



Medical History

Newsletter

AUSTRALIAN AND NEW ZEALAND SOCIETY OF THE HISTORY OF MEDICINE INC

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THE PRESIDENT'S PAGE

On an extensive area of East Arm in Darwin Harbour lie the remains of the WW11 Lugger Maintenance Section. Left by the scrap metal contractors are concrete slabs, a significant slipway and a range of concrete structures. The name of this site was a cover for the Special Z Force, a Defence organisation that undertook covert operations to the north behind enemy lines; intelligence, rescue and sabotage. This organisation ultimately grew into the Special Air Service Regiment or SAS. In a small paddock in Minto, Sydney, lies the retirement cottage of Dr William Redfern. He was a distinguished doctor and humanitarian in early Sydney. Also, at a broader level, Redfern is an important example of the promotion of capable emancipists in the colony and the erosion of the taint of convictism championed by Governor Lachlan Macquarie.

Despite its rich history the Lugger Maintenance Section will not get over the heritage protection line because of port development plans. Redfern's cottage will probably not get over the heritage protection line because of the limited amount of the original fabric remaining, despite its significant history. These significant sites will go and the stories associated with them will fade. Had they made it over the heritage protection line, they would have entered an integrated database at State and Federal levels that is searchable with details of the fabric and the stories. But our history and heritage is not only at risk from bulldozers but also from fire, weather events, sea level rising and aridity. We need a parallel system of State and Federal 'listings' of lost important sites. Imaging technologies are now available to document in detail the fabric of these sites at risk as well as to record the stories.

As will be read elsewhere in this *Newsletter*, the planning effort by Charles George and his team for the Sydney conference is proceeding very well. It is an exciting conference where many members and we hope new members, can

share the scholarship of the occasion and the opportunity to meet friends and colleagues. An additional glitter to the conference is the presence of the International Society for the History of Medicine that has accepted our offer to hold their delegates' meeting in conjunction with our conference. Some of the delegates, it is pleasing to observe, are presenting papers at our conference.

The Society's hard-working secretary, Anthea Hyslop, has had an engagement with a bus that resulted in a surgery-requiring foot injury. I am sure I can speak for us all in wishing her well and for a speedy recovery. The executive meeting has had to be postponed as a consequence. The main issues before us, as well as reviewing plans for the conference, are progress reports on the reviews of the management of our Journal, *Health and History* and the Society website. This we will do when Anthea is, so to speak, back on her feet, with details in our next *Newsletter*.

Brian Reid
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The Quarantine Station at East Arm lay adjacent to the Lugger Maintenance Section.

ALL ABOUT OURSELVES

Members of the ANZSHM
describe their life, work and
interests

It is often said that people become interested in history when they pass into history themselves!

I graduated from the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Sydney in 1972. I see from the curriculum that there was a series of lectures in the history of medicine, but I have absolutely no recall of these. It is likely that I was elsewhere either physically or mentally? I went on to train as a neurologist, and I think that all neurologists by the very nature of the specialty develop at least a passing interest in their neurological forebears. When I worked at the National Hospital for Nervous Diseases at Queen Square, London in the late seventies, I was immersed in history. I recall as a senior registrar sitting in a room in the outpatients department surrounded by the registers which documented the attendances signed off by Brown-Sequard, Gowers and others. I would pull these off the shelves (they are now well and truly locked away) and transport back to former times.

On my return to Australia, a busy hospital and private practice, a family (married to a surgeon with one son) left little time for any of those passions and so it was as I slipped into history that I re-kindled my interest in the history of medicine. Not satisfied with just reading a few books, I decided if I was going to do this, I should do it properly. I enrolled in the Unit of History and Philosophy of Science at the University of Sydney and went to lectures and seminars, sat for examinations and finally emerged, after writing a thesis on 'The changing concepts of apoplexy in the nineteenth century' – riveting stuff! – with an MSc. I would certainly recommend going back to first principles for anyone thinking of doing history in any serious way.

