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The Newsletter of Glasgow Dental School

Dental Mirror

Issue 7
August 2009

Two Big Wins

In 2005, the Dental School Executive developed a business plan to deliver three main objectives by 2010:

1. To complete development and ongoing delivery of the '2004' undergraduate curriculum.
2. To re-establish core funding of research activity by achieving success in the RAE 2008.
3. To establish a sustainable programme of taught postgraduate courses, based around a modular core.

We have now achieved all three objectives. The two articles that follow illustrate our success in both undergraduate education and research. A future edition will carry a feature on our home and overseas postgraduate programmes.



Curriculum Success

As I write this, teaching has ended for the summer and the prospect of another graduation lies ahead. Although the life of an academic can be measured by such events, this year's represents a particular milestone. The first cohort of students to graduate from the 2004 BDS curriculum will leave our doors to head for Vocational and Foundation Training. To have introduced a new curriculum that seems set to fulfil all its intended aims, and to have done so with no great drama, is a stupendous achievement for the School.

People have been very kind in offering me personal congratulations but the truth is it has been a true team effort and one which began even before I arrived in the School. When the School decided that a new curriculum was needed it was Andrew Lamb who began the preparatory work,

and in doing so he displayed a very clear understanding of the need for a student-centred approach. The importance of reflection and an emphasis on imparting the skills of life-long learning were recognised at an early stage. Andrew was instrumental in the appointment of Dr. Helen Bush to the new post of Curriculum Facilitator and it is she who has provided the intellectual foundation for our approach to reflective learning.

Each year of the 2004 curriculum now constitutes a separate course in which clinical skills are learned simultaneously with the underpinning bio-medical knowledge. The Course Coordinators form the backbone of the new organisational structure. Until very recently Peter Carrotte and Robin Orchardson were the duo that so wisely guided the first year of the BDS1

course; welcoming our new students and quickly instilling in them the values of the programme. All the Course Coordinators for subsequent years of the programme, and their deputies and secretaries, have been instrumental in helping to plan and implement the 2004 curriculum on a year by year basis. Sometimes it has felt as though we were only half a step in front of the students but we did it.

Of course there are too many people who have been vital to this success to mention by name, but they include representatives of every profession and job in the building. To illustrate this, there was deep concern about how we would cope with clinical overlap years. With essential additional funds supplied by the Scottish Government Health Department we were able to employ more visiting practitioners and pay nurses to work overtime so that we could extend the working hours of the Conservation Main Clinic. The Health Board also kindly agreed to the use of community clinics to alleviate the overlap problem in Paediatric Dentistry.

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RAE Success

Historically, Glasgow Dental School has enjoyed considerable success in research. However, the results of the Research Assessment Exercises in 1996 and 2001 were very disappointing and resulted ultimately in the complete withdrawal of Scottish Funding Council (SFC) core support for dental research at the University of Glasgow. In 2002, the Dental School became a Division within the Medical Faculty and significant effort was directed towards developing a focused dental research strategy based on three core themes, namely Biotechnology & Craniofacial Sciences (BACS), Community Oral Health (COH) and Infection & Immunity (I&I). Furthermore, the administrative structure of the Dental School was re-organised from a single department model to one encompassing four sections, three of which were based around the core research themes. This structure served to emphasise the importance of research within the overall School strategy. A small number of strategic appointments of research-active staff were also made to enhance the skill sets in key areas of the research themes, such as biofilm biology and epidemiology.

The RAE 2008 exercise was a critical process for the Dental School. It was essential that our performance should improve sufficiently over RAE 2001 to regain core funding from the SFC for dental research. A small steering group worked for two years to plan and prepare the submission. The benefits of both the 2002

research strategy and School reorganisation around the research themes became evident rapidly as the submission was developed. Rigorous criteria were applied to define the research-active staff returned and to ensure that the focus of our research was clearly evident.

The results of RAE 2008 were made available to universities on 17 December 2008. The outcome achieved for dentistry in Glasgow was substantially improved over those in 1996 and 2001. The 2008 profile indicated that 90% of the research activity had been recognised as international in quality, with 60% in the 3* and 4* categories of highest international quality. This was an excellent result, reflecting both the appropriateness of the underlying research strategy and the dedicated hard work of the researchers in the School together with those who had prepared the submission. As a result, SFC amended its distribution of funding such that the University of Glasgow will receive £468,000 of SFC allocation for dental research in the academic year 2009/2010.

