourage the interest in the history of dentistry which had been his life's work.

She had personal connections with the early days of women in medicine. She was a niece of Dr Marion Gilchrist, one of the earliest women to graduate in medicine at the University of Glasgow, and following her own graduation at the University of St Andrews in 1918 she served briefly in Redlands Hospital for Women in Glasgow. She prepared a history of Queen Margaret's College, where the earliest women students in medicine at Glasgow received a segregated education and which is now home to the BBC in Scotland. Although never an active suffragette, she was sufficient of a pioneer to be invited in her eighty-eighth year to address a meeting in the People's Palace on the occasion of the sixtieth anniversary of women's suffrage. She was a keen collector of Nautilus porcelain and had written a history of Bell's Pottery, which produced it. The Glasgow branch of the University of St Andrews graduates association was another organisation which she faithfully supported by regularly inviting a table-full of her friends to their annual dinner.

Failing eyesight and hearing were never permitted to interfere with the pursuit of various objectives in her later years. She was adept at keeping in touch by phone but could never understand how the deep tone of her voice made her instantly recognisable as the caller before she had an opportunity to announce her identity. Her hearing aid would always be turned up at the commencement of a lecture without appreciation of the resultant whine until it could be discreetly drawn to her attention. There were staunch friends from the days when she had actively pursued her husband's interests who were delighted to observe the way in which her many talents enabled her to develop further the work in which she had so ably partnered her husband in his lifetime.