

# Valedictory address

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**William Allen OBE was installed as the President of the British Dental Association at Torquay in April 1999. At Dentistry 2000 on Thursday April 6, 2000, he gave his valedictory address.**

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Ladies and Gentlemen, successive Presidents in their valedictory address have remarked at the speed with which the presidential year passes by. Jennifer and I are no exception to this rule. We have had a very busy year, immensely enjoyable and illuminating. I hope in this brief PostScript to my year to touch on the lessons from this unique opportunity being President affords one.

The President's role is very much to act as an ambassador and I hope we have fulfilled this role in our visits both at home and abroad. I certainly do not intend to give you a diary of our year, but perhaps some highlights will suffice. Abroad we visited New Zealand, USA, Europe and South Africa. The universality of dentistry, comradeship and commonality of issues and problems was marked. Self-regulation, education, and the delivery of a quality service were key areas of consideration and change throughout the world. To this I would add skill mix and workforce as areas of debate.

No less vital to the presidential year are the many visits to Branches, Sections and Groups of the BDA. The heart of our Asso-

ciation is in its local organisation. Presidents over the years have commented on the variety of approach to local BDA. From Exeter in the west to Perth in the north and Norwich in the east, we have travelled the length and breadth of Britain. And I must not forget Ireland both north and south, where the hospitality is legendary. Perhaps I might digress to say with my own half Irish ancestry how pleasing it is to see devolution in action in Ireland — it bodes well for the future and for our Conference in Belfast in 2002. Devolution is no less important in England, Wales and Scotland, and increasingly the BDA's work has specific national characteristics. Travelling the length and breadth at times has been a trial. Despite my well-known enthusiasm for railways taking all day to get to and from St Anne's in Lancashire stretched even my patience. Preston on a cold wet wintry evening is not the most salubrious place!

In my visits I have been impressed by the standard of post-graduate lectures. Certainly in this new era of recertification our sections and branches will have a vital and important role to play. On a number of my trips, Martin Cock or Judi Rogers from our membership department have accompanied me, setting up a stand and demonstrating to the audience the services the BDA provides. It is extraordinary to me the reasons non-members give for not joining the BDA. As an old English master of mine used to say if you were late with your homework 'Allen there may be a reason but there is NO excuse!' And I believe there is no excuse for a dentist not to be a member of his/her professional association.

That is not to say we should be complacent and certainly during my year membership has continued to rise to record levels and new services to assist members, like the Clinical Governance Kit and Practice Compendium, have been introduced. 2000 has been a year of change for the BDA. Some fear change, but I feel we should welcome it,

organisations ossify and decay if they do not continually evaluate, think and plan to improve. With John Renshaw, John Phipps and Ian Wylie we have a strong team to deliver the policies and mission of the Association.

Now I have many people to thank for their help and support during my year. First on that list is my wife Jennifer who has combined a busy practising life with the role of Presidential leading lady. Jennifer, many thanks and now I have retired and you are still completing your orthodontic cases I can truly say I am living off the moral earnings of my wife!

During much of my year John Hunt was Chief Executive and his support and wise advice was invaluable and together with Carol Reddy PA to the Chief Executive my year has administratively been very smooth. I would also like to add how much I appreciate the work that all BDA staff in London and the regional offices do for the Association.

Everyone at home and abroad I thank for their welcome and hospitality in making our year such a pleasure.

Now finally it gives me immense pleasure to introduce my successor — Peter Swiss.

Peter qualified from Guy's during the same decade as myself. Despite this handicap he has had an outstanding career in dentistry; first in practice and part-time as a registrar in prosthetics, then at the MDU and subsequently Denplan. Peter, during this period has gained a worldwide reputation in the ethics of dentistry and now chairs the FDI Special Committee on that subject. His service to the Association, both at local level in Southern Counties, and at the highest level of Council, the Benevolent Fund and on the FDI has been exemplary.

Peter; you have brought dignity and respect to the profession. May I wish you and your charming wife Sue a successful and fulfilling year. I am sure Harrogate will be an exciting start.

It therefore gives me great personal pleasure to ask you, Peter, to step forward and allow me to induct you as President of the British Dental Association for 2001 to 2002.