

Robert Lindsay, August 1926, and the American experience – Part 2: the seventh International Dental Congress

Helen Nield¹

Key points

A source to find out something of the history of dentistry in the inter-war years.

Helps in learning about the international growth of dentistry as a profession.

Informs about the history of the British Dental Association.

Abstract

Having previously described Robert Lindsay's and Bryan Wood's trip to New York and the first International Orthodontic Congress, this second article concentrates on Philadelphia and the seventh International Dental Congress. The latter, a vast gathering, was a chance for dentists from all corners of the globe to come together, not only to connect with each other and exchange ideas, but also to demonstrate the importance of their profession. Twelve years previously, the sixth Congress, held in London, had had to close abruptly following England's declaration of war against Germany. Scheduled to run between 4–8 August, it had closed on the sixth as so many of the delegates had dispersed. William Guy, one of the vice presidents of that conference, played a prominent part in the 1926 meeting and his memories and those of others present in Philadelphia are explored here, in conjunction with Robert Lindsay's handwritten diary and letters.

Introduction

'The Volendam came in today according to the papers having on board Major Coxon and Mr Guy...they I think stay the night in the Waldorf and we may meet them tomorrow on the train.'¹ Robert Lindsay, British Dental Association's (BDA's) dental secretary (Fig. 1) writes this to his wife, Lilian, on his last full day in New York. The following day, Sunday, he and his fellow traveller, Bryan Wood, the BDA honorary treasurer were to take the train to Philadelphia and the seventh International Dental Congress (IDC). Other English and Irish dentists who had attended the International Orthodontic Congress (IOC) were already on their way. However, a sizeable dental contingent had only just landed in the

Big Apple, and this included the American Express (AmEx) party on the Holland-America line ship, the Volendam. William Guy LLD FRCS LRCP HDD FDS Eng and Edin FRCSE, a past president of the BDA (1914), and at this time, dean of Edinburgh Dental School, wrote of embarking at Southampton with 'Messrs [Stephen] Coxon, [Cyril] Child, [Adam] Cubie, [Arthur] Horniblow, [Peter] Cumming, [John] Cairns Russell and [Charles Edward] Wallis'.² He failed to mention that both Julia Horniblow and Hilda Child accompanied their husbands, and that another dentist and BDA member based in London, Violet Helena George LDS RCS Eng, 1922 also sailed.³

While on board, the English party 'struck up a pleasant comradeship' with the Dutch delegates; although, what they thought of Cumming and Guy winning a prize in the ship fancy dress parade as 'The Heavenly Twins' posterity does not record. Rough weather destroyed the wireless aerial but it was fixed in time for the latter to receive a telegram from the President of the Congress, William H. G. Logan, dean of the Chicago College of Dental Surgery (Fig. 2), 'asking him to extend personal and

official greetings to all [delegates] on board'.² To ensure that the Congress was attractive enough to a wide international audience, the organising body had paid an honorarium of \$500 to four well-known dentists involved in work to do with oral hygiene and prevention: Ernst Jessen of Denmark (who had founded the first municipal school dental clinic in Strasbourg in 1902);⁴ Frenchman, A. Blatter; Fritz Schaeffer-Stuckert of Germany; and William Guy himself (Fig. 3).^{5,6} This might explain the telegram which the latter thought a 'very graceful attention'² and it was certainly one that the main BDA party did not receive on their trip out a week earlier. The ship docked safely on 21 August, but in New Jersey, much to the disgust of C. E. Wallis, since this was on the opposite side of the Hudson River to central New York. Instead of being met by a representative from AmEx, they were left to their own devices and 'had to find our way as best we could from the quay at Hoboken to The Waldorf Astoria Hotel...those who took taxis were far from pleased when they found...fares...at least five dollars, payable in advance, and that they arrived at the hotel long after

¹Head of Library and Knowledge Services, British Dental Association, 64 Wimpole Street, London, W1G 8YS, UK. Correspondence to: Helen Nield Email address: helen.nield@bda.org

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those who had gone by electric railway under the Hudson.⁷ William Guy makes no mention of this, so it is tempting to assume that he took the subway and Wallis took a taxi!

On arrival in Philadelphia the following day, Guy was 'warmly' welcomed at the house of Dr Edward Cameron Kirk and his wife in Nova Penna, 'and refreshed with something better than iced water.'⁸ Kirk, a former dean of the Pennsylvania School of Dental Medicine was on the organisation committee for the Congress and at this time, the editor of the journal *Dental Cosmos* and a vice-president of the SS White Manufacturing Company.⁹ Two other guests were Dennis Champion, who had just come from the Orthodontic Congress, and Professor William Henry Gilmour of Liverpool, who had arrived several days previously. The latter records that one of his most 'pleasant new experiences' was 'sitting [outside the Kirks' "colonial home"] in the evening watching the fireflies, which made a sort of fairy-like scene.'¹⁰ Gilmour had brought over a number of old bone dentures and historic instruments for the museum at the Congress and had some trouble with customs officials in both New York and Philadelphia, as he was importing manufactured steel.

Robert and Bryan Wood meanwhile had settled into the Bellevue Stratford, the main hotel for the IDC, where the range of rooms was \$4–8 per day – roughly the equivalent now of \$67–135.¹¹ The former notes that although smaller than their New York hotel, The Commodore, the 'public rooms... surpass anything I have seen anywhere. Marble everywhere and gorgeous furnishing and equipment'. However, the room was disappointing because it only had a bath and not a shower and since it overlooked the well of the hotel was very stuffy – he does concede that 'the room would be palatial in an English hotel' and they were able to have 'three baths a day' to keep from getting 'too sticky'.¹²

Just ordinary folk...