In recent years I came to know a wonderful lady, the late Yvonne Cossart. I am sure that many of you were similarly influenced by her passion and knowledge. Yvonne shared her enthusiasm for the history of medicine and for the history of the University of Sydney with me and together (with John Carmody) we mounted an exhibition of rare



books for the occasion of the meeting of the International Society for the History of the Neurosciences held in Sydney in 2013. Yvonne convinced me to take on my current project – a museum of the History of the Medical School at the University of Sydney. Sadly Yvonne did not live to see the cabinets slowly filling up.

One of the aims of the museum will be to engage the medical students in some of these projects, so there will be no excuse for our future medical students to say they don't recall exposure to the HOM.

On a personal front I am very pleased to report that my husband has also developed an interest in HOM. We find ourselves spending our overseas holidays now seeking out medical museums or walking in the footsteps of notables. Anatomy may no longer be a subject on the curriculum but there are many fantastic anatomy museums in the world with curators just waiting to show them off and we must have seen most of them!

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MEMBERS' NEWS

Welcome!

Ella Arbury (NZ)
Tilly Boleyn (NSW)
Jessica Brosvic (USA)
Nicola Cousen (VIC)
Gay Cusack (NSW)
Karen Daws (VIC)
Maelle Duchemin-Pelletier (UK)
James Dunk (NSW)
Gavin Fabinyi (VIC)
Philippa Gale (NSW)
Susan Gardiner (UK)
Marilyn Gendek (NSW)
Claire Le Couteur (NZ)
Brian McGregor (WA)
Jessica Parr (NSW)
Janet Quartermaine (ACT)
John Ratcliffe (QLD)
Karin Sellberg (QLD)
Eden Smith (VIC)
Ellie Smith (NSW)
David Vaux (VIC)
Julia Wells (NZ)
Gabrielle Wolf (VIC)
Graeme Woodrow (NSW)
Kate Young (VIC)

Vale

Mrs Erol McArthur (VIC), d. 7 December 2014

Congratulations

Professor Warwick Anderson has been elected a fellow of the recently-established Australian Academy of Health and Medical Sciences (AAHMS) in recognition of his ongoing research into medical history, most notably in tracing ideas around immunological tolerance and surveillance.

EDITOR'S COLUMN

Contributions to the Newsletter are always welcome. The next deadline for copy is 15 August 2015. Copy should be sent to the editor, Derek A Dow at d.dow@auckland.ac.nz.

JOURNAL WATCH

Trawling the pages of the medical history journals each quarter for Australasian references is a useful way to capture items which might otherwise escape attention. The April 2015 issue of the *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences*, for example, reviews Naomi Rogers' *Polio Wars: Sister Kenny and the Golden Age of American Medicine*, published in 2014 by OUP in New York, which had not previously flown across my radar.

This book has been a long time in the gestation; many members will remember that Naomi spoke on this topic at our second biennial conference in Perth in 1991. The conference proceedings contain only an abstract of the paper so this is a welcome expansion.

Elizabeth Kenny (1880-1952) is, of course, well known to Australians. The daughter of an Irish farming immigrant, she was born in NSW and flourished as an apparently self-taught nurse. From 1932 she conducted a clinic to treat polio and cerebral palsy victims by unorthodox means, attracting both supporters and criticism. In 1940 she took her methods to the USA and, amongst other things, attracted the attention of Hollywood.

There have been two previous biographies by Victor Cohn, an American science writer, in 1975 and by Alexander Wade, an American music teacher for almost 40 years and an exponent of the Alexander technique, in 2003.

Rogers' book is more than a biography. According to the reviewer, 'Polio Wars uses its narrative to provide valuable insight into the broader histories of mid-century American medicine and medical philanthropy'.



ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

President's page	1
All About Ourselves	2
AMPI News	4
Distance to the Antipodes	5
Medical History Tour	5
NSW Branch News	6
Obituaries	7
Book Reviews	7
Blast from the Past	8

AMPI NEWS

The Australian Natives

The predominantly Australian-born medical workforce that we take for granted was largely an achievement of the nineteenth century. The first two doctors to graduate in Australia completed their course at the Melbourne Medical School in 1867 (Sydney graduates came later). But from the early 1800s others had made the long journey to the United Kingdom to acquire their diplomas.