We now have a springboard from which to enhance further our research abilities and reputation. We have pulled ourselves up from the bottom of the dental research league table, but our ambition is to be one of the top three dental schools in the UK for research performance. With the foundations that have now been laid, this is entirely achievable if we continue on our current upward trajectory. At a recent research away day in June, a start was made on reviewing and refining our research strategy to take us through the next five years.

Further focus is required within the existing three groups, whilst a new Dental Education Research Group has been established, which is likely to concentrate on assessment of e-learning technologies in dentistry.

It is now becoming clear that the replacement for the RAE, called the Research Excellence Framework (REF), will probably be very similar in shape to the RAE 2008, with expert peer review (as opposed to bibliometrics) at its core. This is very positive for dentistry. One of the key recommendations for dental schools from RAE 2008 is the need to collaborate, both with each other and with subject experts in other fields, if we are to achieve the critical mass and interdisciplinary skill-sets required to deliver research of international quality. We already collaborate widely in Glasgow, and these interactions are likely to be strengthened further by ongoing work, led by the Chief Dental Officer for Scotland, to develop a dental research strategy for Scotland.

In summary, we should celebrate the fact that our research agenda is now firmly back on track, though time is of the essence - the period of assessment for the REF is likely to be 2008 – 2012. However, we have every confidence that we are now in a very strong position to maintain the momentum of our success in RAE 2008 and hunt down our place within the top three. Watch this space!

Prof Lorna Macpherson
Director of Dental Research
Prof Jeremy Bagg
Head of the Dental School

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None of this could have happened without the cooperation of NHS management, dental nurses, support staff, and, it must be said, the willingness of academic staff to put in a huge effort themselves.

There is one further group of people who deserve immense credit for the way in which they have coped with the upheaval of the last five years; the students. Those students completing the pre-2004 curriculum whilst its successor was being introduced showed immense understanding and were very supportive of the project. I am sure that they benefitted from some of the new concepts being developed at the time. But special credit must go to this year's graduates. They were the first to do everything; new course, new assessments, new organisation. They displayed great patience when some of the things we planned had to be changed at the last minute or didn't quite work out as

anticipated. What they have achieved in spite of these circumstances is a source of great pride for the School. In particular, members of academic staff were delighted by the 100% pass rate in the third and final component of the first diet of the re-modelled Final Examination.

The current academic session has seen a huge expansion in our outreach teaching programme. Thanks to the enthusiastic cooperation of a number of health boards our students now spend 50% of their final year in community clinics. This year those clinics have been located in Glasgow, Greenock, Falkirk, Kilmarnock, Dumfries and Inverness, in addition to which students have visited Edinburgh Dental Institute. There are some exciting new centres in development in the Greater Glasgow and Clyde area, in Coatbridge, and in Campbeltown, and we expect to add these to our list

of outreach centres in the next year or two. The feedback from students suggests that they greatly enjoy and benefit from this experience and their activity levels demonstrate the enormous benefits they are bringing to communities in these areas.

Not only has the implementation of the 2004 curriculum gone remarkably smoothly but it has done so to considerable acclaim from our external examiners. It would be all too easy to quote selectively from their reports but I think it is fair to say that they have been impressed by the evidence of integrated learning to be seen in the performance of our students, and the early stage at which this is demonstrated.

So we have a new curriculum; what next? Well there is no room for complacency and the constant drive to improve the quality of the learning experience we provide goes on.

Directorate Update

I am grateful to University colleagues for providing me with the opportunity to contribute to this edition of Dental Mirror.

At Glasgow Dental Hospital and School, colleagues will be well aware and, no doubt, suffering the consequences of the ongoing refurbishment and upgrade to facilities.

The programme of capital works continues this year with further window replacement and lift replacements underway. The continued support for GDHS from the Acute Division has resulted in Capital Investment of over £3 million over the last 3 years. It is anticipated that there is more investment to come the way of the GDHS.