Most of their meals were taken in the hotel's roof garden restaurant (Fig. 4) where, just as in The Commodore, canaries sang, and from where superb views over the city were to be had, especially at night when the city was illuminated for the Sesqui-Centennial Exhibition. Robert lunched there that first Sunday on an oil-drenched salad, chosen for its 'attractive' name, 'Lillian'. Unfortunately, he was profoundly sick for the rest of the afternoon, remarking that the double 'l' should have

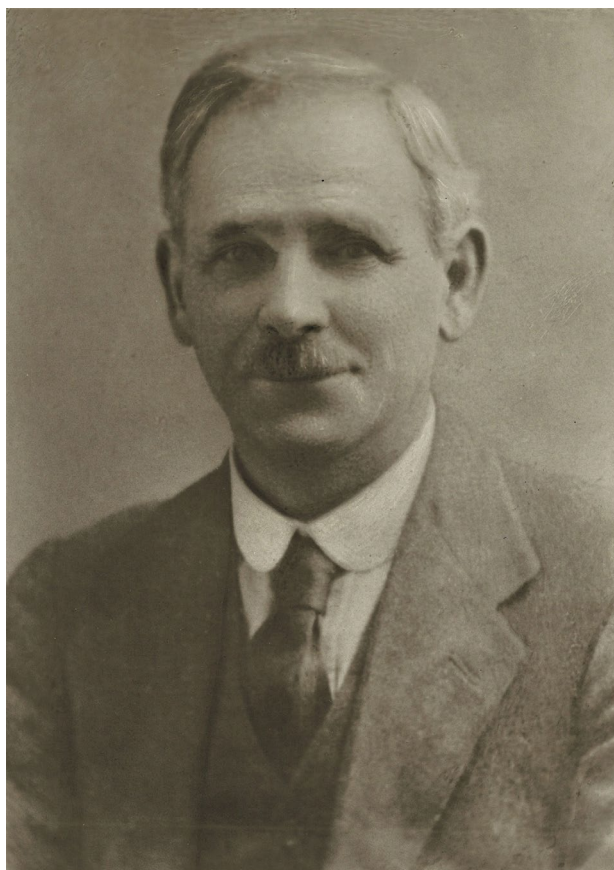


Fig. 1 Robert Lindsay. Image reproduced with the kind permission of the BDA Museum



Fig. 2 William Hoffman Gardiner Logan DDS, MD, LLD, MS in 1937. Image reproduced with the kind permission of the BDA Museum

warned him! That evening, fully recovered, he and Wood returned, but dined by mistake with the AmEx group. They had spotted some of their BDA colleagues 'all in one room of the roof garden and we formed one of their

tables – but never again. They were confined to a particular menu and not an attractive one [meals were included with their package]. I said to the head waiter next time we are not American Express we are just ordinary folk and



Fig. 3 Professor William Guy in 1937. Image reproduced with the kind permission of the BDA Museum



Fig. 4 Bellevue Stratford, roof garden restaurant – a contemporary postcard

that was a standing joke for the rest of the week whenever we entered the garden.¹²

There were two tour parties – the one that went over with William Guy and another party organised by Thomas Cook (meals NOT included) that went over with Robert on the Caronia. Both were taken on a trip round dental establishments and tourist spots in Washington, Pittsburgh, Chicago, Detroit, Niagara Falls, Rochester, Boston and back to New York following the end of the Congress. They followed the same itineraries but returned on different ships, the former on the Nieuw Amsterdam and the latter on the Carmania (see online Supplementary Information).^{13,14}

The Congress proper begins

During the week preceding the Congress, a number of clinics on all manner of dental topics had been arranged by the Philadelphia Clinic Club for any visiting dentist to attend before the actual convention took place.¹⁵ However, Monday 23 August was the scheduled start day and it began with Robert grumbling that he had got to bed at midnight with ‘a view to being up early for the meeting of the FDI [World Dental Federation] at 8.30 – I was there at that hour but nobody appeared. Fifteen minutes later ditto so I gave the meeting up and started with Wood by [street] car for the meetings to begin

at ten.¹² Signs pointing the way to the Congress were placed all along the main road leading to the Commercial Museum, which was its home.¹⁶ Once there, delegates were met with ‘a great hall 500 feet long about 300 broad and 60 high...all down one side a series of rooms had been constructed each about 60 feet by 30. Each had a tall platform, reading lamp, blackboard and lantern screen [for displaying glass lantern slides] and lantern auditorium finished with chairs. Ice water on the platform’. Outside of these spaces, ‘the whole centre was taken up with the trade exhibits, on the other side corresponding to the rooms where the papers were being read were the school exhibits, and at the bottom, the public health and school clinic shows – the top where one entered had the registration office, post office and other administrative rooms...the motion pictures were in an adjacent room.’¹² The films, silent of course at this time, covered not only titles on oral hygiene such as, *Don't wait until it hurts* and *Mouth hygiene for school children* but also instructional titles, such as *Animated drawings used in the dental school of Paris* and *The epithelial inlay*.¹⁷ Apparently 16,000 square feet of space was devoted to the various exhibits.¹⁵

The organisers had split the papers into 15 thematic sections (Table 1), with each assigned a room. Sessions met simultaneously morning and afternoon, with a two-hour break in the middle of the day. Not all sections had sessions every day, for example, the physics, chemistry and metallurgy section only met on the Monday and the dental legislation and history, science and libraries sections only ran on the Wednesday and Thursday.¹⁸ That opening day, the UK was well represented, with papers read by Eric Wilfred Fish (‘rather a conceited young man’ according to Robert),¹² William Guy, Alfred Lockett, William Holder Shipway and William Gilmour, while John Badcock attended the orthodontia section as one of its honorary presidents.