James Shears is thought to have been the first Australian medical student. Born on Norfolk Island in about 1793, he was the son of First Fleet convicts. In 1813 he was apprenticed to William Redfern, the surgeon in charge of the Sydney Hospital, who thus became the first colonial surgeon to train apprentices, a pioneering role that he continued for several years. Shears died in 1814 'much lamented', and so the honour of being the first Australian-born doctor eluded him.

John William Henderson was probably the first Australian to undertake medical training in the United Kingdom. Henderson was born in Sydney in 1800, the son of William Balmain, Principal Surgeon of New South Wales, and his de facto wife Margaret Dawson (later Margaret Henderson). The family moved to England in 1801. Some researchers think Henderson was trained at Middlesex Hospital, although whether he actually qualified is uncertain. He returned to New South Wales in 1828 and was in practice as a surgeon and apothecary, unregistered, until his death in 1850.

The first native-born doctor to be registered in New South Wales was William Sherwin, one of Henderson's contemporaries, who was born at Parramatta in 1804. Sherwin was apprenticed to William Bland, a prominent Sydney practitioner, in 1817. After about six years with Bland he went to England, where he qualified MRCS in 1826. He returned home without fanfare in 1827, although his arrival in Sydney was an historic moment for the profession whose ranks he had just augmented.

Among the apprentices and assistants of William Redfern and William Bland in Sydney there were also at least two young men who had emigrated with their parents as children. They were Henry Cowper, a long-serving apprentice of William Redfern, who qualified MRCS London in 1822, and returned to practice in New South Wales; and Benjamin Clayton, an assistant of William Bland, who qualified MRCS 1828. On his arrival home in 1829, Clayton was welcomed by the *Sydney Gazette* as one to be 'highly esteemed' for his achievement.

Perhaps the most brilliant of the early native-born medical graduates was Edmund Charles Hobson. He was born at Parramatta in 1814, and was raised in Hobart, where he was trained by James Scott MD. After his apprenticeship, he completed his studies in Europe and England (MD and MRCS 1838). He returned home to become a much-loved doctor, and a leading Tasmanian natural scientist.

Dr Hobson moved to Port Phillip in 1840, registered with the New South Wales Medical Board in 1843, and was himself appointed to the newly-formed Port Phillip District Medical Board in October 1844. After his death in 1848, aged only thirty-three, a monument was erected over his grave by public subscription. The inscription stated that he was 'pre-eminent in his profession, and his skill and attention were never solicited by the poor or distressed in vain'.

As young Australians, these men and their many successors were pioneers with a difference, the vanguard of a remarkable drive for colonial professional excellence, often against enormous odds. Their achievements were outstanding, yet their inspiring story remains largely untold.

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Dr William Jamieson Sherwin (1804-74).

Distance to the Antipodes

In recent years I have enjoyed a double act in tandem with Stephen Due's AMPI column, drawing comparisons between his findings and New Zealand equivalents. This quarter, however, I have almost had to admit defeat. While the first Australian-born doctor qualified as early as 1826, New Zealand had to wait another half century to achieve the same distinction.

Stephen also cites two early Australian doctors who had emigrated to the colony as children, the first of whom obtained the MRCS in 1828. Using this criterion, the gap narrows somewhat; the first New Zealand resident to complete his medical studies was Charles Cotterell in 1855. He was born in Naples to a Royal Navy officer who later settled in Nelson, where Charles received his early education. A generation later Ernest Rawson, whose medical father had settled here in 1858, returned to England to obtain the LSA 1877 and MRCS 1878, then came back to practise in Wellington. (The obituary of Ernest's grandson, Dr Dick Rawson of Palmerston North, appeared in our February 2015 *Newsletter*.)