Each of the work programmes is consistent with the overall redesign and refurbishment proposal as described in the redesign feasibility plan to provide an upgraded and modern equipped Dental Hospital and School. The feasibility plans were finalised during 2008 and the Chairman of NHSGGC, Mr Andrew Robertson has personally indicated his interest in seeing progress and has invited myself to a future Health Board Seminar meeting to share the plans in greater detail with Executive and Non-Executive members, before seeking formal support from the Health Board to progress and submit a full business case. I will update colleagues in due course through team brief and other communication media on progress.

The Oral Health Directorate successfully secured SGHD funding of £14.15 million out of a potential allocation of £21.5 million to NHSGGC to develop dental centres at Royal Alexandra Hospital, Paisley; Inverclyde Royal Hospital, Greenock; and Vale of Leven Hospital, Alexandria. Once the dental centres are complete they will provide 20 adult dentistry outreach chairs and enable Glasgow University and NHSGGC to meet the training requirements under agreement with NES. I am pleased to be able to confirm that working in conjunction with NES and Glasgow University plans for additional outreach teaching chairs are underway. At Royal Alexandra Hospital Paisley a 24 chair dental centre has been approved, providing 8 dental student chairs in addition to supporting the re-provision of 10 C&SDS chairs, 2 acute hospital orthodontic surgeries and 4 GDP surgeries to enable some GDS practitioners to meet Glennie Compliance regarding decontamination of dental instruments. The dental centre is due for building work completion in May 2010 and equipment and surgery commissioning planned for a June 2010 completion. The first 8 students are scheduled for commencement at the end of August 2010.

Planning has commenced to determine the options for Inverclyde Dental Centre which, upon completion, estimated as during 2011, will provide 8 adult chairs for dental student outreach in addition to a further 16 chairs for service provision. The

plans for a dental centre at the Vale of Leven Hospital have been reviewed and in partnership with West Dunbartonshire CHP an updated proposal has been developed to incorporate a dental centre as part of the proposed new build Alexandria Medical Centre based on the Vale of Leven Hospital site. This will provide a modern 20 chair dental centre incorporating 4 chairs for outreach teaching. Approval is awaited from SGHD to the dental centre aspects of the full business case.

Ongoing developments and improvements to GDHS are apparent, although acknowledging the constraints and condition of the buildings, with the recent installation of a Reception area at Sauchiehall Street entrance, purchase of 12 dental chairs for level 2 clinic and through NES funding the provision of a new clinical techniques laboratory and upgrade to existing facility.

Throughout all the work my thanks go to the facilities and estates colleagues who endeavour to keep the clinical service and academic activities going uninterrupted by the scale of the challenge!

Finally I would like to extend my gratitude to all staff both University and NHS for their forbearance during the current phase of refurbishment works. Thank you, your cooperation is very much appreciated.

Mr Kevin Hill

Director, Oral Health Directorate, NHSGGC

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Much is changing in the spheres of higher and dental education. The GDC is reviewing its guidance to dental schools, and students are becoming more demanding of professionalism and excellence in teaching. We are immensely gratified that The Times Good University Guide placed us at Number 1 in its league table of UK Dental Schools in June 2009, but we must work hard to maintain that position. That means doing more world-class research, continual enhancement of our educational programmes, and attracting the best students to Glasgow. Of course these three aims go hand in hand and we are now well placed to respond to the challenge.

Dr Vince Bissell

Director of Dental Education



All set for the graduation procession, July 2009

Private & Confidential yet open to all students!

The Role of a Student Advisor within the Dental School

This is a support procedure required by the University of Glasgow to enable undergraduates to have confidential consultations. Different Faculties and indeed different Departments within Faculties are able to implement the requirements as appropriate for their circumstances. As a Division within the Medical Faculty this is precisely what we do in the Dental School.

There are four University staff members who are Student Advisors for the Dental School. We do not restrict any one Advisor to any one particular year. A student is able to direct their particular concerns to any Advisor that they think can assist. Additionally an Advisor is sometimes invited by either Dr Bissell or the School Office to make contact with an individual student and enter into discussion with them regarding a particular situation that has become apparent.

There is a Student Support Meeting held at regular intervals through out the year. This is chaired by Dr Bissell, as Director of Dental Education. Mr Stuart Hutchison from School Administration, with Year Coordinators (or Deputies) and Student Advisors are the only members of this Committee. Many aspects relating to concerns about dental students that have been flagged up by teaching staff and in turn passed onto Year Coordinators are discussed. From this meeting Student Advisors can be directed to contact a particular dental student and raise issues of concern with them.

