

Horrific war injuries spawn radical plastic surgery techniques

August 8 2013

Reconstructing Faces: The Art and Wartime Surgery of Gillies, Pickerill, McIndoe and Mowlem tells the story of the four pioneering surgeons involved in ground-breaking work in facial reconstruction during the two world wars.

Sir Harold Gillies and Sir Archibald McIndoe were born in Dunedin; McIndoe and Rainsford Mowlem studied medicine at the University of Otago Medical School, and Henry Pickerill was foundation Dean of the University's Dental School.

The author Murray Meikle describes how these surgeons helped revolutionise plastic surgery and the treatment of [facial trauma](#), working on soldiers, fighter pilots and civilians disfigured by bombs, shrapnel and burns. Gillies et al., did not work alone, but were supported by a vast surgical enterprise that included general surgeons, dentists, anaesthetists, artists and photographers, nurses and orderlies.

"The First World War presented surgeons with a new challenge," says the author.

"No one, including the British Army, was quite prepared for the slaughter that occurred on an industrial scale in Northern France and Flanders ... 15 per cent of all soldiers who survived had received [facial injuries](#). Despite the best efforts of surgeons, many soldiers were left hideously disfigured. A new kind of surgery was required."

Reconstructing Faces details, as well as illustrates, what the surgeons actually did: the reconstructive problems they faced and how they solved them. The text is heavily illustrated with photos, drawings by war artists and case notes by the surgeons. The book includes a DVD of Rainsford Mowlem performing a variety of plastic operations in 1945, and will be available from September.

'This book will stand out as a real history of its time; it throws a new light on the subject' – Mark McGurk, Professor of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery, Dental Institute at Guy's, King's College and St Thomas' Hospitals, London.

Provided by University of Otago

Citation: Horrific war injuries spawn radical plastic surgery techniques (2013, August 8)
retrieved 6 May 2024 from
<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2013-08-horrific-war-injuries-spawn-radical.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.