

100 Years of Women in the Dental Profession in the UK, 1918-2018

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By

Janine Brooks

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To my mother, Joanetta Beach (1925 – 2018).
The first woman in my family to vote

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FOREWORD

I am delighted to contribute to this publication. Having worked at the British Dental Association Museum for many years, it's been fascinating to explore the development of dentistry from the marketplace spectacle to its development as a cutting-edge healthcare specialism today.

Dentistry as a career is fast becoming favoured by women, with over half of the intake in UK dental schools now being female.

We believe dentistry can be a great career for women, providing flexibility, autonomy, and the potential to lead and ensure UK dentistry is something we can all be proud of.

Throughout dental history, we have seen some strong female leaders, often overcoming prejudice and adversity to fight for better for their patients, as well as their fellow professionals.

I remember first finding a handwritten scroll compiled by Lilian Lindsay listing all the women on the dental register since 1879.

What was running through her head as she wrote her own name at the top of the list as the first qualified woman dentist and how did she feel as she added more names to the list, running up to 1930? As she said on the occasion of her 80th birthday when the BDA was presented with her portrait by the women members of the BDA:

“when I think of the women who have succeeded me and all their achievements I am very proud”.

There are many inspiring and remarkable figures profiled in this book, which I hope will be an inspiration to all dentists working today.

It's also important to remember the many other unsung heroes from dental history, from mothers giving teething remedies to their children and early dental nurses providing toothbrush instruction, as well as all of today's dental professionals working to improve our oral health.

Rachel Bairsto,
Head of Museum Services, British Dental Association Museum

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I have been honoured and incredibly fortunate to have received so many profile contributions from a number of great women dental professionals. They have generously shared their stories with me and permitted me to add them to this book. I am very grateful to them all and I believe they will provide excellent role models to all within the profession and perhaps those who are thinking of entering the profession. A full list of all contributors are given at the end of chapter 6.

I am also very grateful to a number of my female dental friends who have encouraged me to write this celebration, they have been a constant, supportive network for me.

The BDA Librarian and Information Specialist, Helen Nield and the BDA Museum Curator, Rachel Bairsto have been very generous with their time and expertise, allowing me access to a number of archives that have allowed me to set the context for women dental professionals working in 2018.

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to my husband John and my sister Christine for giving so generously of their time to help me with my thoughts and the practical help of proof reading the manuscript.

Any inadvertent errors are mine alone.

ABBREVIATIONS

ADEE	Association for Dental Education in Europe
ADO	Area Dental Officer
BADN	British Association of Dental Nurses
BADT	British Association of Dental Therapists
BASCD	British Association Study of Community Dentistry
BDA	British Dental Association
BDJ	British Dental Journal
BSDH	British Society for Disability and Oral Health
BSDHT	British Society of Dental Hygiene Therapists
BSG	British Society of Gerodontology
BSPD	British Society of Paediatric Dentistry
BUOLD	Bristol University Open Learning for Dentists
CACHE	Council for Awards in Care, Health and Education
CBCT	Cone Beam Computed Tomography
CDS	Community Dental Service
CDO	Chief Dental Officer
CIC	Community Interest Company
COPDEND	Committee of Postgraduate Dental Deans and Directors
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
CRN	Clinical Research Network
CQC	Care Quality Commission
DARG	Dental Auxiliaries Review Group
DBE	Dames Commander
DCP	Dental Care Professional
DDRB	Doctors' and Dentists' Review Body
DDU	Dental Defence Union
DHSC	Department of Health Science
DPA	Dental Practice Adviser
DPL	Dental Protection Limited
DSC	Dental Schools Council
DWD	Dental Workforce Development
FdSc	Foundation Degree
FGDP(UK)	Faculty of General Dental Practice United Kingdom

