

History of the International Association of Paediatric Dentistry

Part 5: The British Paedodontic Society and developments in the UK

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London Society for the Study of Dentistry for Children

The British Paedodontic Society (BPS) evolved from several small regional groups of children's dentists based around the UK. From the beginning, the BPS had many international links. One was Sam Harris. As we saw in Part 3, he wrote to a number of people in other countries, including England's George Scott Page (Fig. 1). Page qualified from Newcastle Dental School in 1923. He gained his DDS in 1924 after study at the Thomas W. Evans Museum and Dental Institute/School of Dentistry, University of Pennsylvania, USA. For the rest of his



Fig. 1. George Scott Page, an important link between Sam Harris and children's dentists in the UK.

life Page remained a lover of all things American, including dentistry. Page was an active member of both the American Dental Society of London and the American Dental Society of Europe, which brought together British and European dentists who had trained and studied in the USA. In 1948 Walter McBride gave a lecture and table clinic at an ADS of E meeting in London. He made an enormous impact on Scott Page, who immediately reopened his lines of communication with America. Page wrote to Al Seyler, then President of the American Society of Dentistry for Children (ASDC) and Editor of its *Journal of Dentistry for Children*.

In 1949 Page was asked by the Metropolitan (London) branch of the British Dental Association to lead a study session on conservative treatment in children's dentistry. He wrote to a colleague, Gilbert Parfitt, then Head of Preventive Dentistry at the Eastman Dental Hospital in London, that if eight people turned up for the session, they could be regarded as a nucleus of people interested in the subject who might form a new group. Page reminded him that the ASDC was already "well founded and of importance".

Two other important participants on the British scene were Leonard Morey and Peter James (Fig. 2). Morey qualified in 1939 after studying at Guy's Hospital Dental School in London. Appalled at the many young army recruits who needed all their teeth extracted, he resolved after the war to specialize in children's dentistry. In 1946 he undertook a DDS course at Chicago, where he came under the influence of Professor George Teuscher. Peter James qualified from the Royal Dental



Fig. 2. Peter James, important early influence, and first President of the British Paedodontic Society (1962).

Hospital of London in 1945. After service in the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve he went to St Andrew's University in Dundee, Scotland. There he undertook postgraduate study leading to a Diploma in Public Dentistry. His interest in prevention led him to take up a post in the Children's and Preventive Dentistry Departments at London's Eastman Dental Hospital. In 1952 he was awarded a Gibbs Travelling Scholarship to study teaching methods and public health dentistry in Scandinavia. His 3-months visit took him to Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden. One month was spent at Oslo Dental School with Professor Guttorm Toverud, known to many Europeans as the 'father of children's dentistry'. He learned that a Scandinavian Society of Children's Dentistry had been formed in the previous year. Toverud expressed surprise that nothing similar existed in Britain, a point reiterated by other Scandinavians, including Professor Erik Kisling of Denmark. Upon his return, James investigated the possibility of forming a society in England. He learned from Morey, by then also on the staff at the Eastman, that Page was actively

seeking the same objective. It was time for the three of them to meet.

Page had recently received a letter from Sam Harris to stimulate the formation of a UK society. Harris told Page about his efforts, supported by the ASDC, to promote the formation of an international liaison council, and also that Al Seyler had recommended him as a contact. Harris hoped that Page might contact some other English dentists, including Morey. Page responded immediately. He thought that the best way forward would be to establish an English group affiliated to the ASDC. Page mentioned that he would return from holiday via Newcastle so that he could visit his old dental school where Professor Maurice Hallett was the Dean. Hallett had opened the first UK Department of Children's Dentistry in 1948. More importantly, during a visit to the USA, he had spent time with Harris and Walter McBride. He expressed sadness on the rift between American pedodontists and orthodontists and ensured that his own training and department embraced both disciplines. He perpetuated this approach when he formed the *Hadrian's Group* of orthodontists and paedodontists, which in 1973 became the *North of England Child Dental Health Group*.

In September 1952 Page, James and Morey discussed formation of an embryonic society. With the enthusiastic support of Professor A. Maxwell Horsnell, sub-Dean for Dentistry at the London Hospital Medical College, the trio arranged a meeting on 19 November. The ten people who attended decided to start an informal *London Study Group in Children's Dentistry*, with Horsnell in the chair.

By 1958 the group had outgrown that format. On 28 October the members formed the *London Society for the Study of Dentistry for Children*. Even then, they made the point that, although initially it would be desirable to have a number of local groups around the country, eventually they should aim for a single national body. At the same time they developed international links. On 31 March 1959 the Chairman, Jeffery (Jeff) Rose, asked Arvid Syrrist, Head of the Children's Department at Malmo Dental School in Sweden, to speak to the London Society on 'Prevention of malocclusion'.

