



## “The Tooth and Nothing but The Tooth”

by  
Chris ‘Dr. Smile Maker’  
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### Life Changing Dentistry – Filling The Gaps – Part 2

**H**i, how are you doing? I hope that you are well and had a great Christmas and New Year. I also hope that you do not feel any worse for any slight overindulgence over the festive season.

#### The Big 40

I turned 40 years of age since the December issue came out. Oh no, when I was in my teens 40 was really old. It doesn't seem so old any more, funny that. Perhaps I'm just delusional. I am wondering if it all down hill from here or life really does just get started. I'll just have to wait and see.

#### Imaginative, Creative and Ingenious

Last time I delved back in time a bit to see how the problem of missing teeth was tackled way back when. We mainly looked at replacing missing teeth with implantations of different sorts. Some were very imaginative, creative and ingenious and sometimes a bit mad.

#### A Bridge Too Far?

Dental bridges are not new, not by a long way. There have been bridges discovered dating back to the fourth or fifth century B.C. One such bridge was found in Sidon, chief city of ancient Phoenicia. The Phoenicians were a people contemporary with the ancient Egyptians and Hebrews and lived in what is now modern day Lebanon. The bridge had four natural human incisor teeth with two carved ivory teeth between them. These ‘teeth’ were bound together with gold wire.

The Etruscans also were very adept in the art of dental prosthesis. Here again there have been dental findings dating back to 500 B.C. Soft gold bands were fitted around natural teeth. The false teeth were fastened to the bands with rivets. The false teeth (pontics to use the dental jargon) were made up of human teeth with the roots cut off or more often oxen teeth. In some cases a groove would be made down the middle of a wide ox's tooth to make it look like two teeth. Absolutely ingenious. These guys must have had some time on their hands, not like the 100 miles an hour of 21st century living, eh?

#### Elephant, Hippopotamus Or Walrus, The Choice Is Yours

Over the years dentures have been made out of different materials including ivory, gold, stainless steel, cobalt-chromium, vulcanised rubber and acrylic. The teeth on the denture made from ivory, natural teeth, porcelain and acrylic. The ivory that was meticulously carved came from different sources. Namely elephant, hippopotamus or walrus. Each type of ivory had its own characteristics in terms of grain and texture. There is evidence of ivory being used for dentures as far back as Roman times.

#### Would You Like Springs With That Sir?

One famous denture wearer was the American President George Washington. He was plagued by toothache and abscesses for many years and only had one tooth left by the time of his inauguration. He had several dentures made by the best people of the time and had them made from the whole range of materials available. His last set was made by John Greenwood. The upper palate was swaged from a sheet of gold and had ivory teeth riveted to it. The lower denture was carved from a single block of ivory. The two dentures were fastened together by a steel spring! I bet that took some getting used to. I also bet that you can't get them on the NHS. How much do you think that would cost now?

So there you go, another little jaunt back in time to dental practice of bygone eras.

#### 16-0 And Still Smiling

My daughter's football team suffered their worst defeat of 16-0 at home. However, she got the player of the game award and was completely made up with it. The whole team were still friends and still smiling. I love it!

Wishing you all the best for 2010, I hope it's a great year for you.

*Chris*

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