

The Victoria Gallery & Museum: University of Liverpool



2004 - The Dental Museum: Edwards Building



The Dental Museum: Edwards Building



The Raw Material



Recording and identifying



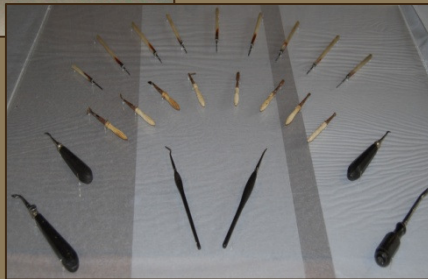
Start to develop themes/ideas



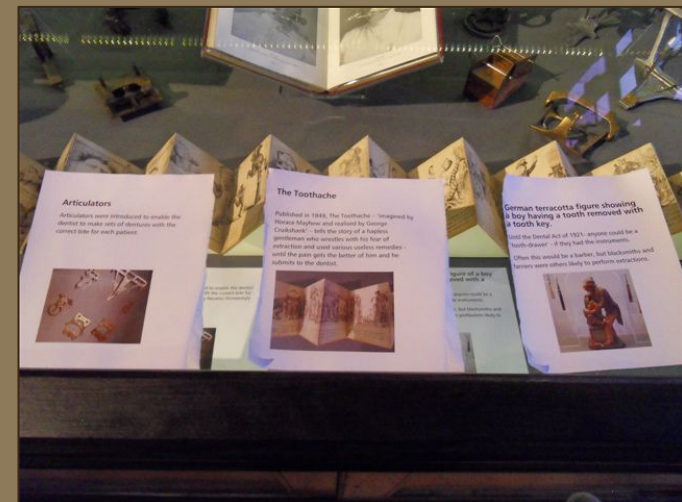
Layout



Content



Collate information & graphics



Panels & Labels

Nasty Gnashers & Dreadful dentures

The history of false teeth...

More than 2500 years ago the Etruscans made false teeth held in place by very visible strips of gold which must have been considered a status symbol.



However, by the 1700s, people had become self-conscious about their bad teeth and increasingly hoped to pass off the false teeth as their own.

This display shows some of the highlights of our collection of early dentures, now thought to be one of the most important in the world.

The Liverpool Dental Hospital began training dentists in 1861 and became part of the University of Liverpool in 1899.

The School's Museum of Dentistry was started in 1880 when some of the students started to collect dental artefacts. The collection is now cared for here at the Victoria Gallery & Museum.



Nasty Gnashers & Dreadful dentures

The history of false teeth...

An accident waiting to happen?

'He had dozed off in one of the armchairs... with a lighted cigarette. Suddenly he leapt up with fumes coming from his mouth; that lighted cigarette had set fire to his false teeth... I saw those fumes with my own eyes and I heard his shout of dismay as he leapt up and hauled the denture out of his mouth.'



Sir Compton Mackenzie (1883-1972), Co-founder of the Scottish National Party and Novelist (author of *Monarch of the Glen*).

'She broke into peals of shrill laughter, when suddenly, her false teeth, never at any time secure and now dislodged from her palate by her moist exuberance, protruded from between her lips like the teeth of a neighing horse, and impelled by a last uncontrollable spasm of mirth, shot out of her mouth and shattered themselves upon the floor.'

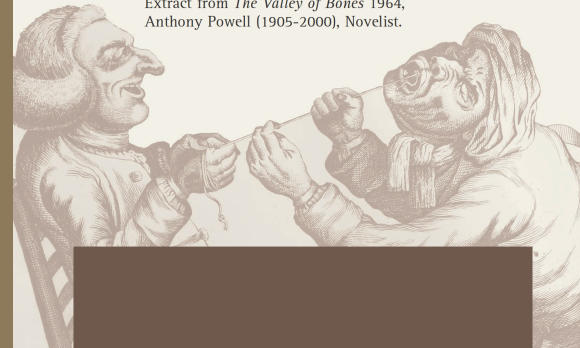


Extract from *Hatter's Castle* 1931, A.J. Cronin, (1896-1981), Physician, Author and creator of Dr Finlay.

'There, beside the bed, along with sleeping pills was another exhibit, something of peculiar horror... Before going to sleep, Bithel had placed his false teeth in the ashtray. He had removed them bodily, the jaws still clenched on the stub of the cigar.'



Extract from *The Valley of Bones* 1964, Anthony Powell (1905-2000), Novelist.



Teeth made from walrus ivory were known as 'seahorse teeth'



In the 1790s, one recipient of seahorse teeth complained about the rotting state of his dentures, and imagined:

'two thousand people at the opera... there may be amongst them at least two or three hundred who have a small piece of sea-horse in the mouth; form an idea of all those decayed substances and you will have a skeleton of the animal, which if placed on the stage, would soon drive away all the spectators by the putrefaction and disgust it would occasion'

Waterloo Teeth 1700s and 1800s

- Although dentures made from human teeth came to be named after the Battle of Waterloo in 1815, they were already popular in the 1700s.
- At first, the teeth were obtained from executed prisoners and unidentified paupers, but grave robbers also provided a ready supply. The very poor were also tempted to sell their healthy teeth.
- When it was realised that the teeth of young, healthy soldiers were of much higher quality - with less decay and disease – it started a new and very profitable trade in battlefield teeth.
- As late as the 1860s, England imported 50 barrels of teeth from the battlefields of the American Civil War.

- The human teeth were set into a base carved from solid hippo, walrus or elephant ivory.
- The ivory was often uncomfortable and could not be held in place very easily. Sometimes chamois leather was attached, to cushion the gums.



Installation



3 Views



Through the Dentist's Window

This dentist opened his surgery in 1882. He bought the best dental chair he could afford, and top quality cabinets to impress his well-off customers.



He added the latest x-ray machine as soon as he could afford it after WWI



He decorated his walls with the latest fashionable wallpaper and displayed a picture of a marketplace tooth drawer to highlight his own modern respectability. Despite all this, it's unlikely that he had any formal qualifications himself.



