

A brief history of the BOS

The British Orthodontic Society came into being on 1 July 1994 by the unification of the five existing national orthodontic societies. It was achieved after fifteen years of aspirations and three years of hard negotiation.

The Founding Societies

The British Society for the Study of Orthodontics (BSSO)

Was founded in 1907 and was the oldest national orthodontic society. At the time of unification almost every orthodontist was a member as well as three hundred General Dental Practitioners (GDPs) with a special interest in orthodontics. The BSSO had its origins in London when a group of dentists with an interest in orthodontics established the Society. It was conceived as a study group and an academic organisation. With the beginnings of a separate orthodontic speciality in the new NHS in the late 1940s and the perceived need for political representation, the BSSO made the decision to eschew political involvement. This inevitably led to the formation of other representative societies. In its last fifteen years the BSSO accepted responsibility for political involvement on behalf of its members. For very many years the BSSO held six evening meetings through the winter months in Portland Place and an annual conference. In the latter years the evening meetings have become larger and reduced to two in number and a one day meeting was held in the Spring. Every year BSSO held the "Northcroft Memorial Lecture" named in memory of one of the founders, George Northcroft. An invitation to give this Lecture has high international prestige. George Northcroft was a President and very active member of the BDA. The "Northcroft Memorial Lecture" is now held annually at the British Orthodontic Conference.

The other founder, Harold Chapman, is honoured by the "Chapman Prize" which is awarded to the best paper from a junior member. The BSSO also set up the "Houston Memorial Fund" to fund orthodontic research in memory of Professor Bill Houston who died in an accident in 1992. It was traditional for BSSO meetings to have a high scientific and academic content. For most of its existence all papers presented to the Society were published in the "Transactions of the BSSO" which was published annually.

The Consultant Orthodontists Group (COG)

Was formed in 1964 to represent Orthodontic Consultants in the Hospital service. The membership was limited to those holding consultant contracts in the NHS. Relationships with oral surgeons was of particular concern in the early years. Although primarily a political organisation, the Group held clinical and political meetings twice a year with attendance restricted to members. The Group established strong links with the Royal Surgical Colleges, the SAC and the BDA through its representatives on the BDA Central Committee for Hospital Dental Services (CCHDS) and was often regarded in the Profession as the political voice of orthodontists. Almost all members of the COG were members of the BSSO and about 70 members belonged to the BAO as well.

The British Association of Orthodontists (BAO)

Was established in 1965 to represent specialist orthodontic practitioners. The Unicorn logo was adopted because the first exploratory meeting was held in the Unicorn Hotel in Stow-on-the-Wold. The founding members were Jack Alexander, Hans Eirew and Bill Frankland who occupied the first offices of Chairman, Treasurer and Secretary. Full membership was limited to those with nearly full-time orthodontic practices. The BAO sought recognition of specialists in practice through specialist registration. It was for this reason that in 1971 Full membership was restricted to those holding postgraduate orthodontic qualifications. Associate members without orthodontic qualifications were encouraged to join but could not vote in the Association. In the early years the BAO was chiefly concerned with the, then, Dental Estimates Board (DES).

In those days all orthodontic treatment was subject to prior approval and there were no items of orthodontic treatment in the fee scale. Orthodontists were entirely dependent on decisions of the DEB which were often regarded as capricious. The Association started its own scientific journal "The Orthodontist" and held an annual conference.

The content of meetings was mainly of practical, clinical and practice management interest with an element of political discussion. Although its membership has always been smaller than the BSSO, the BAO established itself to some extent as the rival national organisation for orthodontists. Many members were also members of the BSSO.

The Community Orthodontists Section (COS)

Was established in 1978 as a section of the BAO, with BAO financial support, to look after the interests of orthodontists in the Community Dental Service. The COS held an annual meeting with a clinical and political content. Although the BAO continued to underwrite the COS financially, the COS became an autonomous organisation. The COS tried for many years to obtain the right of representation on the Central Committee for Community Dental Services of the BDA (CCCDs), but this remained denied to them. Most members were also members of BSSO and/or BAO.

Subsequently the Association of University Teachers of Orthodontics (AUTO) to represent the orthodontic teachers and the Senior Registrars in Orthodontics Group (SROG) to represent Senior Registrars in orthodontics, were formed.