It is important to point out that any student who requests an appointment is aware that these consultations are confidential. The Student Advisor will only relay matters of concern which the student is in agreement with or where there is a greater concern that the student may be at risk either to themselves or others. For obvious reasons this may be speedily put in place. We are fortunate that this does not happen very often.

In some one-to-one meetings between a student and an Advisor concerns are shared and can be addressed and resolved quickly. Sometimes a good number of meetings are required and are ongoing throughout an academic year.

Student Advisors can be an initial point of contact and are able to redirect the student to another agency within the University that is able to assist the student, whether it is in relation to financial matters or health issues. We will not *“pass the buck”*, rather we will seek consent to ensure the matter is or has been appropriately resolved to the satisfaction of the student.

It would be fair to suggest that if a student seeks out a Dental Advisor sooner rather than later the process of resolution not only can begin sooner but will more readily be able to be resolved. This will undoubtedly be less stressful for the individual student and sometimes other close friends and peers.

Student Advisors do not always have a quick ready fix answer but what they do have is the support of the Senior Management within the Dental School to act with the utmost propriety, confidentiality and integrity in allaying student concerns that issues raised will be both taken seriously and addressed constructively.

The four Dental Student Advisors are Dr Petrina Sweeney, Dr David Shaw, Dr Stuart McDonald and Mr Michael Broad. Between them they have over 100 years of remembering being 18 to 23 years of age (some more than others!) yet can empathise greatly with a student experience.

The details to enable any undergraduate dental student to contact a Student Advisor are to be found at various strategic points throughout the Dental Hospital & School, including the web site.

Contact details:

email: m.p.sweeney@dental.gla.ac.uk
tel: 0141 211 9724

email: s.mcdonald@bio.gla.ac.uk
tel: 0141 330 4185

email: d.shaw@dental.gla.ac.uk
tel: 0141 211 9755

email: m.broad@dental.gla.ac.uk
tel: 0141 211 9628



The prize winners are pictured with Mrs Brocklebank and Prof Bagg at the Graduation Ball.

Congratulations to Elective Project Prize Winners

Two of the elective projects undertaken as fourth year students by three of our recent graduates were awarded jointly the British Society of Dental and Maxillofacial Radiology/Henry Schein undergraduate award, announced at the recent AGM of the British Society for Dental & Maxillofacial Radiology.

They were:

Greg Logan for his project entitled '*Comparison of the superimposition of C3D and laser scanned images of the facial soft tissues onto CBCT images of the craniofacial complex*' (supervised by Sunny Khambay and Ashraf Ayoub).

Joanna Morrison and **Iona MacNicol** for '*A study of the importance of the individual variables assessed during videofluoroscopic examination of patients with repaired cleft palate in determining whether secondary surgical correction was recommended to improve speech*' (supervised by Lisa Crampin, Mark Devlin and Laetitia Brocklebank).

The two projects will share the prize fund of £800, and the winners will all present their projects to the Autumn meeting of the BSDMFR to be held in Edinburgh on 24/25 September 2009.

Sports News

The Dental Staff 11-a-side football team hammered the students 10-1 on a beautiful spring morning Sunday 29th March at Garscube. The students went down to the worst score-line ever due in part to a solid performance from the staff - but perhaps due to a Barry-Fergusson-Alan-McGregor-like session in the bar the night before. If it hadn't been for one of the staff team going on the student side the score could have been much worse! Star striker David Conway who stayed on-side mainly due to very sloppy defending even managed to score four goals - with one even managing not to come off his knee.

In April, a 5-a-side team representing the dental school staff '**Dental Academicals**' went on, full of confidence, to play in the Head and Neck cup on 16th April in Glasgow. The tournament was organised by West of Scotland maxillofacial surgeons. A good effort in the group stages saw the team get to the semi-finals only to go out of the tournament on penalties to the Monklands Theatre team '**Monkey Glands**'. Captain David Conway said after a hard fought tournament "*we was robbed*". The tournament winners were the Oncologists '**Beatson Monchengladbach**'.

