

BDAA Summer Newsletter



Hello to you all

Most of you will remember that sending annual booklet newsletters to our members – which we did for 23 years – was discontinued in 2014. Instead, we moved into the modern world (the BDAA that is, not me) setting up a website and sending occasional newsletters by email – a revolution managed by our techno-savvy secretary Gary Mendham. In this eighth of the series I will look back at some recent news, adding some personal notes to the more detailed information that can be found on our website (www.bristoldentalalumni.co.uk).

First and foremost – our centenarian Sister (later Matron) Davison, latterly just Sybil. Her celebration party, held just over a week after her birthday on 25th August last year, was organised by Vicky Townsend and other former student nurses who have maintained close contact with her over the years – Sybil referred to them as her 'girls'. Over 100 people attended – mostly former nurses, but also some dentists and former staff members – giving Sybil a fitting celebration of a very special day. Vicky also organised parties for her 90th and 95th birthdays and for these I had the honour of being invited to perform with my band, The Muskrats. Over a cup of tea in her Clifton flat she loved to talk about her 'girls', but also enjoyed recalling incidents with dental students (admonishing them for their dress, long hair etc. on clinic) and keeping in touch with former staff. Until recently she enjoyed attending alumni reunions and, somehow or other, I was appointed her chauffeur. I feared this would mean I'd have to leave early when she got tired, but not a bit of it – she was there to the very end. Sad to report she has taken a turn for the worse and, being no longer able to cope living alone, she was moved a few months ago to a care home. It's a spacious and airy place and she is comfortable there.



The family of Professor Declan Anderson, who died on 27th March aged 96, have donated a sturdy wooden bench, complete with suitably inscribed brass plaque, which now stands outside the students' common room. All of us who knew Declan will always remember his great sense of humour and love of playing practical jokes on his colleagues. I was a student at Guy's when he was a lecturer in physiology and he always started his lectures with a joke (sometimes quite bawdy) – a way of encouraging students to attend on time. I'm pleased I was never a victim of his practical joking.





Out of the blue in April a message was received on our website from Norman Thomas. Norman graduated in Bristol in 1957 and in 1962 became a lecturer in dental medicine. He emigrated to Canada in 1968 on being appointed to a research and teaching post at the University of Alberta in Edmonton where he went on to become a professor. Those of you who knew him will remember a gregarious, energetic, ebullient, excitable Welshman, always ready for a laugh.

He always retained warm feelings for Bristol and was pleased that a son, Martyn, and grandson Trystan both came to Bristol and graduated BDS – Martyn in 1984, Trystan in 2008. After a successful professional career, mostly in Edmonton but also a spell in Las Vegas, he has settled down with his wife Jean in Edmonton.

It's always sad to hear of the death of an old friend and colleague. Many of our older members will remember Mike Cooksey, who died on 28th April. He was an oral surgeon at BDH for many years. I remember him especially for having introduced me to the delights of sprinkling sugar on to the slices of buttered bread that were served at tea-time in the staff common room many years ago – as a children's dentist I've never been allowed to forget that. The civilised practice of an afternoon break for tea was abolished by Crispian Scully (then Head of School) who demanded that we should all be “busting our guts” writing papers, not wasting time having tea.



Reunions continue to be popular. The graduating years of 1966, 1984 and 1990 held reunions last year and so far the 1966, 1976 and 1986 have informed us of their plans to meet later this year – the 1966 reunion is especially significant, being the 50th anniversary of their

graduation. A tour of the School has been a popular part of reunions, most of them led by Gordon Gray who, although retired this year, has kindly offered to continue doing so. The Hathorn Bar in the students' common room has, over the years, been a popular place to meet but, sad to say, the bar has had to be closed down – its future is uncertain.

We continue to support students travelling to far-off places for their electives – this year Cambodia, Thailand, Sri Lanka, India and USA. We have also supported the library, the Dental Ball, Final year Dinner and the Bristol-Hannover Exchange, and presented BDAA prizes for elective projects carried out last year in Singapore and Tanzania. I want to emphasize that when I refer to what “we” have supported I really mean what “you” have supported because it is only with funds received from subscriptions of BDAA members that we are able to do this. Your contributions towards student activities and the Dental School make a difference and are greatly appreciated.

Unfortunately I have to end on a very sad note: the news received very recently of the death of Olivia Alderson (1990 graduate), a victim of breast cancer. The funeral is on Friday 5th August at St Nicholas Church, Rotherfield Grey, near Henley-on-Thames. We offer our condolences to her husband and three sons.



With best wishes to you all

Reg Andlaw