The Route to the British Orthodontic Society

Unification took place step by step over very many years. Some members of the specialty perceived that the BSSO, the COG and the BAO were to some extent duplicating their activities. One stage at a time, areas were identified where the societies had a common interest in working together. However many consultants represented by the COG and specialist practitioners represented by the BAO saw their position to be threatened by each other. The BSSO tried to occupy a neutral position but as the management of the Society had for many years been undertaken chiefly by consultants there were members of the specialty who questioned their impartiality. As the need for political representation increased it was increasingly apparent that orthodontists needed a common voice. Outside bodies who required an orthodontic opinion usually approached only one of the societies and often received partial advice.

Joint Meeting of BAO and BSSO, Oxford 1975.

The meeting in 1975 was held under the auspices of BAO. BSSO contributed two sessions to the programme. During a period of political discussion, a BAO member, Roger Thomas, stood up and proposed that the societies combine. Members present responded to his statement in acclamation.

British Orthodontic Standards Working Party.

In 1978 the BAO, BSSO and COG established the British Orthodontic Standards Working Party under the Chairmanship of Professor B Leighton with representatives from all three societies with the objective of making recommendations regarding standards in orthodontics. Subsequently representatives of AUTO and COS joined the Working Party. The Working Party has produced many authoritative reports on most aspects of orthodontic standards and has done much to improve the quality of national orthodontic care. One of its many tasks was to set the standards for the PAR Index.

British Orthodontic Conference.

In 1980, Mr R Bird, President of the BSSO produced a discussion paper "Organisation of the Orthodontic Societies into a Single Society". A meeting of the officers of BAO and COG in 1982 agreed, amongst other things, to "discourage public slanging matches" which act to the detriment of orthodontists and to explore the possibility of holding a joint conference. In 1983 a joint meeting of the officers of BAO, BSSO, COG and AUTO agreed that the societies should hold a Joint Conference. The Minutes of this meeting make it clear that this was regarded as a first step to unification. The first meeting of the British Orthodontic Conference Committee was held in December 1983 with a view to the first Joint Conference in 1986. The Chairman was David Di Biase .

The first British Orthodontic Conference was held in Bournemouth in September 1986. It is interesting that the minutes of the first meeting of the Conference Committee show much more concern with political issues than with the organisation of the Conference. The first Conference was a huge success. The BAO Committee only agreed to the first two Joint Conferences, any continuation to be subject to a referendum of Full members. The referendum agreed to continuing the Joint Conference by a margin of over 90% showing that the membership did not share the reticence of the Committee. There have now been eleven BOC Conferences, each one has had a higher attendance than the one before. Over 800 members attended the

1995 Conference in Bournemouth. The Conference Committee is now a Committee of the British Orthodontic Society and is of course completely non-political.

Joint Response Committee - Schanschieff Report.

The Committee of Enquiry into Unnecessary Dental Treatment was set up in reaction to the Thames Television programme "Digging for Gold". Quite unexpectedly their Report in 1995 questioned the whole validity of orthodontic treatment under the NHS. This was a tremendous catalyst for orthodontic co-operation in the interests of survival and in a few weeks a "Joint Response Committee" of the orthodontic societies produced a very damning criticism of the orthodontic aspects of the Schanschieff Report. This subsequently formed the basis of the BDA response. The consequence was a complete restructuring of the orthodontic narrative in the GDS and the virtual end of prior approval for orthodontics. The Joint Response Committee remained in place on an ad hoc basis.

Joint Representation.

From 1983 the Chairman of BSSO Council and the Chairman of BAO were co-opted members of each other's committee. Every Committee of the founding societies co-opted the Chairmen of the other societies which placed an intolerable burden on the Chairmen.

Unification Working Party.

The BAO and BSSO set up a Unification Working Party which held its first meeting in September 1990. It was originally conceived to be about the unification of BAO and BSSO. The BAO insisted that COG must be involved too and all the orthodontic societies agreed to join the discussions. From the start it was agreed that GDPs would be equal members of the unified society. Negotiations regarding the name of the new society and representation on the Council were intractable. At the thirteenth meeting in July 1993 in a "make or break" atmosphere final Proposals were agreed and subsequently accepted by all the societies at the Glasgow Conference in September 1993. A constitution was agreed by the Working Party and put to a postal ballot of members by BAO, BSSO, COG and COS. The results ranged from acceptance by 92% to 100% showing yet again that the members are entirely in favour and only the officers of the societies were having difficulty in coming to agreement.