Returning to the New Zealand-born medics, it seems that the first to study in Britain could not wait to shake off the dust of his homeland. Lambert Ormsby, the son of New Zealand's surveyor-general, was born in Onehunga near Auckland in 1850. Following his father's death, Lambert headed to England at the age of 14, intending to join the Royal Navy. Instead, he turned to medicine in the late 1860s, studying in Ireland, home of his maternal grandparents, and was knighted in 1903 for his contributions to surgery in Ireland. He never returned to practise in New Zealand.

The first New Zealander to return to the colony to hang up his plate was Walter Fell, son of a Nelson merchant. After training at St Thomas's Hospital in London, Walter registered in the UK on 27 August 1881, just nine days before Charles Low, who had pursued his studies in Edinburgh, the other mecca for New Zealand students. Another difference between the two men was in their schooling. Fell had been sent 'Home' to Rugby School and had then gone on to complete an Arts degree at Oxford before entering medical school. Low, on the other hand, had been dux of the Otago Boys High School in Dunedin and began his medical studies at Otago before transferring to Edinburgh – a pattern repeated time and again in the last quarter of the century.

Low was a true pioneer, as the only student of Millen Coughtrey, the first professor of anatomy in the Otago Medical School, to complete his medical studies; the others all dropped out. Low also had the distinction of being the first New Zealand-born doctor to register here. He did so on 19

January 1883, a year before Fell came home.

New Zealand had been settled by increasing numbers of Pakeha since the early 1840s which makes it difficult to understand why none of the generation born here in that decade appear to have entered the medical profession. One possible explanation can be found in a letter penned in 1879 by the Auckland cleric and doctor, Arthur Guyan Purchas, regarding his intention to send his third son, Arthur junior, to study medicine in England. Recalling the old perceptions of the 'distance to the antipodes', Purchas noted that by the 1870s 'even delicate women seem to think nothing of it'.

Purchas might also have added the opening of the Otago Medical School in 1875 as an incentive for New Zealand students to aim for the medical profession. The success of Otago as a role model and a feeder for the UK schools can be clearly seen in the success enjoyed in 1886 when three New Zealanders – Truby King, Frederick Jeffcoat and Peter Lindsay – filled the top three places in the Edinburgh final medical exam pass lists.

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MEDICAL HISTORY TOURS

(1) Australians Studying Abroad invite you to join the tour 'Europe: A History of Medicine and Pharmacy' from 11 September to 3 October, 2015. This tour has developed over the last 10 years, and seeks out many unusual and often hard-to-access places, libraries, physic gardens, and museums which trace the evolution of ideas that reflect the development of medicine and pharmacy over 500 years from renaissance to modern times. We follow the course of the Black Death that appeared in the city states of Italy from the Silk Road in 1347, from Venice to London. The tour is led by Prof Robert Clancy AM and his wife Christine, who is a pharmacist/art historian, and David Henderson, an Australian artist/art historian, based in Venice. See www.asatours.com.au or contact ASA Cultural Tours on 0398226899, info@asatours.com.au, or Robert Clancy, clancy_robert@hotmail.com

(2) Jon Baines Tours are offering another two History of Medicine tours in 2015. In July there is a special post-ANZSHM Conference tour of spectacular Central and North Australia (6-11 July). Lastly, a History of Medicine cruise through the Western Mediterranean (16-27 October led by highly experienced tour leader Sue Weiring, will visit Rome, Palermo and Trapani, Valetta, Tunis, Cartagena Malaga, Tangier, Cadiz and Seville, with specialist lectures throughout. For more details contact: info@jonbainestours.com.au, call 03 9343 6367 or visit www.jonbainestours.com

NSW BRANCH NEWS

The NSW committee has been busy preparing for the upcoming 14th Biennial Conference of the ANZSHM to be held from 30th June to 4th July in Sydney. The venue is the Australian Catholic University in North Sydney, well situated for local, national and international guests. We are fortunate to have exceptional keynote speakers; Professor Linda Bryder, Dr Simon Chaplin from the Wellcome Trust in London and Professor Stephen Garton from the University of Sydney. The response to the call for abstracts has been overwhelming and if the reputation of the keynote speakers and the quality of the abstracts are anything to go by, the meeting is sure to be an outstanding success on an intellectual level. The social programme includes a medical walk tracing the origins of early medical practice in Sydney; a gala dinner at the Kirribilli Club overlooking the harbour and we look forward to welcoming Dame Marie Bashir at the opening reception.