Gilmour mentions that ‘as requested, I presented a report of “Dental education in England”, in which very little interest was taken. I think there were only about four present’.¹⁰ In fact, his paper is not even mentioned in the transactions! Attendance at the various sections was very varied, with those covering more general clinical topics being very popular and those more specialised and non-clinical much less so. The sections on operative dentistry and full and partial dental prostheses were very full.¹⁹

Robert and Wood, as two of its honorary presidents, began the day at section XI – mouth hygiene, preventive dentistry and public health – once they had found it! They had

‘some difficulty’ because it was ‘apart from the other meetings in a very nice lecture hall’ that was ‘not sufficiently placarded’. According to William Guy, it was actually half a mile away

from the main Congress in the University of Pennsylvania Museum. Both Robert and Guy put the small attendance down to this.^{2,12} However, at some point during the Congress, they had an ‘oral hygiene lunch at which about 200 attended’ and Robert gave a short speech – so no trouble finding the section when food was involved! The editor of *Oral Hygiene*, Rea Proctor McGee MD DDS, was also concerned at the small attendance and felt that ‘careful examination should be made into the reason for the lack of interest shown and the errors corrected in the immediate future.’²⁰ After all, mouth hygiene was really one of the key features of the Congress. Nonetheless, at least 30 people listened to the opening address, ‘which was not especially notable and the subsequent papers were not up to what we expected’.¹² Of Guy’s talk that day, Robert notes ‘it was the usual Guy performance and of course I was quite familiar with what he said’. In the afternoon, Shipway of Bristol, dental surgeon to the chocolate manufacturer, J. S. Fry & Sons Ltd, gave a paper on ‘Dental conditions in Great Britain’, which included a brief description of school dentistry and the National Health Insurance Service.²¹ Robert was not there to hear it, but from what he gathered, ‘he had been talking rubbish about N. H. Ins’. Mr Lindsay believed that there was ‘much need for a proper correct paper on school dentistry and other public services. It is 100 pities that Wood and I dropped our paper’.¹² In the original draft programme, the two had been down to present a talk on the ‘History of public dental service in Great Britain’ in section XV.²² Dr Shipway, nevertheless, was a staunch advocate of the school dental service, having lambasted the *British Journal of Dental Science* the previous year for talking of a post within it as a job for a beginner: ‘the lack of success of this service is entirely due to regarding the work in this light. The service should be so adequately paid that the salary should retain the best men in it’.²³ He was, in fact, the first school dental officer to the Bristol Education Committee.²⁴

A government dinner, a reception and the Butterfield contingent

Monday evening saw the official opening of the Congress. It was preceded by a dinner in the ballroom of the Bellevue Stratford ‘given by the Government of the United States in honour of the visiting delegates to the seventh International Dental Congress’ (Fig. 5).¹⁸

Table 1 Sections at the seventh International Dental Congress

Section	Subject
Section I	Anatomy, physiology, materia medica and therapeutics
Section II	Bacteriology, pathology and diagnosis
Section III	Physics, chemistry and metallurgy
Section IV	Operative dentistry
Section V	Partial denture prosthesis (including crown and bridge work)
Section VI	Full denture prosthesis
Section VII	Exodontia, anaesthesia and roentgenology
Section VIII	Orthodontia
Section IX	Maxillofacial surgery and surgical prosthesis
Section X	Periodontia
Section XI	Mouth hygiene, preventive dentistry and public health
Section XII	Dental education
Section XIII	Dental legislation
Section XIV	Military surgery
Section XV	History, science and libraries

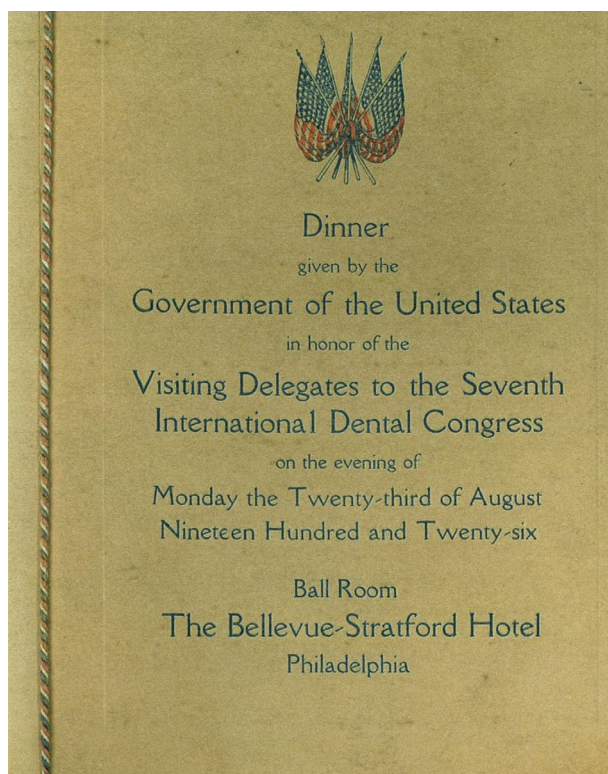
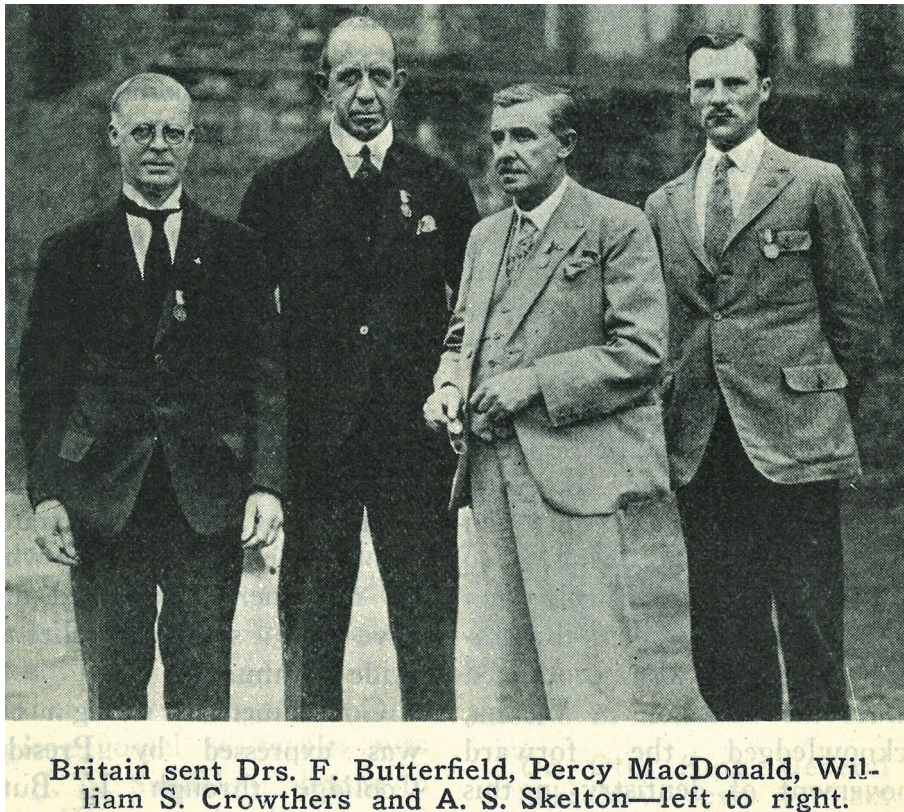