FT	Foundation Trainee
FTSE	Financial Times Stock Exchange
GA	General Anaesthesia
GDC	General Dental Council
GDP	General Dental Practitioner
GDPC	General Dental Practice Committee
GDS	General Dental Service
GP	General (Medical) Practitioner
HapTEL	Haptics in Technology enhanced Learning
HEA	Higher Education Authority
HEE	Health Education England
HESA	Higher Education Student Authority
HIV	Human Immuno-deficient Virus
HMP	Her Majesty's Prison
HTA	Health Technology Assessment
IADH	International Association for Disability and Oral Health
IVIDENT	International Virtual Dental School
ISFE	Intercollegiate Specialty Fellowship Examination
LA	Local Anaesthesia
LDC	Local Dental Committee
LDS	Licence in Dental Surgery
LTFT	Less than full time
LHMC	London Hospital Medical College
MCN	Managed Clinical Network
MDDUS	Medical and Dental Union of Scotland
MDU	Medical Defence Union
MLA	Member of Legislative Assembly
MRC	Medical Research Council
MSP	Member of Scottish Parliament
N3	New National Network
NEBDN	National Examining Board for Dental Nursing
NCAS	National Clinical Assessment Service
NCFE	National Council for Further Education
NHS	National Health Service
NHSE	National Health Service England
NHS IA	National Health Service Information Authority
NICE	National Institute for Clinical Excellence
NIHR	National Institute of Healthcare Research
NLP	Neuro Linguistic Programming
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification

OMFS	Oral Maxillo Facial Surgeon
OOH	Out of Hours
ORCA	Organisation for Caries Research
ORE	Overseas Registration Examination
PASS	Practitioner Advice and Support Scheme
PEC	Professional Executive Committee
PCT	Primary Care Trust
PHE	Public Health England
PM	Prime Minister
RAF	Royal Air Force
RCPS	Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons
RCS	Royal College of Surgeons
RTT	Referral to Treatment
SBDN	Society of British Dental Nurses
SCD	Special Care Dentistry
SHA	Strategic Health Authority
SHO	Senior House Officer
SWH	Scottish Women's Hospital
TPD	Training Programme Director
UCAS	Universities and Colleges Admissions Service
UK	United Kingdom
VT	Vocational Training or Trainee
WiD	Women in Dentistry
YTS	Youth Training Scheme

Qualifications/Honours

	Qualification
BA	Bachelor of Arts
BChD	Bachelor of Dental Surgery
BDS	Bachelor of Dental Surgery
BSc	Bachelor of Science
CBE	Commander British Empire
C&G FETC	City & Guilds Further Education Teaching Certificate
Clin. Res.	Clinical Research
CMI	Chartered Management Institute
DCDP	Diploma in Clinical Dental Practice
DDS	Doctor of Dental Surgery
DDSc	Doctor of Dental Science

DGDP(UK)	Diploma in General Dental Practice (UK)
DN	Dental Nurse
Dent RCPS	Dental Fellow of College of Physicians and Surgeons
DDPH	Diploma Dental Public Health
DPDS	Diploma in Postgraduate Dental Studies
Dip.	Diploma
Dip DHE	Diploma Dental Health Education
DMedEth	Doctorate in Medical Ethics
D.Orth	Diploma in Orthodontics
Ed	Education
Ed D	Doctorate in Education
Ed S	Educational Specialist
EDH	Enrolled Dental Hygienist
EDT	Enrolled Dental Therapist
FBADN	Fellow British Association Dental Nurses
FAcadMEd	Fellow Academy of Medical Educators
FDS	Fellow in Dental Surgery
FDTF	Faculty of Dental Trainers RCS Edinburgh
FFD or FFDS	Fellow Faculty Dental Surgery
FFGDP (UK)	Fellow Faculty of General Dental Practice
FFPH	Fellow Faculty of Public Health
FIAM	Fellow of Institute of Administrative Managers
FICD	Fellow of International College of Dentists
FHEA	Fellow Health Education Authority
FRCPCCH	Fellow of the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health
FTCD	Fellow of Trinity College Dublin
IHPE	Institute of Health Promotion and Education
IRM Cert	International Certificate in Risk Management
LCGI	Licentiate City and Guilds Institute
LDS	Licentiate in Dental Surgery
LLD	Latin Legum Magister
LLM	Doctor of Laws
LRCP	Licentiate of the Royal College of Physicians
MA	Master of Arts
MAODE	MA Online & Distance Education (Open University)
MBBS	Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery
MBE	Member British Empire
MCCD	Member in Clinical Community Dental Practice
MClinDent	Master of Clinical Dentistry