We in NSW look forward to welcoming you all to Sydney for the meeting.

Enquiries/RSPV for all events to Catherine Storey, cestorey@bigpond.com.

VALE!

James Stuart Guest (1916-2015)

In April 1919 the Royal College of Surgeons of England and the Worshipful Company of Barbers instituted 'an historical lecture in anatomy or surgery' to be called the Thomas Vicary lecture, in commemoration of Vicary's role in the 1540 establishment of the Barber Surgeons Company.

To be called upon to deliver this most prestigious lecture is a great honour and it was one which in 1989 fell to James Stuart Guest. His superb presentation was entitled 'John Hunter's disciple—Frederic Wood Jones' (*Ann R Coll Surg Eng* 1991, 73(5):1-10); from it one learns much about Jim Guest's own life.

James, an only child, was educated at Geelong Grammar School and Melbourne University, graduating BSc 1938 and MB BS 1941. He first met Wood Jones as a zoology student in 1936, describing him as 'a superb lecturer, and an inspiring and popular teacher'.

James was President of the Medical History Society of Victoria 2003-5: over the years most of the papers that he presented to the Society related in some fashion to his association with Wood Jones.

In the *Lives of the Fellows of the Royal College of Surgeons of England*, Jones' entry concludes: 'his views were always original and stimulating and

usually expressed without reserve or regard for persons, since he enjoyed controversy without animosity. He was essentially a humble, friendly person interested in the pursuit of truth in natural history.' These sage words apply in equal measure to James Stuart Guest. May he now truly rest in well-deserved peace.

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F B (Barry) Smith (1932-2015)

My first encounter with the work of FB Smith came through his *The People's Health, 1830-1910* (1979), which combined his expertise in modern British history with a profound interest in the plight of ordinary people to produce a forensic analysis of their births, lives, maladies and deaths. This truly remarkable book made his name in the history of medicine, both here and overseas. With an MA from Melbourne, and a PhD from Cambridge, Smith had earlier published in both Australian and British history, his *Making of the Second Reform Bill* appearing in 1966. In that year began his long career in the Research School of Social Sciences at the ANU, first as Senior Fellow, then as Professorial Fellow from 1975 until his retirement in 1997.

After *The People's Health* came a critical study of a Victorian heroine, in *Florence Nightingale: Reputation and Power* (1982). I first met Barry Smith at a seminar in which he took Nightingale sternly to task for her opposition to smallpox



vaccination. Smith was a man of trenchant opinions, with a rather dour view of the world, despite a keen sense of humour. For all his scepticism, he did not court controversy, but neither did he dodge it, as witness his controversial assessment of the impact of Agent Orange on Australia's Vietnam veterans, in Brendan O'Keefe's *Medicine at War: medical aspects of Australia's involvement in Southeast Asia 1950-1972* (1994).

Among many other works, two more confirmed Smith's standing as the *doyen* of medical history in Australia: *The Retreat of Tuberculosis 1850-1950* (1988), and his last book, *Illness in Colonial Australia* (2011). From colleagues and students alike, Barry won high esteem and warm affection. He is much missed, and will be long remembered.

