



## Update- October 2003

"There is no disease, perhaps, which attacks the human family so indiscriminately as the toothache, none which the dentist is called upon so often to cure and none that he treats with less success." This bleak observation was made in 1839 by Simon P. Hüllihan, American pioneer of oral surgery whose achievements are little known on this side of the Atlantic. His extraordinary career is described in this newsletter by [Khursheed Moos](#).

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Remember 'Granny' McColl? The water bill now passing through Parliament stirs memories of the great fluoridation case of 1980-81 - the longest civil case in Scottish legal history. Robert McKechnie, along with Professor K.W. Stephen of Glasgow University, attended the court for two days every week for two years, briefing QCs and answering queries. Recently he recalled this experience for participants in the increasingly popular Wednesday-morning "conversation" series at the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow. It will be remembered that in the end Lord Jauncey decided that although all the scientific, medical, and dental allegations had been shown to be baseless, the process of fluoridation was ultra vires -i.e. beyond the legal power of Strathclyde Regional Council. This is the defect that the current legislation is designed to remove. Robert McKechnie will give his account of the court case in our next newsletter.

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We may wonder how easy or difficult it was to become a dental student in bygone days. Ross Hood (BDS Glasgow, 1954) has prepared an album, which traces his progress from applications for admission to the course and through it to graduation. He has preserved a complete set of class examination and degree examination papers, which give a very clear and interesting picture of the hurdles facing a budding dentist half a century ago. The collection is rounded off by his original degree certificate and was presented by him to the Group Chairman at the September meeting.

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Last year the novelist Jill Paton Walsh contacted us to ask when women first qualified as dentists. She was, she explained, writing a detective novel in which the central character was a retired woman dentist in the 1930s. When we sent her some information we mentioned that in due course we might feature her book in this series. The author replied that she was "afraid that you might not like to quote my character in Word of Mouth - she's potty..." Naturally this has not put us off!

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The reading room area, rare book room and archive room of the library at the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow, are undergoing extensive refurbishment. All the archives and books from these areas have been placed into storage and are no longer accessible for research purposes. The redevelopment will result in much better storage accommodation for the historical material held by the College Library and a more up-to-

date reading room with plenty of computer terminals for those wishing to e-mail or use web resources. There will also be plenty of space for the regular Wednesday morning Library Conversations meetings as well as a separate supervised area for those wishing to consult documents and rare books. The building work should be completed by Christmas but normal service will not resume until after the New Year.

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At a dinner held in the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons on 4th May 2003, the West of Scotland Branch of the British Dental Association celebrated the recent award of the BDA Tomes Medal to Dr Henry Noble, our Chairman. Professor Stanley Gelbier, Chairman of the Lindsay Society for the History of Dentistry, and Professor Sir David Mason delivered humourously enjoyable toasts, to which Dr Noble replied. The photograph shows Dr David Brunton, President of the Branch, marking the occasion by the presentation of two framed prints of sailing scenes upon the Clyde.