Fig. 5 Menu for the dinner given by the US Government for the visiting delegates. Reproduced with permission from University of Pennsylvania Dental Collection, 1885–1935, Archives Center, National Museum of American History



Britain sent Drs. F. Butterfield, Percy MacDonald, William S. Crowthers and A. S. Skelton—left to right.

Fig. 6 Members of the Incorporated Dental Society. Reproduced from M. B. Massol, *The Seventh International*, *Oral Hygiene*, 1926²⁷

Robert had tried to get 'Parrott and Cale-Matthews in on the strength of their being delegates from Birmingham university but couldn't, although all of the official BDA delegates were eligible for admission: Robert and Wood, Guy, Gilmour, Shipway, Conrad Ackner, Irene Dorman, Robert Nicol and John Badcock.²⁵ As far as the food went, the dental secretary was not impressed with the Liberty Bell ice, nor the 'salmon mayonnaise followed by some preparation of chicken' but 'the soup served in small cups and in one case cold tomato was very good. The coffee of course excellent and the grapefruit very pleasant.'¹² With no time for the planned speeches, the delegates were hurried away to the nearby Academy of Music for the reception.

Here, the national delegate government and state representatives had tickets for the stage with 'ladies and other privileged persons' admitted to the boxes. Robert was incensed, after being assured by the Congress president that there were no spare tickets, to discover 'Butterfield present and his friends Crowthers and Macdonald on the stage.'¹² Fred Butterfield and William Smedley Crowthers were presumably there quite legitimately as secretary and president

of the Incorporated Dental Society (IDS). Percy Macdonald was not named as an IDS delegate and certainly should not have been in attendance. Robert had worked in tandem with Fred Butterfield and the IDS to flesh out a Dentists Act that would be acceptable both to the majority of BDA members and the IDS membership, but he does not seem to have held them in particularly high regard. The IDS, it must be remembered, represented those dentists who had no formal accepted UK dental qualification, although members had to pass an examination in order to join. However Robert may have treated them face to face, his language in the diary is quite scathing. He believed that the reason they had made it on to the stage was 'probably due to effrontery trading on the ignorance of the local people to some extent'. Matters were not improved later on in the week, when he spotted in one of the papers 'a photograph of Butterfield, Crowthers, Macdonald and a man called Skelton with a legend describing them as the British delegation and C and B...as the president and secretary. Of course these creatures were probably themselves responsible for the attempt at bluffing themselves into a false position...'¹² The

photograph was later reproduced in the journal *Oral Hygiene* (Fig. 6).

The organisation at this event was chaotic to say the least, or as Robert put it, 'the most tragic instance of bad management!' Apparently, the government representatives were supposed to be in the front seats on the stage, 'but although cards had been put on those seats bearing the names of the countries, no explanation had been given to anyone and a scene of great confusion ensued...many who had no right there sat in the front seats. Among these were Butterfield and his crowd and among others, Coxon [late mayor of King's Lynn, a BDA member but not one of the official representatives] who first took the seat reserved for Badcock and then one behind that reserved for Greece and remained in it'. The Congress president made futile attempts to sort things out 'by calling in a voice not sufficiently audible... all the time on the other side of the curtain the patient audience was awaiting...kept in some measure of good humour by occasional performances of the orchestra. Up went the curtain about an hour late.'¹² Proceedings got underway with two representatives of the American Government. Assistant secretary of state, J. Butler Wright (the organisers had been hoping for the President, Calvin Coolidge, but had to make do),²⁶ 'stressed the importance of internationalising dentistry [and] addressed the French and Spanish delegates in their own tongues.'²⁷ He also emphasised the net worth of US dental exports.²⁸ He was followed by a welcome address from dentist, Senator Henrik Shipstead. Government recognition was very important for dentistry as an up-and-coming profession in America – after all, the first dental school in the US had only opened its doors in 1840 at Baltimore (although this was 20 years before the first dental school in the UK). The President of the American Dental Association (ADA), Sheppard W. Foster, finished up the initial speeches with a talk on the history of the development of dentistry in America.