MCDH	Master Community Dental Health
MDPH	Master Dental Public Health
MDentSci	Master Dental Science
MedLM	Master of Education (Leadership & Management)
MFDS	Diploma of Membership of Faculty of Dental Surgery
MFGDP	Membership of Faculty of General Dental Practice
MPaed	Master of Paediatrics
MPhil	Master of Philosophy
MPH	Master of Public Health
MRACDS (DPH)	Membership in General Dental Practice (Diploma in Public Health)
MSc	Master Science
NTFHEA	National Teaching Fellowship Higher Education Authority
OBE	Order British Empire
OHE	Oral Health Education
PFHEA	Principal Fellow Higher Education Authority
PGA	Post Graduate Award
PG Cert	Post Graduate Certificate
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
RCS	Royal College of Surgeons
RCSI	Royal College of Surgeons Ireland
RCPS	Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons
RDH	Registered Dental Hygienist
RDN	Registered Dental Nurse
RDS	Restorative Dental Science
RDT	Registered Dental Therapist
SFHEA	Senior Fellow Higher Education Authority
TD	Territorial Decoration

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

I have been thinking about writing a book showcasing the achievements of women dental professionals for some time, several years in fact. 2018 as the centenary of women first obtaining the vote, albeit only a proportion of women, gave me the impetus I needed. I want this book to be a celebration. A celebration of the many and varied achievements of women dental professionals across all aspects of dentistry. I hope the individual profiles will be an inspiration to all who work in the profession or may be thinking of entering dentistry – men and women. They may also be of interest to those outside the profession with an interest in social history and gender issues. The 100 years since 1918 have seen huge changes in dentistry and the dental profession. The position of women in society, the workplace and the profession has undergone profound change and growth. The garden may not be totally rosy but it is on the way to becoming so. Dentistry should be proud that, as a profession, women have flourished and now hold a strong position, shoulder to shoulder with our male colleagues. I am so proud to be a woman in dentistry in the 21st century. In addition to celebrating the huge achievements of women dental professionals I hope this book will provide role models for those looking to either enter the profession or to develop their career in new directions. Finally, I want to showcase the role of mentoring and the important place this holds for every successful professional. I hope you enjoy reading about the women dental professionals who have made a huge, often quiet, contribution to dentistry and the society of the United Kingdom (UK) over the last 100 years.

UK society has experienced massive change since 1918. This includes health, wealth, technological, scientific, cultural and demographic. Men, women, young and old and at all levels of society have experienced and continue to experience the effects of that change. Women, in particular, have accessed opportunities that were difficult or impossible to access prior to 1918. The changes did not happen overnight, nor all at the same time and the changes continue, they are dynamic. This book is a

celebration of the achievements of women dental professionals in the 100 years since some women gained the right to vote. However, it seems appropriate to place that success in the context of societal evolution (and sometimes revolution).

The women who work in the UK dental profession in 2018 are impressive and there is a lot to learn from their success for every single dental professional today. The learning may even be greater than dentistry and perhaps greater than the UK. Whilst the profession still has some way to go before we benefit from all the talents of women across all aspects of dentistry I will stick my neck out and say I think the UK dental profession may be one of the leaders when it comes to women. By way of illustrating that point the following table provides an overview of female representation in the public sphere across the UK:

Table 1. Female representation in the UK public sphere

Role	Proportion of women	Year of Data
Member of Parliament	32%	2017
House of Lords	26%	2017
Cabinet	26%	2017
Member Scottish Parliament	25%	2016
AMs	42%	2016
MLAs	30%	2017
Boards of public bodies	29%	2016
Senior civil service	41%	2017
Justice of Supreme Court	9%	2017
General Practitioner	54%	2015
NHS Consultants	34%	2015
Secondary head teachers	39%	2015
University professors	24%	2015-16
FTSE 100 directors	26%	2016

Source: Apostolova, V., et al (2017)

If we as a society and as a profession are to grow, we need to benefit from the talents of our whole population, not just the half that is male. If we could tap into the resources of women fully, just think what might be possible.