David Conway

MSc students enjoying post-exam refreshments



Glasgow Dental School

Staffing Update – February to July 2009

We would like to welcome the following new members of staff:

- **Clinical Senior Lecturer/Honorary Consultant in Oral Surgery:** Aileen Bell
- **Clinical University Teacher in Oral Surgery:** Kurt Naudi
- **Clinical Lecturer in Special Care Dentistry:** Abigail Heffernan
- **Clinical Lecturer in Oral Medicine:** Clare Marney
- **Scientific Development Officer (CLEO Project):** Ziad Al-Ani
- **Year Secretary (BDS 3)/Secretary to Director of PG Education:** Michelle Rooney
- **Modern Apprentice:** Cailin Blackwood
- **Educational Resources Technician:** Martin Stewart
- **Research/Finance Assistant:** Tracy McArthur
- **PT Research Secretary:** Catherine Vost
- **Research Nurse:** Isabella Geary

Appointments to these posts are pending:

- **Clinical Lecturer in Orthodontics**
- **Clinical Academic Fellows in Restorative Dentistry (4 posts)**

Community Oral Health

Staffing

1. **Miss Abigail Heffernan** has been appointed as Clinical Lecturer in Special Care Dentistry and we are pleased to welcome her to the Section.
2. Congratulations are offered to two members of the Section who were successful in the recent University Promotions Round:
 - **Dr Alex McMahon** has been promoted to Reader in Epidemiology
 - **Dr Andrea Sherriff** has been promoted to Senior Lecturer in Statistics

Research Activities

With a number of key appointments over the past two years, the group is emerging as a unit developing the capability to respond to, inform and shape policy on dental public health in Scotland. The work is aligned with key Scottish Government Health Department policies and aims to address national priority oral health issues. Group members have close collaborative links with and/or are embedded within NHS organisational structures. The major theme of the group is the investigation of oral health inequalities. This is explored from two perspectives: epidemiology and intervention evaluation.

Dr Alex McMahon leads work on studying the epidemiology of dental caries inequalities in Scotland. This includes analysis of data from the National Dental Inspection Programme in Scotland. The application of specific measurement tools enables the study of inequalities over time and the impact

of health improvement interventions to be assessed from an inequalities perspective.

Together with NSS ISD, we collaborate on the ARCAGE (Alcohol Related Cancers and Genetic susceptibility in Europe) study. This is a European multicentre case-control study investigating gene and environment interactions in the aetiology of head and neck cancer, coordinated by the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC). Dr David Conway leads on the work for the Scotland centre, and on the analysis of socioeconomic factors across Europe.

We are also a member of INHANCE (International Head and Neck Cancer Epidemiology collaboration). This is a global network coordinated by IARC and the National Cancer Institute (NCI) in the US which aims to pool together head and neck cancer epidemiological research from around

2008 Publications

(continued from Issue 6)

Wilford J, McMahon AD, Peters J, Pickvance S, Jackson A, Blank L et al. **Predicting job loss in those off sick.** [Review]. *Occupational Medicine*. 2008, 58: 99-106.

Wray D, Wagle SMS.

A dentist's guide to using the BNF: part I. *British Dental Journal* 2008, 204: 437-439.

Wray D, Wagle SMS.

A dentist's guide to using the BNF: part II. *British Dental Journal*. 2008, 204: 487-491.

Wray D, Ruiz F, Richey R, Stokes T.

Prophylaxis against infective endocarditis for dental procedures: summary of the NICE guideline. *British Dental Journal* 2008, 204: 555-557.

the world. We are leading on the worldwide socioeconomic analysis, and have recently undertaken a global systematic review and meta-analysis of the socioeconomic risk factors for oral cancer.

Professor Lorna Macpherson is a Director of **Childsmile**, the national oral health improvement programme for children in Scotland, and also the Chair of its national Evaluation Board. The Scottish Government-funded Programme aims to improve oral health and reduce inequalities in the dental health of children in Scotland. The skill mix within the Community Oral Health group (including dental public health, epidemiology, statistics, ethics, qualitative research, and health services evaluation), and our partnerships with national agencies and other research institutions enables our group to take the lead role in the evaluation of this complex and multi-faceted service development programme.