British Orthodontic Society

The Society comprises six Groups representing the different areas of employment of orthodontists:

Community Group:

Community Dental Service Orthodontists

Consultant Orthodontists Group:

Orthodontic Consultants

Practitioners Group:

GDP orthodontists who practice orthodontics part-time and some full-time orthodontists in specialist practice who do not hold specialist qualifications

Orthodontic Specialists Group:

Orthodontists in practice who hold specialist orthodontic qualifications

Training Grades Group:

All orthodontists on formal training courses including Registrars and Senior Registrars

University Teachers Group:

All university teachers of orthodontics

All the Groups were represented on the original Council of the Society. In addition to the elected members the Chairman of the SAC, a representative of the Royal Surgical Colleges and a representative of the GDSC are members. The Council was the representative body for all orthodontists in their relation with outside bodies. The Groups had devolved authority within their own sphere of activity but not in matters which affected the interests of members of other Groups. All the financial assets of the existing societies were transferred to the British Orthodontic Society .

The Council was assisted by several Committees responsible for finance, the British Journal of Orthodontics, the British Orthodontic Conference and for Standards. There was a General Orthodontic Services Committee which was responsible for negotiation with the GDSC, the Dental Practice Board and other bodies in all matters

concerning the GDS and had representatives from specialist and general practitioners as well as consultants and a community orthodontist.

The first Chairman of the Society was David Di Biase, the first Secretary was Chris Kettler and the first Treasurer was Alan Thom. The Society had a permanently staffed administration office at the Eastman Dental Hospital. After two years in post the first Chairman and Secretary retired to be replaced by David Lawton and David Barnett.

The first meeting of the Council was held on 22 July at the Eastman Dental Hospital when the agenda was mostly concerned with appointments to the Committees and other house keeping functions. The first full meeting of the Council was a high profile affair at the British Orthodontic Conference in Harrogate on 2 October 1994. On the following day there was an Inaugural Reception for the members of the British Orthodontic Society was attended by Harold Jones, President of the BDA. The gavel presented to the BSSO by George Northcroft belongs to the BDA Museum and was loaned to the British Orthodontic Society for use at the first full meeting of the Council.

The first few years.

The Society was rapidly accepted by all bodies inside the profession, such as the BDA and the GDC, as the sole national representative of all orthodontists. The respect afforded to the views of the Society greatly exceeds that given to any of the founding societies separately. Outside bodies, such as the Department of Health, quickly came to regard the Society as the appropriate body to consult on matters relating to orthodontics. The CDO's Report on UK Specialist Dental Training and future Manpower was published in the summer of 1995. There were bound to be differences of opinion between different branches of the specialty on the response to this report. It was highly fortuitous that these differences could be discussed within the Society and the differences of opinion minimised.

The Society rapidly became accepted by all its members as the natural and complete successor of all the founding societies and there is every reason to expect that the British Orthodontic Society will continue to represent all orthodontists and dentists who do orthodontic treatment for the foreseeable future.

Twelve years on

The Society became a Company Limited by Guarantee in 1998. The Society purchased new prestigious offices in Bridewell Place in the City of London in January 2006. The Council of the BOS was perceived to be too large and that there were too many Trustees of the Society. In 2006 the Society was re-structured. The main executive body has become the Board of Trustees which comprises the six Group Chairmen (or a Trustee appointed by the Group), the Chairman of the Conference and Meetings Committee and the BOS Chairman and Treasurer. The Society appointed a salaried Executive Secretary to replace the Honorary Secretary. The President and Executive Secretary are non-voting members of the Boards of Trustees. The Committees of the Society were rationalised. A new Representative Body has been created to be a main information forum for all the Groups and the Committee Chairmen. The provision of orthodontic treatment in NHS practice has been radically changed by the introduction of a New Contract in 2006. The BOS has been accepted by the Department of Health and the British Dental Association as the principal body to consult with regarding the delivery of orthodontic training and treatment in the UK. The main objective of the founders of the Society have been realised. The BOS is recognised nationally and internationally as the representative and the voice of orthodontics in the UK.