



Reminiscences of Jimmy Campbell

David McGowan and Henry Noble contribute the latest in our series of verbal histories

We had a fascinating chat with Jimmy Campbell last month in the PG Centre when he described a long life in which were interwoven the twin themes of dentistry and football, and which was dramatically affected by the Second World War. Born in Bridgeton in the East-end of Glasgow in 1918, his family's footballing heritage destined him to be a future Celtic player. Jimmy's father, a turner in an engineering works, had been a professional with Reading before returning to Glasgow because of the war.

Memories of Primary School remain vivid with regular weekly tests in preparation for the Qualifying exam, which he duly passed before entering Whitehill Secondary. Discipline was tough - he remembers a classmate who had scored 99 out of 100 in a Maths test being 'belted' for making the one stupid mistake! On the other hand, the teachers who looked after the school football team were generous with their own weekend time and hospitality. A perceptive English teacher cured Jimmy's stammer by casting him as Puck in a classroom production of *Midsummer Night's Dream* - some might say a role which he still plays - small and lively as ever.

Schooldays ended abruptly when his father arranged for him to become an apprentice dental mechanic in the practice laboratory in Rutherglen of his friend George Boreland - for the princely sum of 5/- a week (later rising to 7/6). There was no choice in the matter - the contribution to the family income was needed. George Boreland was also a footballer who had played professionally for Hibernian in Edinburgh. He had also been a tenor in St Giles's Cathedral Choir and would entertain the laboratory staff with the occasional aria.

Life in the Thirties was busy for the teenager, particularly at the weekends which were not only match days but also peak times in the dental laboratory as the delivery of dentures to the patients was arranged to coincide with their weekly payday. The vulcanisers ran hot and long into the night on Fridays! . Boreland encouraged Jimmy to seek to become a dentist himself by preparing for the certificate examinations, taken at night school, which would allow him to enter the college classes for the LDS. The first subjects he studied successfully were English and Maths; followed by Latin and French (the latter was to have an unexpected significance). These studies allowed him deferment of call-up into the Army, which however was cancelled after Dunkirk, and in 1940 he was enlisted into the Training School of the Royal Army Dental Corps at Aldershot.

A goal scoring appearance in the Scottish Juvenile Cup Final, and selection for the national team at that level had led to an offer of professional terms from Celtic. Despite some initial lack of parental enthusiasm, and counter offers from Aberdeen and Hearts, he duly signed in 1939. The signing on fee was £20 and, with an advance on a year-round wage of £5 a week, amounted to more money than he had ever seen in his life. He was encouraged to continue with his studies but to train regularly and to keep fit - and to avoid the smoky atmospheres of cinemas and dance halls!

Once in the Army his footballing talents lead to an immediate place in the RADC team and later to guest appearances with Aldershot and then Folkestone Town, Leyton Orient, and Chelsea. His passion for physical fitness lead him to take a PE course which brought promotion to Corporal just 6 weeks after call-up, a decision which met with vigorously expressed hostility from the "old sweats" in the Corps. He attempted to fail his laboratory aptitude test and work a transfer to the Army Physical Training Corps but this was resisted - the need for dental technicians at this stage of the war was so pressing. Many recruits had gross dental disease and then having been rendered edentulous, had to be provided with dentures before they were classified fit for combat. However in 1942, through the support of QMS Fountain who had been a gymnast member of the 1936 British Olympic Team, Jimmy was transferred to the Army Physical Training Corps. Following a 6-week training course he became a Sergeant Instructor and left the dental world behind till after the war. Nevertheless the ambition remained, as he knew his short stature would be a serious disadvantage in top-flight football and, having married Mary in 1942, there were now family responsibilities to be considered

His first APTC posting was to an Artillery Regiment manning the South Coast defences, a task which turned out, fortunately, to be more noted for boredom than for action. The inter-battery athletic and boxing competitions which he organised, were important for morale, and there were more football contacts with famous names like Dennis Compton and Stan Cullis.