Research Grants 2008 (Part 1)

'Dissecting the adaptive immune response to cariogenic bacteria in the oral cavity'

S Culshaw, P Garside, G McConnell, J Girkin, J Brewer, T Evans
Medical Research Scotland Postdoctoral Fellowship
£106,114; 24 months from October 2008

'Testing of active ingredients against bacteria associated with animal dental disease'

MP Riggio, G Ramage
Ward Industries
£12,000; 6 months from July 2008

'Functional genomics in *Aspergillus fumigatus* and new strategies to fight against the first fungal pathogen in Europe'

G Ramage (consortium member)
European Social Fund (ESF) Research Networking Fund. Co-ordinated by JP Latge (Pasteur Institute)
€395,428; 2008 – 2011

'Dissecting the role of the human Th17 cell in chronic inflammation'

S Culshaw, I McInnes
Robert's Pump Priming Research Award - Faculty of Medicine, University of Glasgow
£4,750; 6 months from November 2008

'The role of inflammation in the development and progression of oral cancer'

K Hunter, R Nibbs
Tenovus Scotland
£9,997; 12 months from November 2008

'Treatment and prevention of *Candida albicans* biofilms in denture stomatitis'

A Jose, G Ramage, C Murray, F McCord
British Society for the Study of Prosthetic Dentistry
£1,000; 12 months from February 2008

'Gram negative CF pathogens'

G Ramage, C Williams, C Murray
Wyeth Pharmaceuticals sponsored M.Res. Studentship
£31,703; 12 months from 1st of January 2009

'Do previously undetectable bacteria play a significant role in the aetiopathogenesis of feline lymphocytic/plasmacytic gingivostomatitis?'

MP Riggio, D Bennett, DJ Taylor, DF Lappin, DJ Mellor, EM Graham, EA Courcier
Pet Plan Charitable Trust
£102,710; 36 months from 1st January 2009

'Development of a biologically relevant gingivitis model'

G Ramage, S Culshaw, C Murray
GlaxoSmithKline sponsored Ph.D. studentship
£136,836; 36 months from 1st of October 2008

'Dissecting the role of the human Th17 cell in chronic inflammation'

S Culshaw, I McInnes
British Society for Periodontology
£5,000; 6 months from August 2008

'Do previously undetectable bacteria play a significant role in the aetiopathogenesis of feline periodontal disease and lymphocytic/plasmacytic gingivostomatitis?'

MP Riggio, D Bennett, DJ Taylor
BSAVA Petsavers
£8,000; 12 months from October 2008

'Does recombinant human bone morphogen protein-7 (rhBMP-7) have pro-tumourigenic properties?'

DF Lappin, M Abu Seriah, K Hunter
Cruden Foundation Limited
£2,000; 6 months from 1st September 2008

'Alcohol brief interventions and dentistry'

C Goodall, R Welbury
NHS Health Scotland
£39,055; 24 months from March 2009

'The antimicrobial activity of Tigecycline against periodontal pathogens and its potential for immunomodulation'

G Ramage
British Society of Periodontology
£500; 12 months from June 2009

'Prevalence of HCV infection in children'

R Welbury, J Bagg
Health Protection Scotland
£105,195; 36 months from October 2008

'The relationship between the host response and oral biofilm development'

S Culshaw, G Ramage
Tenovus Scotland
£9,250; 18 months from March 2009

'Investigating dental treatment as a possible risk factor for CJD'

A Smith
Department of Health
£13,885; 24 months from April 2008

'The public health challenge of road safety - a study of the epidemiological patterns, healthcare consequences and prevention of traffic related injuries in Strathclyde'

D Stone, M Mackenzie
Scottish Executive Health Department
£4,252; 30 months from June 2009

Infection and Immunity Journal Club Meeting Schedule:

August – December 2009

Venue: D72 (Level 2)

Time: 12.45 – 14.00 (Tuesdays)

25th August: Gordon S and Andrew – Decontamination

22nd September: Ranjith and Douglas – Diabetes/Candidosis

20th October: Ryan and Gordon – Respiratory Infection

24th November: Shauna and Deborah – Immunology/Periodontology

22nd December: Jennifer and John – Caries

Format:

- Topic overview with recent relevant literature
- Data presentation
- 25 minute presentation max

Group organiser provides doughnuts and treats!

*Presenters may be subject to change depending on circumstances and new recruits.