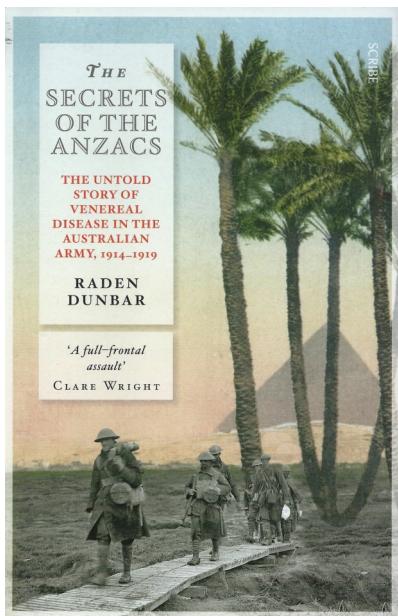
Anthea Hyslop
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BOOK REVIEWS

Raden Dunbar, *The Secrets of the Anzacs: The Untold Story of Venereal Disease in the Australian Army, 1914–1919*, Scribe, Melbourne, 2014

During all the recent publicity surrounding the commemoration of Anzac Day there was little discussion of health issues and almost none on a major health issue confronting Australian and New Zealand troops who travelled to the other side of the world during the First World War – that is, sexually transmitted (then called ‘venereal’) diseases.

A little-known fact is that about 60,000 soldiers in the Australian Army were treated by army doctors in Egypt, Europe and Australia for venereal diseases during the war. This highly readable and informative history tells the stories of a number of individuals in the Australian Army whose lives were affected by VD, including those who made the policies, those who provided treatment, and those who contracted the disease.



In particular it traces the stories of five young soldiers who became infected in Egypt in 1915, were returned to Australia in disgrace on the troopship A18 *Wiltshire*, and ‘had to deal with the consequences for the rest of their lives’. One of them was the author’s great uncle Ernest

Dunbar. His story encompassed all the hazards and tribulations of the war in one single narrative – wounded at Gallipoli and gassed at Passchendaele, he developed trench feet and shell shock, as well as gonorrhoea. His story involved desertion, multiple identities, and in the end he died in 1924 of cancer and heart disease, less than ten years after he had volunteered for service.

As the author wrote, ‘so many fit young men had cheerfully answered the nation’s call to “serve our Sovereign Lord the King in the Australian Imperial Forces” and had survived the war only to live the remainder of their shortened lives as invalids’. He noted that the post-war dead are not included

in the Roll of Honour at the Australian War Memorial, but that they should also be remembered for having lost their lives as a consequence of their war service. As Janet McCalman writes on the back cover blurb, this book is a ‘timely and necessary contribution to the centenary of Anzac’.

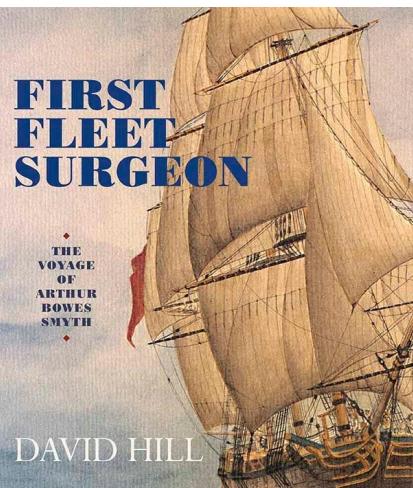
Linda Bryder
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First Fleet surgeon: the voyage of Arthur Bowes Smyth, by David Hill. National Library of Australia, 2015

There are thirteen surviving First Fleet journals, including those of three naval surgeons: John White, the Principal Surgeon; George Worgan of the *Sirius*; and Arthur Bowes Smith, whose journal written aboard the convict ship *Lady Penrhyn* provided the inspiration for this book.

The surgeons’ journals are splendid examples of eighteenth-century natural history and travel writing. They are typical products of the Enlightenment, the work of men still unaware of evolution, but driven by curiosity, keen observers of people and the environment, on a great adventure.

In this book, David Hill tells the story of Bowes Smyth’s voyage, basing his narrative primarily on the surgeon’s original journal. Formerly a career executive, Hill has more recently emerged as an author of historical bestsellers. Here is another one, with a wealth of supplementary historical data, and plenty of excellent illustrations supplied by the National Library of Australia publishing team.



