

*'The principles on which the Association was based will ensure that both the BDA and the dental profession emerge from these troubled times stronger and better fitted to serve the people of the UK.'*

# Presidential address

Joe Rich was installed as the new President of the British Dental Association at the 2007 British Dental Conference and Exhibition held in Harrogate on 24–26 May 2007. The following is his presidential address.



Ladies and Gentlemen, Immediate Past President, I cannot pretend to be surprised at becoming President, I have had a year to get ready, but I was not prepared for how I would feel at this moment. I am bursting with pride and filled with humility. OK, pride wins!

No one stands in my position here today because of their own efforts alone, so please allow me to publicly

thank those whose influences have brought me here.

Barrie Aron, my classmate and friend who persuaded me that a career in dentistry was the most wonderful choice and that Edinburgh was the perfect place to be a student. You were so right. Thank you.

To my fellow dental students in Edinburgh 1957–1962, who taught me that I was not a good enough poker player, that sooner or later work had to be done and that it was high time I grew up and accepted responsibility. Thank you.

To my teachers then and since whose dedication and determination ensured I obtained that skill and knowledge which has enabled me to enjoy my career so much. Thank you.

To John Howarth, who gave me my first job and a perfect model of what is now known as vocational training, taking me to BDA functions, Manchester Medical Society and other professional organisations in the area and teaching me to play a responsible part in professional life. Thank you.

To Louis Miller who involved me in the LDC, made me Chairman and then GDSC rep, mostly without me realising what was happening. Thank you.

To the late Norman Whitehouse and his staff at Wimpole Street including Diana Scarrot, Michael Watson, Linda Wallace and Stephen Hancocks, who at a time of crisis for the Association were faced with me, newly elected and with almost no experience at that level. They nursed me, guided me and protected me through my years as Chairman of the GDSC. Thank you.

To my long-suffering friend and partner Peter King, who

carried the practice while I was gallivanting around government offices playing Mr Dentistry, with never a word of complaint. He is still carrying me. Thank you.

To my wife Jacqueline and my children who put up with an absent dad, and to the profession of dentistry. Thank you.

This is a very difficult period in the history of the dental profession in the UK. There have been changes before, there have been problems before, but never have there been so many at the same time. Last month saw the anniversary of the first year of the 'new contract' for primary care NHS services in England and Wales, with similar upheavals in Scotland and Northern Ireland. This has caused enormous stress throughout the profession and the British Dental Association has worked tirelessly to help.

A year ago we celebrated 50 years of self-regulation of the dental profession in the UK. The record of the GDC was praised by all. Now we are to be regulated by appointees. We are not to be trusted to use democratic means. Time will tell, but the record is one we can be proud of.

At the same time there has been a massive shift in the source of funding for the provision of dental care, from almost total government via the NHS to almost 50% private through patients and plans. Where are we to turn in times like these? Where do we find the knowledge, the experience and the organisation to represent the interests of practitioners? The answer is the British Dental Association.

I am happy to be able to say that the BDA has never been better prepared to deal with the situation. We have more members, we have more highly-trained and dedicated staff and more able and determined elected officers than ever before in our history, who will lead our profession through the difficult days ahead. The principles on which our Association was based, Representation, Education and Fellowship, will ensure that both the BDA and the dental profession will emerge from these troubled times stronger and better fitted to serve the people of the UK.

Ladies and Gentlemen, thank you for making me President.

Joe Rich

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# Valedictory address

Sue Greening was installed as the President of the British Dental Association at last year's 2006 British Dental Conference and Exhibition held in Birmingham. At this year's Conference in Harrogate, she gave the following valedictory address.



This morning we look forward to greeting our new President Joe Rich. But I cannot let this moment pass without a short reflection on my year in office.

This time last year I was looking forward to what promised to be an exciting year, and a year that I knew would not be an easy one for any of us in dentistry – both of those predictions were correct.

It has been a very uncertain time for us in whichever branch of dentistry we work, as we come to terms with the biggest change in British dentistry for years. The new contract has had a significant effect on the way many of us work and I did wonder, when I stood anticipating my year in office, what I would find as I travelled the country meeting our members.

What I did find is a profession that we can all be proud of. Dentists, we know, are resilient, but what was very obvious in all parts of the country was how supportive they are to each other. I have had the pleasure of visiting Branches, Sections and Groups from Belfast to Brighton and from Glasgow to Barnstaple and everywhere I have been impressed by the camaraderie and support shown to each other. I have personally been warmly welcomed wherever I have been. I have given lectures, proposed toasts, made speeches and even, in Glasgow, recited the poetry of our famous Welsh poet Dylan Thomas – well, I couldn't let the Scots have all the glory with Robbie Burns! Everywhere I have enjoyed wonderful hospitality and

there is one other thing that we can be sure of – dentists know how to enjoy themselves, however tough life seems!

I would like to thank all of you who have looked after me so well and made my year so enjoyable and memorable. I would like to thank the staff at the BDA who have supported me throughout the year and particularly Kerry Dalton, who started the year organising my programme and then Jane Wilson and Jonica Love, who took over when Kerry's skills were required elsewhere in the organisation. Thank you too to my colleagues and employers back at the 'day job' in Gwent, for their tolerance and support. I have many happy memories of a very special and unique year so thank you all.

I know that Joe will also have a wonderful year! I am delighted to be passing the Presidential medal to Joe Rich. Joe has been a hugely significant figure within the BDA ever since I can remember. He was a great help to me when I first became involved at a senior level within the Association and it is an honour for me to precede him as President. I know he will be an excellent ambassador for our Association and I wish him and his wife all the very best in the year to come.

Finally, my thanks go to the members of the BDA for giving me the honour of being President of this Association. I hope to continue my commitment to the BDA – I don't feel old enough to give it all up yet, but I have been immensely proud to represent the BDA both at home and abroad and I am grateful to you all for your friendship and support and for a very special experience that I will never forget.

Sue Greening  
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