19th century haemorrhoid diathermy clamp

To the Editor: In London in the late 1960s, one of my chiefs regularly used a diathermy clamp (*Med J Aust* 2012; 197: 193) for the management of third and fourth degree piles. The patient was anaesthetised, placed in the lithotomy position, and draped. Meanwhile, the clamp was brought to red heat on a Bunsen burner in a side room and fetched into theatre by me, the assistant. The chief drew each pile down in turn, applying the clamp across the base of the pile with the shield upwards, to protect that very sensitive area. It was so held for a minute, with much sizzling and the smell of cooking flesh.

In the immediate postoperative period, the patients made rapid progress. I never saw a reactionary or secondary haemorrhage, anal stenosis or early recurrence. What the long-term results were, I do not know. I have never seen anyone else perform this operation or a description of it, but cryosurgery to piles is similar.

Perhaps, this snippet will interest the general and colorectal surgeons of today.

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