The next phase of his army career came with an unexpected order to report to an office in Montague Mansions, Baker Street, London. After the interview, where his knowledge of French was highlighted, he duly found himself posted to the SOE (Special Operations Executive) Training School in Berkshire. The SOE had been formed on the express orders of Churchill with the task of carrying the war to the enemy, by any means possible, behind their lines in occupied Europe. Nationals of occupied countries were prepared and infiltrated in to their homelands following training in weapon-handling, demolition, wireless communications and, by the fitness instructors, in parachuting and one to one combat. Sergeant Campbell was attached to the Belgian group under the command of Lt Colonel Hardie Amies (better known later as the Queen's couturier), and was at one time his bodyguard. His final posting was to the Infantry training Battalion of the Parachute Regiment, which he describes as the best year of his Army career.

After the war in 1946 came the return to dentistry when, despite Prof. Humphries describing his academic qualifications as "a bit of a dog's breakfast" he accepted him on to the LDS course at Birmingham University. Once again it was the football connection which was decisive in taking him to the Midlands, as he had been signed by Leicester City to play for them after the war. After the first year he passed the "matriculation examination for those of mature years" and was accepted into the BDS course. He enjoyed his student time and particularly remembers Prof. Osborne in Prosthetics and fellow Scots Mr. Lammie, and Dr Ireland (later Professor and Dean at Glasgow). Classmates included Peter Clarke and Colin Brady, later Consultants in Oral Surgery in Aberdeen and in Birmingham, and the late Ivor Whitehead who was eventually to be a Senior Lecturer in his old school. After qualifying LDS he spent time in Oral Surgery at Birmingham General working for Mr. Tavenner and graduated BDS with second class honours in 1952. The registrar in the unit was Ex-Lieutenant-Colonel Joe Moore, who was to become Professor of Oral Surgery and Dean at Manchester. He remembers assisting Mr R.O. Walker to perform a Kostecka operation for mandibular prognathism -then considered a very advanced technique. The prospect of a hospital career in Oral Surgery beckoned but, being now the father of a young family and 10

years older than other trainees, and facing the prospect of a low salary and years more study, the decision was made to return to Glasgow and seek a post in practice.

Mr. McKellar in Greenock agreed to employ him as an assistant at a salary of £20 per week. Unfortunately he died suddenly, so that Jimmy found himself pitched into single handed practice -with the former principal's widow as owner - manager and receptionist ("Have you got your 7/6 with you").

It was a classical "blood and vulcanite" practice and while he became an expert in removing retained roots he also introduced some patients, despite their reluctance, to more conservative treatment. However a few months were enough and another post, as assistant in the Paisley practice of Mr. Willie Mason, was much more satisfactory and provided a better introduction to general practice.

The next step was independence with the purchase in 1954 of the practice at 114 Bothwell Street, Glasgow from William Hardie Scott. Supported by Mary as receptionist, surgery assistant, and bookkeeper, as well as wife and mother to two school girl daughters, the practice flourished till city centre demolition dictated a move to 105 Douglas Street in 1965 which was to be his place of practice for the next ten years.

A busy time in practice along with involvement with the Local Dental Committee and the Glasgow Odontological Society Council meant that the football was over but a stirring of interest lead to an application to take the SFA coaching certificate. This however was diverted to Athletic coaching in support of the next Campbell generation, when daughter Mary showed talent as a sprinter which lead to selection for the British International Team, and then to a training in Physical Education at Birmingham and a teaching career. Coaching at Bellahouston Harriers and for the Scottish Women's Athletic Team became a long-term commitment for Jimmy which ended only early this year. Approaching retirement in 1983 at a time when most would be thinking of sedentary pursuits he was in training for the first of half a dozen city marathons the last of which he ran in 198x. Even in retirement he was invited to coach professional footballers at Motherwell and at St Johnstone where we understand they had difficulty in keeping up with him on training runs in the Perth streets.

When Glasgow Dental Hospital expanded in 1970, a new post as Assistant Dental Surgeon was created in the Oral Surgery Department and, having been invited to apply, Jimmy was appointed, initially on a part-time basis, but becoming a full-time Associate Specialist in 1975. The coaching role continued - but this time in guiding dental students in the intricacies of extractions and minor oral surgery. It was a treasured experience for many, as final yearbooks of the time attest and a vital part of the training of generations of Glasgow graduates. He also provided dental care for exacting needs of the medically compromised patients of the Western Infirmary.

A tribute to a life of self-discipline, physical fitness and support to the young, at 84 years old Jimmy Campbell remains young at heart and an inspiration to us all. Long may he continue to do so.