These opening salvos were followed by the 'roll call of nations, which alas! [from William Guy] involved 35 speeches from 35 representatives.'² However, one of these was John Badcock, the BDA president, and he had arrived with an important piece of paper for the standing and perception of the dental profession in the UK. This was a letter which he read out from the minister of health, Neville Chamberlain (later infamous for another piece of paper), authorising him as an official British delegate to the Congress. It

goes on to say that he, Chamberlain, attached the 'greatest importance to the provision of an adequate and efficient dental service as an essential part of the policy of preventive medicine'.²⁹ The statement was seen in the *BDJ* as 'an authoritative pronouncement on the part of a Department of State that the Government of this country accords to dentistry its right position in regard to the public health'.³⁰ Badcock himself noted that 'ours was the only government which extended the courtesy of a ministerial message [and it] did not pass unnoticed by the representative of the US Government'.³¹ Sadly, as the speakers were all facing the auditorium, nobody on the stage could really hear what was going on. Robert and Wood managed to slip out at 11.30, just as Logan was calling on each state of the union to give its report, so they missed out on at least a further 50 speeches!¹²

William Guy for Great Britain

The following day followed much the same pattern, with Harold Chapman giving a talk on the aetiology of orthodontics in section VIII and Stephen Coxon on facial restorations in section IX. Another dinner rounded off proceedings – a 'banquet to the foreign guests'. The irreverent BDA group 'had a sweep at our table on the length of the speeches – on this occasion, eight minutes five seconds got it – the Belgian [Emile Huet] I think'. That night 'the British representative was not there but "Professor" Guy who replied for Great Britain'.¹² Robert was much aggrieved at this, as he felt that Badcock as the 'lead delegate' ought to have spoken, although Guy was the only other representative to have been officially sent by the BDA.

There had been quite a lot of discussion at various Representative Board meetings as to whether the BDA should depute someone to go and whether any money should be paid to help with their costs. In fact, William Guy's was the first name nominated as someone who was 'known to the profession in various parts of the world and one whose name was familiar to all those dentists who had attended meetings of the FDI'. Next, John Badcock as BDA president was suggested, as he 'had not had an opportunity of doing...much in the way of representing [the] Association abroad'.³² By the next meeting, the Finance Committee had agreed to recommend that £100 should be 'granted by the Board towards paying the expenses of the two official

delegates'.³³ To put this into perspective, at the same meeting, the Library Committee was granted the sum of £50 as its budget for the entire year! It then transpired that both the honorary treasurer (Wood) and the dental secretary (Lindsay) were attending, as was Professor Gilmour, who was a BDA representative in the FDI. Fortunately, as BDA funds 'were limited', these three had all 'declined to accept any grant towards expenses'.³⁴ Indeed, Robert makes a point of saying in his diary, while describing the lack of attention paid to the British delegation, that 'we paid our way absolutely throughout and apart...from pleasant conversation with quite a number of men...have nothing to thank any Americans for above that which every other visitor obtained by simple membership. This is exactly what I desired to do from the first and I think it was Wood's idea too'.³⁵

Speaking in the rain

Wednesday saw the start of the history, science and libraries section, which had been an afterthought of the organising committee, suggested by W. H. G. Logan.³⁶ Wallis, one of its honorary presidents, presented his 'Recollections of Lister'. He described how, while working as one of the latter's surgical dressers at King's College Hospital, his hands had become 'sodden and cracked' after a month of applying Lister's mercury and carbolic mixture pre-operatively to the patients.³⁷ In the afternoon, the New York dentist, Bernhard Wolf Weinberger spoke on 'The dental library – its past and its future'. As librarian of New York's First District Dental Society since 1914 and dental librarian at the New York Academy of Medicine since 1922, he certainly knew his subject.³⁸ Robert thought his paper 'quite interesting' and commented on it. Later, after chatting to the former, he mentions that he found him 'very nice but very proud of himself and his library...[he] spoke appreciatively of the BDA librarian'.¹²

Robert followed him on to the podium to give a talk written on the history of dentistry in Great Britain by two BDA stalwarts, Leonard Matheson (a former BDA president and erstwhile *BDJ* editor) and J. Lewin Payne (a former president of the Metropolitan Branch). He had practised it on the voyage over while 'lying on the deck under a boat on the boat deck...with deck business going on all round and the most perfect blue seas outside'.³⁹ He felt that he 'read the summary

well...and explained the lantern slides – they were very kind in their thanks but seemed determined to consider the abstract my work'. Sadly, as he was speaking, 'rain was coming down in a deluge outside and I stood just under a leak in the roof'.¹²

Interestingly, at the end of this section's meetings, a 'committee on resolutions', with Weinberger as its chairman, was set up, where it was agreed to ask national organisations to start similar sections. They also resolved both to promote an 'international index of the current dental literature' to ensure that dentists would be aware of non-English language publications, and to produce a comprehensive dental bibliography, which would also show which items were held in which library.⁴⁰ Sadly, neither of these projects seems to have been brought to fruition, although Weinberger did try and get the bibliography off the ground by advertising for information on different dental libraries in 1930⁴¹ and by asking for the support of dental librarians for it during a Medical Library Association convention in 1933.⁴²

A grateful sense of rest

After finishing his talk, Robert met up with Wood to have a look round the school exhibits, the quiet of which 'gave a grateful sense of rest'.¹⁹ He found the 'kindergarten scheme of teaching preventive dentistry...particularly good'.¹² Posters drawn by school children were numerous among the oral hygiene exhibits, and as Merwin B. Massol declaimed, 'a child who produces his own poster doesn't soon forget the lesson it teaches'.²⁷ A local paper reported that a Mrs Rosalie B. Stillman, dental hygienist, was in charge of one of the mouth hygiene exhibits, with the booth 'attractively decorated with photographs and honour rolls of the pupils in the grade schools who had "100% perfect condition of teeth"'.⁴³ Among the other exhibitors advertised were the Lion Dental Infirmary of Japan, the Danish Society for Dental Care of Children, the American Dental Hygienists Association (ADHA) and the Department of Dental Health Education of the ADA.⁴⁴ The latter took as its central idea the slogan 'watch your teeth', accompanied by a lighthouse that flashed on and off. Displays on either side highlighted various foods that were helpful for teeth and the 'necessity of proper daily care and of regular visits to the dentist' (Fig. 7).⁴⁵