Table 2. Timeline of Firsts for Woman Dental Professionals

Year	First Dental Female Professional to/be.....	Woman
1895	Gain a UK dental qualification (Edinburgh)	Lilian Murray
1897	Enter Glasgow Dental School as a student	Wiliemina Simmers
1897	Licentiate in Dental Surgery of the Royal College (England)	Ruby Halliday
1901	LDS of the Faculty of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow	Wiliemina Simmers
1925	Member of Odontology section of Royal Society of Medicine	Lilian Lindsay (nee Murray)
1945	President, Odontology section, Royal Society of Medicine	Lilian Lindsay
1946	President of the BDA	Lilian Lindsay (75 years of age)
1949	Awarded the Diploma in Dental Orthopaedics, Glasgow (RCPS) - the first UK postgraduate orthodontic qualification.	Elizabeth Morrison Webster
1950	President of BADN	Beatrice Green
1963	Awarded the Fellowship in Dental Surgery of the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh	Dorothy Geddes
1963	Elected to serve on the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh Council	Dorothy Geddes
1975	Only women member of the BDA Representative Board	Clare Stone (was she the first?) – after Lilian Lindsay?
1976	Elected to GDC	Margaret Seward
1978	Editor Designate of BDJ	Margaret Seward
1979	Editor BDJ	Margaret Seward
1986	Elected to BDA Council	Shelagh Farrell
1990	Appointed to a chair in dentistry in the UK - Professor of Oral Biology at the University of Glasgow	Dorothy Geddes
1990	Elected both to the Board of Faculty at the RCS in England and as Vice Dean	Margaret Seward

1992	Female Dean of a faculty of dental surgery of any royal surgical college in the UK and Ireland	Dorothy Geddes
1994	President of the GDC	Margaret Seward
1999	First DBE for the dental profession in UK	Margaret Seward
2000	UK Chief Dental Officer (England)	Dame Margaret Seward
2007	Scottish Chief Dental Officer	Margie Taylor
2007	First female dentist to conquer Everest (and first ever woman from Northern Ireland to do so)	Hannah Shields
2016	Welsh Chief Dental Officer	Colette Bridgman

The timeline above gives a flavour for the progression of women in the dental profession during the last 100 plus years. You might be surprised by how recent many of the firsts actually are. A few names dominate the list. It has only been in the last 20 to 30 years that we have seen women taking up more senior roles in dentistry and increasing their visibility.

In the following chapters I will consider how women in general have been viewed by society, moving on to consider women dental professionals and their rise over the last 100 years. The main body of the book, chapter 6 covers a number of profiles of successful women dental professionals from across the profession. This chapter is the heart of the celebration. I also cover some thoughts on equality before turning to the future and what it might hold for women dental professionals and dentistry in general.

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CHAPTER TWO

WOMEN AND SOCIETY

In this chapter I want to take a brief look at the place of women in society in general and how they were viewed and how they viewed themselves. It is my intention to set the scene for women who sought (perhaps even dared) to become dental professionals.

Women of today, in the early part of the 21st Century, may find it hard to believe the challenges their mothers, grandmothers and great grandmothers were faced with on a daily basis. The women of today stand on their shoulders and benefit from their struggles. Society and women can easily take for granted the struggles that have gone before. We owe the women of our past a huge debt. I want to take a brief look at the position of women generally in society before 1918, as this sets the scene for the trials and challenges that women faced when seeking to work in dentistry. So, I shall look back before I travel forward.

Pre-1918

Aristotle in his book: *On the generation of Animals*, written in the 4th Century BC writes:

“We must look upon the female character as being a sort of natural deficiency”.

