



WOMEN IN DENTISTRY

March – April 2010

A MINI-EXHIBITION CURATED BY THE BDA LIBRARY



Lilian Lindsay*

(Picture and text from Cohen E, Cohen RA. *The Autobiography of Dr Lilian Lindsay*. Br Dent J 1991 171(10) 325

"Miss Buss ... sent for me and announced that I was destined to be a teacher of the deaf and dumb. Whether the sudden attack roused my rebellious spirit or I may have had an allergy to teaching I do not know, but I refused to teach. This enraged Miss Buss who stated emphatically 'Then I will prevent you from doing anything else'. Like a flash I replied 'You cannot prevent me from being a dentist'. She prevented me from having that second scholarship. I knew nothing of dentistry, but having stated boldly that I would be a dentist, there was nothing else to be done."

In 1895, Lilian Lindsay (nee Murray) became the first qualified woman dentist in Britain, graduating from Edinburgh Dental Hospital after being refused admission into the London dental schools. She retired from practice in 1920 in order to take up a post as Honorary Librarian to the British Dental Association – founding the first BDA Library. A portrait of Lilian Lindsay in the BDA Library is displayed above the journal stands to your left.

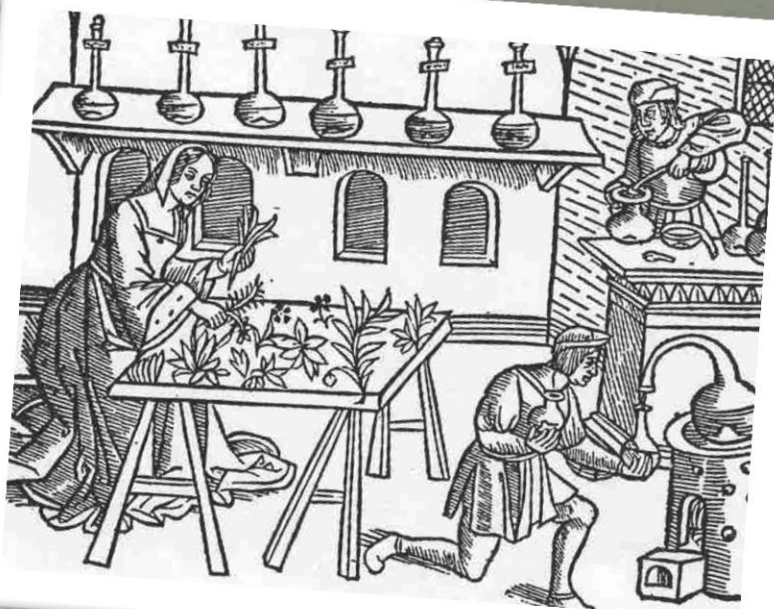
LILIAN LINDSAY, 1871-1960



“We are told by the Portuguese dental historian, Jose d’Boleo, that, in Paris there is a print from the latter half of the sixteenth century, in which a woman dentist is to be seen exercising her skill. Historical experts support the claim that this is the oldest print portraying a woman dentist. The scene depicts a patient afraid to undergo treatment at the hands of the woman dentist and the following verse recounts the scene:

‘Don’t touch me. It’s my last tooth and me, almost without gums, much to my woe. You shall not get any more money from me. How would you go about it, old shrew? Go to the devil, oh wrencher of crooked teeth’!

(Seward, M. H. *The Fair Face of Dentistry – From Anathema to Acceptance*. Br Dent J 1991 171(7) 214-220)



Abbess preparing Herbal Medicines, 1200s*

*Image from Museum of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society, online exhibition: *Celebrating Women in Pharmacy*. <http://www.rpsgb.org.uk/informationresources/museum/exhibitions/nawpexhib/>.

“Women have probably practiced dentistry for centuries. When in 1544 the barber surgeons received a charter from Henry VIII, women were admitted on the same terms as men, usually as apprentices, but sometimes by patrimony. However, they were not allowed to wear the livery as this entitled the wearer to a vote in the City.” (Kidd E. *Dental Suffragettes – Women in Dentistry*. Dent Update 1974 1(5) 249-252)

“Women, it would appear, have practiced tooth drawing from ancient times, although the allusions to them are scanty, the reasons perhaps lying in the fact that they are only mentioned when they have transgressed, and that the majority of them were peaceful law-abiding operators.” - Lillian Lindsay

(Quoted in Weir E. M., *Call Me Dentist*, Australian Dent J 1978 23(1) 67-68)



Arms of the Company of Barber-Surgeons *

*Image taken from Dobson J, Milnes Walker R. *Barbers and Barber-Surgeons of London: A History of the Barbers' and Barber-Surgeons of London*. Oxford: Blackwell Scientific Publications, 1979

THE EARLY YEARS OF WOMEN IN DENTISTRY

WOMEN IN U.K. DENTISTRY – A TIMELINE

1895



IN 1895, LILIAN LINDSAY BECAME THE FIRST QUALIFIED WOMAN DENTIST IN THE U.K.*

*Image from Seward M. H., *The Fair Face of Dentistry – From Anathema to Acceptance*. Br Dent J 1991 171(7) 214-220

BY 1937, 3.2% OF DENTISTS REGISTERED WITH THE GDC WERE WOMEN



1937



1972

IN 1972, THIS FIGURE HAD RISEN TO 12.8%

AT THE TURN OF THE MILLENNIUM, 32% OF UK DENTISTS WERE WOMEN. BY THE MIDDLE OF THE DECADE, THIS FIGURE HAD RISEN TO 37%



2000

BY 2020, IT IS PREDICTED THAT OVER 50% OF ALL DENTISTS IN THE U.K. WILL BE WOMEN



2020