# Harold Gillies and the Tubed Pedicle Procedure

Dr. Harold Gillies treated military men with massively damaged faces during World War I.

At Queen's Hospital, a special institution set-up for this purpose, he further developed a technique—which he'd first encountered in a Russian textbook—called the "Tubed Pedicle."

Gillies had a particularly difficult problem to solve when he met Able Seaman Willie Vicarage. Willie had an extremely bad injury at his mouth and chin.

In an era without antibiotics, Gillies and his fellow surgeons worried constantly about infection. The "tubed pedicle" would help them work-around the lack of medication to ward-off or minimize the risk of infection.

How did this innovation work? The BBC provides background:

> *Antibiotics had not yet been invented, meaning it was very hard to graft tissue from one part of the body to another because infection often developed.*
>
> *But while treating Able Seaman Willie Vicarage, Gillies invented the "tubed pedicle." This used a flap of skin from the chest or forehead and "swung" it into place over the face.*
>
> *The flap remained attached but was stitched into a tube. This kept the original blood supply intact and dramatically reduced the infection rate.*

The treatment protocol may have appeared a bit grotesque to outsiders, but for the patients and their care-givers at Queen's Hospital, it was a life-saving and life-restoring technique.

## Credits:

From the Gillies Archives at Queen Mary's Hospital; online via the BBC's story on "Faces of Battle."

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