Not a very promising start it would seem.

Mortimer (2009) in his excellent book; *The Time Traveller’s Guide to Medieval England*, notes that in the 21st Century we have come some way from the way women were described in Medieval times. Then women fell into four groups: maidens, wives, nuns and widows. At that time only widows and aged spinsters (old maids) had a degree of independence. Women were blamed for society’s weakness, whether that be physical, intellectual or moral. This seems to stem from the story of Adam and Eve, when Eve tempts Adam to eat from the forbidden fruit, resulting in their

fall from Eden – as Mortimer writes, “*a difficult thing to live down*”. Society at that time was misogynistic to say the least. The male dominated society was regarded as the natural way, and the position of women believed to be a punishment from God.



Adam and Eve, painted by Hans Thoma in 1897. In the Hermitage, St. Petersburg
Photographed by Janine Brooks

You have to feel a little sorry for Adam.

1918 – a watershed year for women

On the 6th February 1918 the Representation of the People (Equal Franchise) Act gave some women the vote – as long as they were aged at least 30 and were either themselves or married to, a local government elector.

Mari Takayanagi (2016) explains what this means more fully:

“A woman had to be aged 30 or older to register as a Parliamentary voter. She, or her husband, also had to meet the local government franchise

qualification, which meant:

- *Occupying a dwelling-house (of any value). This meant living in a house or a separate part of a house, as an owner (i.e. a freehold owner) or a tenant (i.e. paying rent); or*
- *Occupying land or premises of a yearly value of not less than five pounds. This meant living as a lodger in rooms within a house, which were let in an unfurnished state. The annual value of £5 meant the gross estimated rental or gross value as assessed for rates, as determined by the registration officer.*

Therefore - living as a lodger in furnished rooms at any value, or in unfurnished rooms to a value of less than £5, did not qualify. This meant in practice women over 30 were excluded from the vote including women living at home with parents, brothers or other family members; female resident servants; and unmarried women living in furnished rooms or hostels. A woman on military or naval service in connection with the current war could vote, if she would have qualified had she not been on service, from the age of 30. A woman whose husband was on military or naval service still qualified if her husband met the local government franchise qualification.

No woman could be a conscientious objector! A woman was not disqualified from voting if her husband was a conscientious objector.

She had to be not subject to any legal incapacity, and be a British subject. If married to an alien, she was herself an alien and could not vote. Peeresses in their own right can vote!

Women had a potential second vote in the university franchise (University graduates over 21 years), but unlike men were not eligible for the business premises franchise."

Later in chapter 3, I will look at how this affected women dental professionals.

Post-1918

The last 100 years have seen various firsts for women in public life (a selection are given below).

Table 3. Public Life in UK, First Women to hold office (1919 – 2018)

Year	Office	Woman
1919	Member of Parliament (House of Commons)	Nancy Astor
1929	Cabinet Minister	Margaret Bondfield
1948	University Vice Chancellor	Prof Lillian Penson
1955	Civil Service Permanent Secretary	Dame Evelyn Sharp
1958	Life Peer	Baroness Wootton of Abinger
1964	Parliamentary Whip (Commons)	Harriet Slater
1965	High Court Judge	Dame Elizabeth Lane
1965	Minister of State, Minister for Transport	Barbara Castle
1970	Deputy Speaker	Betty Harvie Anderson
1973	Director of a national museum (Science)	Dame Margaret Weston
1975	Leader of the Opposition	Margaret Thatcher
1979	Prime Minister	Margaret Thatcher
1981	Leader of the House of Lords	Baroness Young
1987	Court of Appeal Judge	Dame Elizabeth Butler-Sloss
1991	Head of MI5	Stella Rimington
1992	Speaker of the House of Commons	Betty Boothroyd
1994	Church of England priest ordained	Angela Berners-Wilson
1995	Chief Constable	Pauline Clare
1997	Secretary of State for Northern Ireland	Mo Mowlam
1998	Chief Whip	Ann Taylor
2000	Chief Dental Officer for England	Margaret Seward
2001	Secretary of State for Scotland	Helen Liddell
2006	Foreign Secretary	Rt. Hon Margaret Beckett
2006	House of Lords' Lord Speaker	Baroness Hayman
2007	Home Secretary	Jacqui Smith
2007	Attorney-General	Baroness Scotland
2009	Poet Laureate	Carol Ann Duffy
2010	Secretary of State for Wales	Cheryl Gillan
2011	Chief Medical Officer for England	Prof Dame Sally Davies
2013	RAF Air Vice-Marshal	Elaine West
2014	Dean of Norwich	Canon Jane Barbara Hedges

