

Disposals:

The Curator decided, due to space considerations, to release the record books of local hospitals (Sidcup Cottage and Cray Valley) together with some pre-1974 Queen Mary's records to the Local Studies Centre of Bexley Borough. We are discussing whether also to release some of the other material. It is important to know that it will remain in safe hands but now that Queen Mary's is part of a larger organisation its direct relevance is limited (and it is rarely consulted). I have also negotiated the transfer of some of the early Bexley Hospital record books to the London Metropolitan Archive (this is a long story).

Website:

The website remains up to date and continues to attract a steady stream of visitors and researchers from all over the world. Many of the images referred to in this report can be seen on the site at www.gilliesarchives.org.uk. Following a somewhat petulant request from a family researcher I put the entire database online, which has been another factor in attracting enquiries, and we have received a number of reminiscences and photographs from family members in exchange for copies of notes.

The online availability of the Medal Roll through the National Archives has been invaluable in finding first names for the British WW1 patients. The NA has also started to digitise its service and pension records – which are very incomplete due to the damage caused in WW2 – and we have been able to help a number of personal researchers (the Curator maintains a personal subscription to ancestry.co.uk). Most recently the 1911 Census has been released. Although this is expensive to access it is the nearest record point to the start of WW1 and numerous useful bits of information have been gleaned from it.

One small issue has been the pirating of images from Project Façade, our sister website run by Paddy Hartley. These have been inappropriately used in an online game programme called BioShock. I have investigated the possibility of removing them, but have concluded that the effort is not justifiable in time or expense. I fear this is an inevitable consequence of the free distribution of images.

Collaborations

Following on from last year's "Timewatch" programme the Curator was involved in a New Zealand production about NZ facial casualties, "Saving Face", prompted by two books which appeared last year (see the 2008 report), which was shown down under on Anzac Day 2009; this also was a great success and owed a great deal to our collaboration with historian Sandy Callister and surgeons Harvey Brown and Darryl Tong.

Three authors visited for research; Juliet Nicholson (granddaughter of Vita Sackville-West) has written a masterly account of the aftermath of the Great War, including a section on facial injury and its development at Sidcup. The book "The Great Silence 1918-1920: Living in the Shadow of the Great War" is published by John Murray and has received excellent reviews. The second author, Louisa Young, is granddaughter of Kathleen Young, previously Kathleen Scott, a sculptress who worked briefly at Sidcup and who married Lord Kennet after the death in Antarctica of her first husband, Robert Scott. She has penned a novel around a soldier treated at Sidcup; it is due to be published in 2010-11. I have seen the manuscript. Another "Birdsong", perhaps? The third, Sabrina Ffrench-Blake, is writing a new biography of Henry Tonks. The American poet Ann Gerike is also on the point of publishing her latest collection of poems, part inspired by our WW1 records, and Mark Carpan has another novel on the stocks. Suzannah Biernoff has published a paper in "Social History of Medicine" using our images; one has also appeared in a Pearson Education GCSE history textbook. We have provided images to Arcturus Publishing for use in a book entitled "The Story of Medicine". We also provided some material for the new display in Orpington Hospital to commemorate its Canadian history in WW1, authorised the use of illustrations in a number of scientific articles and provided a number of illustrations for the NHS website "NHS Choices".

The Wellcome exhibition "War and Medicine" transferred successfully to Dresden, and our material loaned to the Deutsches Hygiene-Museum has been safely returned.

Our collaboration with Paddy Hartley, our unofficial “artist-in residence”, continues successfully. An article on Frederick Stacey appeared in the magazine “Britain at War”.

We have had expressions of interest from other media companies including CNN and the National Geographic, but nothing concrete as yet!

Lectures:

The Curator has given two local lectures in the last year, to Otford U3A and the Sevenoaks Historical Society.

Donations:

I hope to discuss ongoing funding with the Chief Executive shortly.

Visitors:

Kerry Neale of Canberra visited as part of her PhD thesis work on the Australian casualties, and presented a masterful paper at “Securing the Ultimate Victory”, an international conference held in Aldershot in April 2009. Another Australian, Paul Cheung from Sydney, crossed paths with her. We have again had a full programme of visitors, both undergraduate and postgraduate, with more in the diary. Perhaps the most distinguished of our literary visitors was Pat Barker, who is researching a sequel to her acclaimed novel “Life Class” which has Henry Tonks as a character.

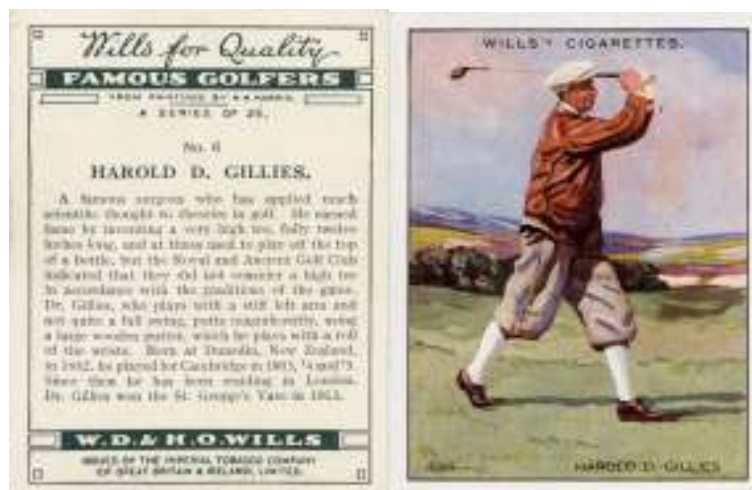
The archive staff:

The organisational work continues to be managed by the loyal and hardworking team led (despite serious illness) by Roseann Gibbs, with help from Jean Holden, Sue Taponnier, Brenda Holmes and Olive Robertson. They have not only been cataloguing, but also selling copies of the hospital books and we are most grateful to them for all their hard work.

Lastly our usual reminder to all staff – that we request and require copies of any papers, or other publications, for deposition in the vaults. Please oblige.

Dr Andrew Bamji FRCP
Curator, Gillies Archives

November 2009



Cigarette card c.1930; the only surgeon ever so honoured!