



Update- April 2003

Our chairman, Dr Henry Noble, has been awarded the John Tomes Medal of the British Dental Association, which is awarded "to honour outstanding service to the dental profession or to the association." The medal will be presented to Dr Noble at the 2003 annual conference of the BDA in Manchester. "Old Tomes was always a hero of mine," says Dr Noble. "I was forever coming across his name in dental histology." Our congratulations, Henry, on this well-deserved honour.

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Previous distinguished recipients of the Tomes Medal include Ronald A. Cohen, who died in 2001. In an appreciation in an earlier issue of this newsletter Professor Khurshed F. Moos recalled the way in which "immediately, he was able to pinpoint certain items in his superb historical library for me to take out and study there." Now this collection of several hundred books on dentistry and dental history, some of them dating from the eighteenth century, has been auctioned in London. With funds donated by Professor Gordon Seward and Dame Margaret Seward a number of books were bought for the BDA's collection – also an 1810 lithograph, "The Golden Remedy" by George Cruikshank.

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Dr Michael Dickson, lecturer in restorative dentistry, has agreed to act as curator of the museum collection of historical dental artefacts in the Dental School. Any queries or items to be added should be addressed to: Dr Michael Dickson, Room H4, Level 6, Glasgow Dental Hospital and School. Or e-mail m.dickson@dental.gla.ac.uk .

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A strange sort of bird is the pelican,

Its beak can hold more than its belly can

A lesser known fact about the pelican is that it gave its name to a beak-shaped instrument once used for prizing out teeth sideways, as Carol Parry notes in her article on the dental instruments in the historical instrument collection at the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow.

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Where does the word "dentist" come from? How has dentistry changed over time? What did the earliest dental tools look like? These and other questions are answered in "Oral Histories", a CD-ROM produced by the British Dental Association Museum which tells the story of how dentistry developed in Great Britain and is illustrated with more than 150 images from the BDA Museum image library. The images record changes in treatment from early market-place extractions to the complex technological procedures available today, and include the personalities who made these changes possible. "Oral Histories" is divided into

five sections. Each is dedicated to an important period in British dental history, and includes the providers of dental treatment and their patients, and the tools of the trade as illustrated through photographs, drawings, paintings, prints and advertisements held in the BDA Museum collections. "Oral Histories" can be purchased online at the BDA Shop (www.bdashop.com), by e-mail (bdashop@bda-dentistry.org.uk) or by telephone (020 7563 4555). Inquiries to Roxanne Fea, British Dental Association Museum, 64 Wimpole Street, London W1G 8YS; tel. 0207 563 4549 (fax 0207 935 6492); e-mail, r.fea@bda-dentistry.org.uk .

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Dental history crops up from time to time at the lively and varied series of Wednesday-morning "conversations" at the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow, which are attended by several members of our group. Dr Elma Douglas's talk about the extra-mural medical schools in Glasgow included a number of references to dental education, a topic on which she expands in this newsletter in an article which gives a valuable medical perspective on a significant piece of the city's dental history.

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Another recent RCPSG conversation was on the subject of progress in medicine during the lifetime of the participants Robert McKechnie recalled that in the bad old days the rule was "If in doubt take it out" whereas nowadays, thanks to adhesive restorative materials, a tooth would be removed from a youngster only as a last resort. He also related how he was once introduced to the Queen at a garden party. "Oh – you're a dentist!" she exclaimed, and demanded to know why the women who had cheered her on her recent visit to Glasgow Cathedral had no teeth.

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The principle of distraction from extractions has been discussed in these pages before – but a trombone? In this newsletter Dr Rufus Ross describes how "Sequah", dental mountebank of the late nineteenth century, used to whip out teeth at the rate of eight per minute before admiring crowds while a brass band played continuously. The "novelty of having a trombone playing near your right ear and a big drum beating near your left" obviously worked well. Perhaps dental surgeries should be equipped with suitable CDs.

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