Later, while browsing the historical exhibits, Mr Lindsay noticed 'Mrs Lindsay's

reprint of Charles Allen [*Curious observations on the teeth* – reproduced in 1924 with an introduction by Lilian] with a commendatory note on the description card. He also mentions some ‘very interesting German exhibits of books, instruments and plates – pelicans seemed fairly plentiful’ and the ‘plate made by Greenwood for George Washington’.¹²

Another exhibit showcased the work of the US Army and Navy Dental Corps, of which maxillofacial surgery was an important part. This was advertised as ‘the profession’s first opportunity to view results of the war experiences of the dentists who served in field and camp’ and included ‘photographs, radiographs, casts...to show in detail the final results of actual cases of gunshot wounds and the dental rehabilitation of wounded soldiers’.⁴⁶ It was no doubt of interest to British delegates, such as Arthur H. Parrott of Birmingham Dental School, who had received an OBE for his treatment of maxillofacial injuries during the First World War.⁴⁷ Robert ‘noted the USA Navy exhibit with interest and made a mental note for discussion with Fletcher’.¹² Edward E. Fletcher was the first director of the UK’s Naval Dental Services and had been in post since 1920.⁴⁸ The display showed ‘a full size section of a battleship, containing a complete dental infirmary and oral hygiene dispensary’, as well as demonstrating the ‘occupational training of enlisted men as dental assistants and oral hygienists as it is carried on in the Navy Dental School’.⁴⁹

Typical American pleasures

Thursday afternoon saw Parrott give his paper in section VII on ‘intra-osseous anaesthesia by injection’, a technique that became so synonymous with him that it was later referred to as ‘Parrott’s method’.⁴⁷ That day, all the afternoon sessions were completed by 4 pm, in time for delegates to take a specially arranged trip to Atlantic City, ‘where arrangements were made at the Ambassador Hotel for bathing’.⁵⁰ Apparently, the outing was enjoyed by many members, although some were ‘bitten by mosquitoes’.² Robert and Wood had tickets for this ‘so that we might see a typical American seaside pleasure resort’, but instead, they decided to attend a baseball match: ‘it was an experience I welcomed. On that weekday, many thousands of mostly young Americans were away from work to attend the national game. They are more excited than our people and accompanied the game with shouts and



Fig. 7 The American Dental Association Department of Dental Health Education stand. Reproduced from Congress Exhibit of the Department of Dental Health Education, *J Am Dent Assoc*, 1926. Courtesy of the American Dental Association Library & Archives

protests against the decisions of the umpire... two local men in front of us kindly explained the points and Wood and Campion were presently quite keen at them’.³⁵

That night, Guy and Gilmour were at the banquet of the University’s Psi-Omega Society as guests of Dr Herbert Wheeler (who had hosted Robert and Wood for a day during the IOC). The evening was filled with speeches, community singing of college ditties and a variety show.² Meanwhile, Robert records: ‘to finish the feeding we had a most charming dinner...at a café Wood had discovered...a Freshman among the waiters...was a character...we took young Campion to dinner and meeting [John Thomas] Jameson in the hall of the hotel, we swept him in and had the most enjoyable little dinner conceivable’.¹²

The police move in...

Friday was clinics day: ‘Wheeler and his committee had to get to work on Thursday... to dismantle the rooms where the papers had been read and get the tables for the desks set out. That was a pretty stiff job...but they did it effectively’.³⁵ There were 543 of these clinics, which consisted of a clinician seated at a card table and demonstrating – none of them were surgical. Most were provided by the different US states, but there was also a section of dental school clinics,⁵¹ and Professor Gilmour, who was table number 265, provided one of these for Liverpool University. Apparently, one of the

‘foreigners’ who approached his stand ‘said how happy he was to hear English spoken’!¹⁰ Robert, as usual commenting on the organisation rather than the dentistry, remarked that the English way of putting the demonstrator in a pen to keep the audience ‘from pressing upon him’ worked much better and the stand ‘number was not high enough to be readily seen over the heads of the people’.³⁵ Wallis also complained that with 15,000 members of the Congress all trying to get to the stands, ‘extremely few managed to see anything at all’.⁷ Nevertheless, an editorial in the *Journal of the American Dental Association* felt that the event was successful ‘beyond all conception’ as ‘the large clinic room was crowded all day, and even when five o’clock came and the hour of closing was announced, the crowds were so dense and they were so insistent on remaining that they had to be forcibly ejected by the police’.⁵²

One BDA member who did gain something from the day was Samuel Doran of Manchester, who, when his three friends dropped out, very adventurously had travelled to the Congress aboard the *Franconia* entirely on his own. He reported that he was ‘particularly impressed by some of the removable bridge and gold inlay work done by Dr Weaver, of Cleveland, and his technician, both of whom are artists in this type of work’.⁵³ S. M. Weaver and his technician, Herman Wald, had presented a clinic on ‘Chayes removable restorations (duplicates of practical cases; detail of saddle planning; enlarged photographs at different stages of construction)’.⁵⁴

