

The Wylie Centenary Flyer

August 2008



Summer Fun 1908!

July is statistically the hottest month of the year but the three hottest days of the last century have all been in August, in 1911, 1932 and 1990. In 1908, the summer was recorded as 'cool' but a strange phenomenon occurred that made it memorable.

The Tunguska Event happened in Siberia on June 30th 1908. It was a mysterious explosion possibly caused by a meteor or comet and flattened 80 million trees, over 830 square miles! The explosion is thought to have been more powerful than 1,000 atomic bombs and was heard 600 miles away. Even now scientists do not agree on the cause of the event and UFO theories abound.

Dust scattered from the site had far reaching effects. Britain was lit for several days by a white and yellow sky and it was bright enough for midnight games of cricket and golf! One writer to the Times recalled similar 'wonderful glows' he had seen in England in 1883, due to the dust scattered in the upper atmosphere by the 'terrific outburst of Krakatoa.' 'No volcanic outburst of abnormal violence has been reported lately', but he wondered if it could be due to 'some unreported eruption in some little-known region of the world'. Despite the shockwaves and the dust it was 13 years before anyone ventured into Siberia to investigate what had happened!



August has always been the most popular month for summer holidays, and in 1908 Southend would have been a likely destination for many Essex people. The pier had just had a new extension opened, and now the upper deck had spaces for 500 deckchairs and 600 permanent seats. People travelled in from East London by train and most went home the same day, as they could not afford to stay overnight. Although not many people could swim, the sea was thought to be therapeutic and they enjoyed paddling. They also enjoyed ice cream, although it was known as 'hokey-pokey' then. The famous Southend 'Rossi' ice cream company was not started until 1932.

Editor: **Kathy Beasley**

In A Pickle With Your Medicines?

In the August edition of the Veterinary Record 1908 the President of the British Veterinary Association worried about some of the containers veterinary surgeons used to dispense medications. In fact he felt that some of the dispensing was 'absolutely disgraceful'. He described 'draughts sent out in ginger beer bottles, powders wrapped up in newspaper etc., labels competing in design with those on a special brand of mustard or pickles'!

'We know to our great regret that there are men who are anything but ornaments to the profession, men whose actions are questionable, the places they frequent and the company they keep more so, but this class of man is dying out, thanks in great measure to the high standard of the entrance examination'. 'We can all be gentlemen; what better epitaph can one wish for than to have it said', 'He was one of nature's gentlemen'.

Obviously the President had not considered during his address that there would ever be female veterinary surgeons, and of course there were none for several more years. The first female registered with the Royal College was Aleen Cust in 1922.

I would hope that the veterinary surgeons associated with Wylies over the last hundred years would have met with his approval, even if some of them could never be 'gentlemen! The standards that our clients rightly expect from us now, both medically and surgically, would have been impossible for him to start to comprehend one hundred years ago. However, I think that he would have liked our new, ecologically friendly, canvas Centenary bags that should be available soon. They should be invaluable in helping you carry larger items, and so much better than plastic bags.

Olympics 1908!

The 2008 Olympic Games are being held this month in Beijing. How different they will be from 1908, when they lasted from April to October!

The 1908 Olympic Games were supposed to be held in Rome, but Mount Vesuvius erupted badly in 1906, devastating nearby Naples. It was obvious that Italy needed to concentrate all available resources into disaster relief and rebuilding, so with only 18 months notice, London stepped in to hold the games.

Gold, silver and bronze medals were awarded for the first time, and Britain won 56 gold medals, more than any other country! However the games were not without controversy. At the Opening Ceremony the US team refused to dip the Stars and Stripes as they passed King Edward VII in the Royal Box, while the Finnish team refused to march under the flag of Czarist Russia. The Americans also refused to re-run a 4-man 400m final so Brit Wyndham Halswelle ran unopposed to take gold!

At the request of the King, the marathon started at Windsor Castle, making it 385 yards longer. It was won by Italian Dorando Pietri but he was disqualified as he had fallen 5 times and had to be helped to his feet. He may also have been offered brandy along the route! The gold medal went to America, but there was such public sympathy for Pietri that Queen Alexander presented him with a special gold cup.

Some events were different, and we were good at them! The Tug-Of-War was won by the City Of London Police team, and we also won two of the power boat races. When it came to women's archery, we won all the medals as the British team was the only one that entered! Swede, Oscar Swahn, aged 60, was the oldest ever competitor to win a gold medal, which he won for the running deer, single shot event! In between events there were demonstrations, and one was bicycle polo!