The Pedalling Profs hit the Hebrides



Following the success of the sponsored cycle ride along the Coast to Coast route in 2008, which raised more than £3000 for the Dental Fund, the Pedalling Profs (Richard Welbury and Jeremy Bagg) were keen to identify a slightly tougher challenge for 2009. A chance discussion between Richard and Ken Scouler, a general practitioner in Fort William and NES Director of General Dental Practice for the Highlands & Islands, spawned the idea of a sponsored cycle along the length of the Western Isles. This was born the Hebridean Challenge, which was tackled between 27 and 30 May 2009 by Richard, Jeremy and Ken, ably supported by support van driver and general commandant Mike Broad.

A very big factor on the Western Isles is the wind direction. We chose to cycle from Barra to Lewis, since the prevailing wind is a southerly. This was a good decision, since the wind for the entire trip was a south-westerly. Furthermore, the weather was fantastic which not only helped with the cycling but also showed the stunning scenery to best advantage.

Day 1 started with a trip to the University Transport Depot in Thurso St. to pick up the minibus that was loaned to us through the good offices of Mr John Cooper, the Transport Services Manager, to whom we are very grateful. With the exception of Ken, the three of us set off for Oban, where we met our fourth team member in time for a spot of lunch before catching the ferry to Barra. The crossing took five hours, but the Minch was calm and we were treated to sightings of two schools of dolphins and two whales. At Castlebay, we were met

by Robert Mackintosh, a local dentist and current MSc (Dent Sci) Primary Dental Care student, and then set off on the first very short (9 miles) leg of the cycle ride to Aird Mhor.

Day 2 commenced with a ferry crossing to Eriskay. We cycled across South Uist, Benebecula and North Uist, a total of 58 miles. Towards the end of the morning we were met by Bill Hart, a local dentist, who directed us to the Orasay Inn for lunch – a must for devotees of seafood. The evening was another gastronomic delight – the Langass Lodge Hotel, which served scallops that the owner had dived for earlier in the day. Ken Scouler's local knowledge and contacts made sure that we never went hungry!

Day 3 saw an early rise to catch the 0720 ferry across the Sound of Harris. This was a very tough day of cycling, with steep hills in both Harris and Lewis. The first stage to Tarbet took us past the finest scenery of the trip – mountains, shimmering white sands and blue sea. On arrival at Tarbet we indulged in a second breakfast – double rounds of bacon sandwiches and lashings of tea – knowing that the steepest and longest hills were just ahead. The battle uphill, however, was subsequently rewarded by a fantastic long downhill section, complete with hairpin bends and speeds in excess of 40 mph. Lunch was provided by Isobel Madden (Rural Training Advisor NES), who had kindly prepared a spectacular picnic which we enjoyed beside a small loch. The weather was sunny all afternoon, and we were pleased to pull in to the Doune Braes Hotel at about 3.45pm, after completing the 65 miles for Day 3. The evening included dinner with Isobel Madden and Ken McDonald (a practitioner from Stornoway), trips to two spectacular beaches and the famous Black Houses

at Carloway, a meeting with Colm Rice and George Macleod (also both current MSc students) and a trip to the standing stones at Callanish to watch the sunset. It had been a full day!

The last day started with a 30 mile cycle to our final destination, the Butt of Lewis. We arrived at about 11.30 am, and toasted each other in Lucozade Sport, a drink that had become part of our staple diet. We had found out by chance, earlier in the week, that 30 May was also Mike's 55th birthday. As a double celebration, therefore, Ken and his local network arranged for us to have lunch at a beautiful restaurant called Sulair at Point of Ness, complete with champagne and birthday cake for Mike. It was a fitting end to a fantastic trip and set us up for the long overnight drive back to Glasgow.

In total, we raised over £2000. We would like to thank the many people who helped us along the way and showed us such fantastic hospitality, in particular Robert Mackintosh, Bill Hart and Isobel Madden. Thanks also to the many people who sponsored us and allowed us to achieve our target of £2000. We are now trying to identify next year's fund-raiser – any (reasonable!) suggestions will be gratefully received.

**Jeremy Bagg, Richard Welbury
Mike Broad, Ken Scouler**



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www.gla.ac.uk/schools/dental/ (Glasgow University, Dental School)

www.nhsgg.org.uk/content/ (Greater Glasgow & Clyde Health Board)