The five chief dentists

During the afternoon, five honorary degrees were conferred by the University of Pennsylvania on 'as the papers had it – the five chief dentists to the world'.³⁵ These were the incoming president of the FDI, Florestán Aguilar of Madrid, who was also dentist to the King of Spain; Ernst Jessen; Williams Guy and Gilmour, who all received the degree of Doctor of Laws; and Pennsylvania's own Herman Prinz, professor of materia medica and therapeutics, receiving the degree of Doctor of Science. The five walked in an academic procession to the auditorium of the University Museum where 'the ceremony was conducted with a simple dignity that was most fitting and impressive'.³⁵ Photographs were taken in the garden and Gilmour remarked that it was 'a unique experience, as one of five of the recipients... to be snapped by some 20 or 30 newspaper photographic operators. It was like standing in front of a Lewis [machine] gun' (Fig. 8).¹⁰

On this day (the only day that it didn't rain), the inevitable golf tournament was held, organised by the American Dental Golf Association. Britain was represented in the prizes by American-born IDS member, Robert Newcomer LeCron, who won the first 'oral hygiene cup', and London-based Canadian, Dr Harvey Schwalm. Another American dentist resident in London, Clair William Roberts, donated a 'brassie and driver' as a prize.²⁷

Robert and Wood spent the afternoon rushing round to find presents, only to end up buying 'four pounds of candy'. They then took the train back to New York and embarked on the *Lancastria*: 'Colgate saw us off with an electric sign just as if we were in a fair and the light of the statue of liberty was a small part of the entertainment... and so eastward ho for Britain with a good will'.³⁵

How truly inclusive was the Congress?

This section contains potentially harmful or offensive language or ideas relating to race and ethnicity. This content reflects the mores of the time but we now recognise that it may contribute to or perpetuate harms. We include it as part of the historical record.

According to one report, just over 10,000 delegates were registered, and of these, around 700 were from outside the USA.⁵⁶ Elsewhere, it was declared that the 'latest data on attendance placed the number somewhere

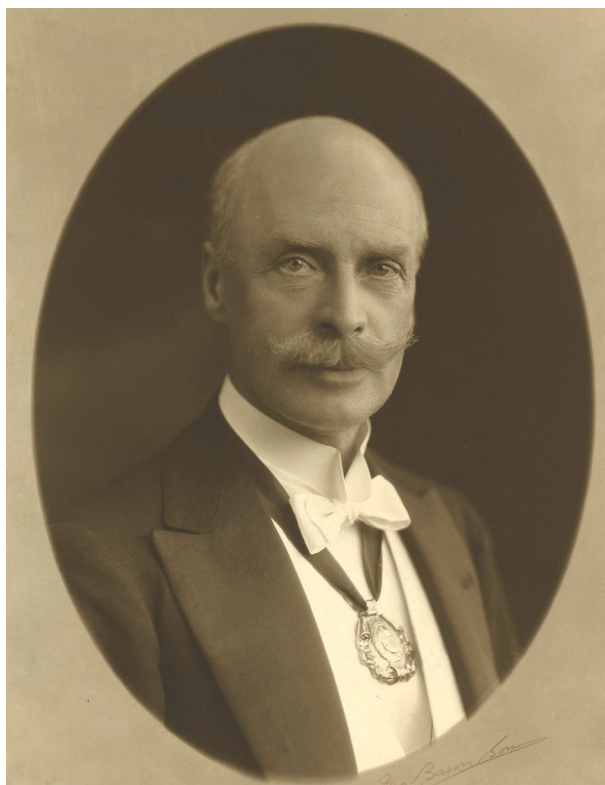


Fig. 8 Professor William Henry Gilmour BDA President, 1927. Image reproduced with the kind permission of the BDA Museum

between 14,000 and 15,000'.⁵² It is certainly true that 'never before [had] there been seen such an aggregation of prominent dentists as were gathered together on that occasion'.⁵² Over 40 nations were represented in the melting pot at the Commercial Museum, including one delegate, Dr Alexander Limberg, from Soviet Russia.²⁷ Outside of Europe and North America there were representatives from organisations in Australia, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Cuba, Columbia, Egypt, Haiti, India, Japan, Korea, Mexico, New Zealand, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Syria, Uruguay and Venezuela.

Speakers were overwhelmingly from the United States, with 228 US talks listed in the transactions compared to 106 given by delegates from elsewhere. Outside of the US, Europe and North America, six talks were presented by delegates from South America, eight by those from Japan, and one from India.¹⁸ The representative from what was then British India, Sorab M. Khambatta DDS FACD JP, spoke on 'The present status of dentistry in India'. It was an appeal to the United States to 'relieve the dental distress of suffering humanity in India' which, at that time, had only one dental training institution, the recently founded and privately owned Calcutta Dental College. The British Government had

failed the country in every way, providing not a single governmental dental school nor one free dental hospital.⁵⁷ None of the UK party commented on this paper.

Women were there, with Dr Mary B. Meade of Illinois, a paedodontist, and Dr Anna Mintz of Massachusetts being photographed for *Oral Hygiene*;²⁷ the BDA even had one among its official delegates. However, the 30 organisers of the Congress were all men, and of the 133 section officers, only two were women, both in the periodontia section. They were Gillette Hayden and Mrs Grace Rogers Spalding, pioneers as co-founders of the American Academy of Periodontology.⁵⁸ Mrs Spalding also gave a talk to the section, as did another woman, Mildred W. Dickerson from Washington DC. Dr Josefina Landate of Madrid, possibly the first woman to qualify as a dentist in Spain,⁵⁹ was a speaker in the anatomy section, and was even one of the honorary presidents of section II. The only other female dentist to present a paper was the Dutch professor of prosthetic dentistry and expert in treating maxillofacial war wounds, Miss Jansje Gretha Schuiringa, from the Institute of Dentistry in Utrecht.⁶⁰ The remaining woman was dental hygienist, Edith M. Hardy from Rochester, New York, the outgoing president of the ADHA, which

had been established in 1923. She spoke on ‘The dental hygienist in private practice, in public school service and in institutional work.’ Hygienists at this time were not used in the UK and under the terms of the 1921 Dentists Act, they would have been unable to carry out the full cleaning and scaling that was such a vital part of their work in the States.