2014	First Minister of Scotland	Nicola Sturgeon
2015	Church of England Bishop	The Right Reverend Libby Lane
2015	First female senior officer in the Army	Major General Susan Ridge
2016	Lord Chancellor	Liz Truss
2017	Metropolitan Police Commissioner	Cressida Dick
2017	President of Supreme Court	Baroness Hale of Richmond

Source: www.first100years.org.uk

It is rather shocking to me how recent some of these firsts are. Women make up 51% of the UK population; however, there are not many sectors of employment where women comprise 51% of the workforce. For young (and not so young) women today it seems hard to believe it was only just over 40 years ago (1975), when it was still legal to hire men in preference to women for no other reason than their sex. Until 1971 it was legal to pay men more for the same work as well. Before 1975 a woman would have struggled to find a mortgage provider that would accept her without a male guarantor, not great if you were trying to buy a practice.

Clarke (1982) suggests that in the 1960s women's identities were anchored in family roles. However, this paints a limited picture of the lives of women and probably says more about society as a whole and the roles that have traditionally been 'allocated' than what women would ideally desire.

In professional societies meritocracy is, at least in theory, substituted for class as the basis of social structure. Consequently, social mobility increases, and women are incorporated into the workplace; achieving new levels of liberty. Britain's labour force has seen a marked increase in the number of jobs performed by women since the rise of professional groups in society. Since the beginning of the 1980s (and the millennium), women closed a big employment gap. In 1981 men filled 3.2 million more jobs than women, whereas in 2002 the numbers are almost equal with men filling 12.8 and women 12.7 million jobs. However nearly half of women's jobs were part-time, and women were still much more likely to do administrative or secretarial work than men (Labour Force Survey 2002). In 2018 those numbers have changed, with 17.1 million men employed and 15.2 million women. The gap has widened to 1.9 million more men than women in jobs, although overall the numbers in work for

both sexes have increased considerably (ONS 2018). In 2018 approximately 13% of men employed worked part-time.

When considering meritocracy and educational advantage, if we look at the numbers of men and women who go to university we see some interesting statistics. While women have outnumbered men in admissions for years, the 2014 figures show the gap had widened to nearly 58,000, with women making up more than half of students in two-thirds of subject areas. Men remain over-represented in most STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths) subjects: most notably in engineering where there are 20,000 more men than women, and computing science where there are 17,000 more. Women are particularly strongly represented in subjects allied to medicine, with 32,000 more women accepted in 2014. In medicine and dentistry – among the most competitive undergraduate courses – there were 5,000 women and 3,800 men accepted in 2014.

The trends outlined above continue to be played out. Figures published by the Higher Education Student Statistics (HESA) show that female students in 2016/17 were more likely to study subjects allied to medicine than any other subject. Of first year female students, 19% chose to study subjects allied to medicine, which includes dentistry. In comparison, male students in 2016/17 were most likely to study business and administrative studies. Of first year male students, 19% chose to study business and administrative studies. Female students dominated many subject areas, in particular subjects allied to medicine, veterinary science and education (representing 80%, 77% and 74% of students respectively taking those courses). Male students dominated only five subjects, all of which were science subjects. Those with the highest percentage of male students were engineering and technology; computer science and mathematical sciences, at 81%, 81% and 62% respectively (HESA 2016/17).