The British Paedodontic Society

In May 1962 the name of the group was changed to the *British Paedodontic Society*, but still it remained

London-based. On 9 July President of the ASDC Ralph E. MacDonald of Indiana became the first speaker from the USA formally to address the BPS; although Lawrence R. Burdge, a former ASDC President, had opened the discussion of a paper in 1960. Before his academic lecture MacDonald gave a brief talk on the ASDC, which at that time had some 8000 members. Stimulated by his talk, the committee re-opened a theme considered in 1952: the possibility of the BPS seeking affiliation to the ASDC. Instead, they decided that "friendly communications were to be promoted". In 1963 the BPS committee learned about and made contact with other UK study groups.

1966 was a key year. On 20 January, Secretary David (Dennis) Soloman Berman (Fig. 3) reported to his BPS committee on a meeting between him, Syrrist and the BPS President James (Jimmy) Byrom. Syrrist had expressed interest in a proposed symposium to be held in London in 1967 and in the formation of a European paedodontic society. On 21 April the committee agreed to nominate Professor Geoffrey Leighton Slack, a noted internationalist, as President for 1956-67. The Society already had an international outlook. Of its seven



Fig. 3. David Soloman Berman, Secretary of the British Paedodontic Society 1966-68.

Table 1. Honorary members of the BPS (up to 1966).

1958	Professor A. Maxwell Horsnell (Australia)
1964	Professor Guttorm Toverud (Norway)
1965	Dr (Miss) Eleanor M. Knowles, O.B.E. (UK)
1984	Dr (Miss) Jean Forrest, O.B.E. (UK)
1964	Professor Arvid Syrrist (Sweden)
1965	Dr G. Scott Page (UK)
1966	Dr Samuel D. Harris (USA)

honorary members (Table 1), four came from abroad: Professors Max Horsnell (Australia), Guttorm Toverud (Norway), and Samuel Harris (USA) Arvid Syrrist (Sweden); the others were Eleanor M. Knowles, Jean Forrest and Scott Page. Berman reported that he and Slack had attended a meeting of Anglo-Scandinavian teachers of children's dentistry in Hamar, Norway. There they had mentioned that the London Hospital Medical College had agreed to accommodate an international symposium.

In view of his long association with paedodontics and the help given to its founder members, on 31 May, 1966 it was agreed to confer honorary membership of the BPS upon Sam Harris, the seventh such recipient. Thus, a further important international link was confirmed. In his letter of acceptance received on 6 October, Harris again stressed his desire to form an international council of dentistry for children. He suggested that a forthcoming joint meeting of the ASDC, American Dental Association and the American Academy of Pedodontics would present an ideal opportunity. Harris proposed the formation of a European Council of Pedodontics, which could later join with the Pan-American Council. Berman told him about the biennial meetings of Anglo-Scandinavian teachers, and suggested that the proposed international paedodontic symposium at the London Hospital Medical College might provide a suitable forum at which to put forward his ideas.

At the AGM on 25 October 1966, Slack became President. He was Head of the Department of Child Dental Health and Dean of Dental Studies at The London Hospital Medical College. Berman was elected Secretary, and Donald Hayes Norman became Treasurer. Together they made a powerful team, raising the status of the BPS nationally and internationally. Toverud came from Oslo at Slack's invitation to speak at the Society's annual dinner, expanding on the international concept. Although by then Toverud had already been an honorary member for 2 years, he received his honorary membership certificate at that dinner.

Midland Society for the Study of Children's Dentistry

In 1935 Leslie Hardwick (Fig. 4) qualified from Birmingham Dental School. After experience as a dental house surgeon at the Queen's Hospital in Birmingham he entered general practice. However, for one session a week he worked at a children's dental clinic. He then joined the Army and when the war ended in 1945 he joined the staff of Birmingham Dental School. In the early 1950s he visited Scandinavia, soon coming under the spell of Guttorm Toverud. Together with Toverud, Slack and a small group of other enthusiasts, Hardwick founded, in 1955, the Anglo-Scandinavian Society of Teachers of Children's Dentistry. It met every 2 years until about 1965, alternating between one of the Scandinavian countries and the UK. This group played an important part in raising the standards of both teaching and practice.

Hardwick was so appalled by the state of children's teeth that he instituted the teaching of children's and preventive dentistry at Birmingham. In 1955 he was asked by the City of Birmingham's Chief Dental Officer (head of the school dental service) to give a series of Saturday morning lectures to pregnant women and professional staff of the City's health department. In March 1959, as part of his strategy, he brought together school dentists, general practitioners and hospital colleagues to form the *Midland Society for the Study of Children's*



Fig. 4. Leslie Hardwick, founder of the Midland Society for the Study of Children's Dentistry.

Dentistry. From the beginning, speakers were invited from other parts of the country. The first was Maurice Hallett of Newcastle.

In Part 6 we shall see how various regional groups were brought together to form a national BPS.