No Native American dentists attended the Congress because none existed until George Blue Spruce Jr graduated from Creighton University in 1956.⁶¹ It is difficult to know if any African American dentists were present – certainly, apart from the Armenian American, Dr Varaztad Kazanjian, the organisers of both the Congress and the sections all seem to have been of white, American ethnicity. Charles Edwin Bentley,⁶² a Black dentist prominent in the oral hygiene movement in Chicago in the first quarter of the twentieth century, was not mentioned by any of the speakers on oral hygiene.

Both William Guy and Robert Lindsay comment on the Black population they encountered in New York and Philadelphia. When Robert was being driven through Central Park on the way to spend the day with Wheeler, the latter’s daughter made ‘pointed remarks about the negro as we passed through a part described as the negro quarter’. Robert’s take on it was that ‘it was in many respects picturesque – I mean the costumes of the lady negroes’. The daughter also spoke disparagingly about the Jewish population and grumbled that soon ‘fashionable Park Avenue will be attacked and the natives driven out’. The offhand racism found in these comments is chilling with regard to what was to come in the Second World War. Robert, superior in his Britishness, merely commented that ‘these Yanks are simple children in many ways.’⁶³ In describing Philadelphia, he mentions that ‘the coloured element in the population is more in evidence here than in New York I think. Our way to the museum took us sometimes through a quarter which seemed almost entirely devoted to the negro element and the sight was strange to a European...Black labour is much in evidence particularly as porters in the stations and one meets Black passengers in the tram cars and trains quite freely.’¹² Guy, generally less patronising, also mentions the station porters, the ‘red caps’ who were ‘coloured men’ and comments that ‘the white officials are a bit haughty.’⁸ On his return to New York, at the end of the Congress, Robert, who had thoroughly enjoyed the food everywhere he went, remarks that at ‘the station restaurant...

we had our last real American meal from a staff entirely Black.’³⁵

The attitude of the UK contingent to the Black population in New York and Philadelphia makes uncomfortable reading today. Robert seemed compelled to comment on it, despite the fact that back in the UK, both London dentist, Charles Aston Moody from Jamaica (brother of the more well-known doctor and civil rights campaigner, Harold Moody), and adopted Scottish dentist, Edward Tull-Warnock, who had Barbadian roots, were both members of the British Dental Association. Neither seems to have attended the Congress in Philadelphia, despite the former being an alumnus of Pennsylvania.⁶⁴

Lasting impressions

The main recollection of just about everybody that wrote about the Congress was the immense volume of sound. Robert declared that ‘in many cases, it was impossible to hear [the talks] and in all cases it was a serious strain,’¹² since the ‘temporary nature of [the] walls... imperfectly excluded the noise from the Great Hall.’¹⁹ This was where the mouth hygiene section benefited from being separated from the rest. Mancunian, Philip Wigoder bemoans the papers read in ‘very hot, crowded rooms and unheard by the majority of people,’⁵³ while Professor Gilmour complains that the ‘noise of the fans and from the adjoining sections, together with the heat, [meant] the attendance in these sections was not very comfortable; one section interfering with another, to say nothing of the noise of members talking outside.’¹⁰ Even the American, McGee noted that ‘one had almost to have a megaphone to reach the third row of chairs.’²⁰ This must have been disappointing to the organisers, since both of the competitors for building these booths had claimed to be able to make them soundproof.⁶⁵

The sheer size of the event and the crush of people is another aspect that stands out from the various reports by the British contingent, with William Guy talking of its ‘immensity and its catholicity.’² Professor Gilmour ‘found it somewhat disappointing and feel that I have gained more knowledge at smaller meetings,’¹⁰ as there was too much going on. Ultimately, C. E. Wallis declared, ‘I think most of us would confess we did not learn very much at the Congress itself’ and for those that went on them, more value was gained from the tours around the American cities and dental schools afterwards.⁷

For the reputation of dentistry, however, the Congress was an immense success. It was reported on by the American newspapers, ‘giving many members of the public a new conception of the profession’s function and status as a scientific group.’²⁷ For Edward Kirk, ‘its success far surpassed our most sanguine hopes and abundantly fulfilled all our prophecies.’⁵⁶ He highlights the renewed ‘spirit of confraternism’ between the nations so recently involved in the First World War – a profound irony in retrospect – while a *BDJ* report talks of the impressive ‘solidarity of attitude underlying superficial diversity.’⁶⁶

Robert Lindsay summed it up by saying ‘the attempt to put a quart into a pint pot is child’s play beside the attempt to see and hear in five days the sights and sounds that for the human eye and ear would require five weeks’. His final word on this enormous undertaking, two and a half years in the planning, was that ‘with an occasional pause before some especially notable tree, the comprehensive view of the forest was obtained and appreciated.’¹²

Ethics declaration

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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Certain paragraphs in the ‘How truly inclusive was the Congress?’ section in this article contain potentially harmful or offensive language or ideas relating to race and ethnicity. This content reflects the mores of the time but we now recognise that it may contribute to or perpetuate harms. We include it as part of the historical record.

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Correction to: Fantastic results for your endodontic patients

The original article can be found online at <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41415-023-5966-7>

Journal correction note:

Dental products and services. *Br Dent J* 2023; **234**: 831.

When this product news item was first published, the image was missing from the online web version of the article. This has now been rectified and the image included.

The journal apologises for any inconvenience caused.