For enthusiasts, the original journal by Arthur Bowes Smyth is also well worth reading (printed transcription Australian Documents Library 1979; digital transcription State Library of New South Wales website; manuscript images National Library of Australia website).

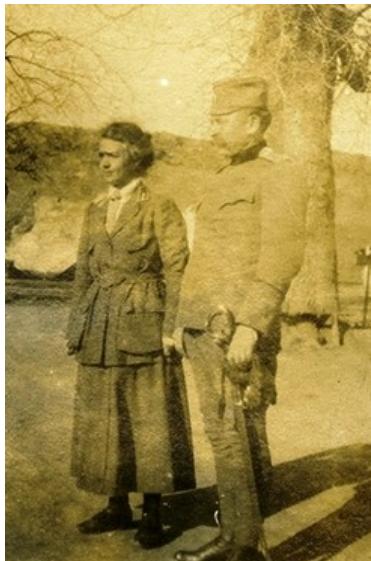
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BLAST FROM THE PAST

Medical History Australia 25 years ago

Twenty-five years ago this month *Medical History Australia* reported on the achievement of Carolyn De Poi, who had topped the Melbourne medical graduates' list and then had taken a year out to undertake a BMSc project about the life and career of an earlier Melbourne female graduate, Mary De Garis (1881-1963). Carolyn's work, based on her subject's undergraduate notebooks which had been deposited in Melbourne's Medical History Unit, formed the basis of an exhibition in the Medical History Museum.

De Garis, who graduated in 1904-5, had a varied career which included service with the Scottish Women's Hospitals in Serbia from 1916 to 1918. After the War she practised as a GP in Geelong and was heavily involved in antenatal and maternity care.

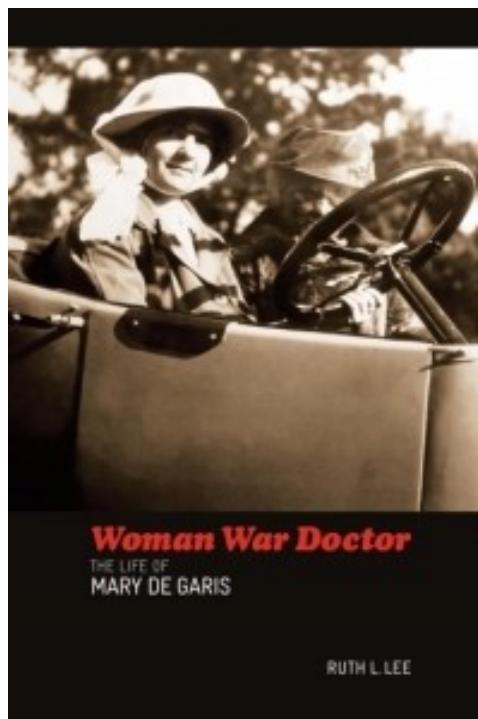


In June 1912 De Poi, a rural Victorian GP and medical educator since the mid-1990s, reprised her work in an article entitled 'An uncommonly varied and decidedly useful career', in issue 10 of the *University of Melbourne Collections*.

Dr Mary De Garis accompanied by a Serbian colonel.

With the upsurge of interest in WW1 it is perhaps no surprise that a Deakin University academic published a full-length biography, *Woman War Doctor: The Life of Mary De Garis*, in July 2014. What was surprising, however, was the claim in the Deakin media release that De Garis had been 'ignored-by-historians', with Dr Lee stating that 'Her contribution to the Australian/Allied war effort is not recognised in the Australian War Memorial and similarly her contribution to women's health has gone unrecognised by historians.'

Those interested in the work of the Scottish Women's Hospitals, which recruited a number of Australian and New Zealand doctors as well as those from Britain, should read Leah Leneman's 1994 monograph, *In the Service of Life: The Story of Elsie Inglis and the Scottish Women's Hospitals*.



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For the latest information, visit the ANZSHM Internet Website: www.anzshm.org.au

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DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT ISSUE WILL BE 15 AUGUST 2015.