



Dear members

You will have received an email recently from Gary Mendham informing you that I retired at the end of January from our BDAA Committee after 30 years as Chairman. During that period I wrote to you many times in our newsletters but this will be my last one, my swansong. It's always hard to give up an activity enjoyed for many years – now I can only reflect on the pleasure and satisfaction it has given me.

How did I get involved? Reunions of dental alumni had been organised for several years by a 'gang of four' local GDPs (Paul Baines, Gary Mendham, Phil Key and Alun Jones) but by the late 1980s they were thinking that a link with the Dental School would be

advantageous. In June 1989 they invited me to take on the chairmanship. Why me, you might ask? I suspect it was because I had recently taken early retirement and they thought I would be hanging about with nothing better to do. Whatever the reason I accepted because I was happy to support their aim of promoting reunions – but I certainly did not envisage still being at it 30 years later!

In 1990 we set up a new committee which included Paul and Alun (Gary had left for a year in the States and Phil was unavailable). Our aim was simply to continue organising reunions. However, reacting to a questionnaire sent to members with our first (1991) newsletter, we decided to change our approach and promote graduation-year reunions instead of the larger open events held previously. Our plan was simple: to get them to organise their own reunions! Our role would be to advise and assist as and when required, and (before the advent of email) to cover costs of stationery and postage. For the plan to succeed we would need to persuade a member of each 'year' to become their reunion organiser, at least for their first reunion. A tall order, you might say? We did not rate our chances very high, but in fact the response was amazingly positive. Year-group reunions soon began to be held, eventually leading to repeat reunions on 5, 10, or other anniversaries, with many of the original volunteers carrying on to organise their reunions to this day. The record speaks for itself: over 170 reunions since 1992 and only two 'years' recorded as not having held a reunion. I doubt that any UK dental school or university department can match that record and I feel it reflects on how much our alumni appreciate the friendships they made and the benefits they gained as students in Bristol. This success has given me huge satisfaction – and also great pleasure in meeting 'old students' at the many reunions I attended over the years.

Every year we tried hard (short of using physical force) to recruit students before they graduated. As membership increased (and with it subscription income) we were able to start helping students in various ways and making donations supporting the dental library and other teaching facilities in the Dental School, all of which have steadily increased over the years. This, of course, has been another source of great personal satisfaction – but I have always kept in mind that you, our BDAA members, are the benefactors who make it all possible and who deserve the credit and our gratitude.

I'm pleased that Ken Marshall agreed to take over as Chairman. Ken was a member of our committee from 1993 to 2001, had a break and then rejoined us in 2011 as Membership Secretary.

The BDAA is in good hands and will continue promoting reunions and making useful contributions to benefit students and the School.

So – that's it from me.

Best wishes to you all.

Reg