These data underpin the increase in women into the general workforce. More women are deciding to take university courses, although their choice of subjects is not currently uniform since, as previously noted, STEM subjects are less popular with women. This may say more about how these subjects are portrayed at school and within society than about the capability of women. It may also be a factor of female characteristics and society considering them to be predominantly carers.

Table 4. Important events in UK history that impacted on women

Date	Event
1870	Married Women's Property Act
1918	Women over thirty granted the right to vote; women can stand as an MP for the first time
1922	Equal inheritance
1928	All women over the age of 21 granted equal voting rights with men
1950	UK General Election – Clement Attlee Prime Minister (PM)
1967	Abortion decriminalised – the pill available via family planning clinics regardless of marital status
1970	Illegal to pay women less than men – Ford's Dagenham plant. Age of voting lowered to 18, for all
1974	UK General Elections. 28.2.1974 and 10.10.1974 (Harold Wilson PM both times)
1975	Sex Discrimination Act – no longer a need for a male guarantor for women wanting loans or credit
1982	Women no longer could be refused service in a pub
1994	Right to maternity leave for all working women
2010	Equality Act 2010 legally protects people from discrimination in the workplace and in wider society
2015	Shared paternal leave is introduced

Having had a very brief look at setting the context for women in the UK I would now like to turn to the specifics of dentistry. I want to set the context for the amazing women dental professionals of 2018 and, whilst I am concentrating on the 100 years since 1918, I'm going to spend a short while on thinking about women in dentistry before 1918. For this I will need to look outside the UK as well within.

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CHAPTER THREE

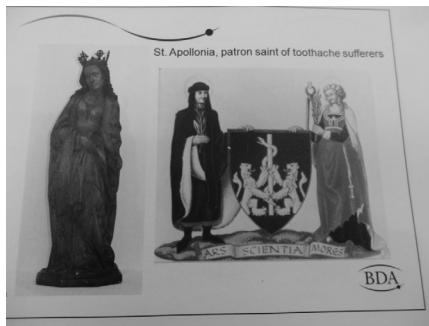
WOMEN DENTAL PROFESSIONALS

In this chapter, having considered the position of women in society in general I want to begin to concentrate on women dental professionals. I will briefly look back to before 1918 before looking at 1918 and a few statistics for that year and women dentists.

Pre-1918

Saint Apollonia, the patron saint of dentistry

St. Apollonia's day is February 9th. She appears on the Arms of the BDA alongside St. Damian, the patron saint of physicians. Apollonia, described as a Deanconess, is considered to have died in AD 249 when she willingly leapt into a fire after having her teeth forcibly removed or broken. She refused to denounce her faith and suffered the consequences of the time. She is often depicted with a golden tooth or holding forceps. Not strictly a woman in dentistry, but a woman who has come to be closely related to dentistry.



BDA Arms
Photograph – Janine Brooks



Photograph of glass St. Apollonia, BDA museum.
Photograph – Janine Brooks

Women who work in dentistry are not a modern phenomenon; they have been around for a very long time and there is considerable evidence for this.

Weir (1978) quotes Lindsay as writing: *“Women, it would appear, have practised tooth drawing from ancient times, although the allusions to them are scanty, the reasons perhaps lying in the fact that they are only mentioned when they have transgressed and that the majority of them were peaceful law-abiding operators”*.

Kidd (1974) writes: *“Women have probably practiced dentistry for centuries. When in 1544, the barber surgeons received a charter from Henry VIII, women were admitted on the same terms as men, usually as apprentices, but sometimes by patrimony. However, they were not allowed to wear the livery as this entitled the wearer to a vote in the City.”*

Treatment of the teeth has been practiced for many hundreds of years: evidence is found in the dental appliances made by the Etruscans. How many of the people who performed such work were women is unknown. Seward (1991) notes that the Portuguese dental historian Jose d’Boleo tells of a print from the latter half of the 16thC to be found in Paris that depicts a dentist exercising her skill. So, we know that there were women who provided dental treatment at that time.