

..”Be careful where you aim..”

Every year we attend a two day conference of the top tier independent opticians in the UK and Republic of Ireland. It's great to rub shoulders with these creative entrepreneurs, learn from them and get to know them. I always look forward to it and I'm excited by the thought of bringing something new back to work on at Bottomleys.

Each year there is the coveted Practice of the Year award presented at the conference. To stand a chance of winning you have to submit a long document showing what you've been up to and how you run your business with evidence to show why you're different and deserve the award.

As if I'd got nothing else to do, I was foolishly persuaded to submit the document and throw my hat in the ring this year. Once I got into it I actually enjoyed it! In doing it I got the chance to look at what we do and why we do it almost through fresh eyes. I finished it and pressed send. I wasn't so worried... they pick 10 finalists out of all the entries so it was highly unlikely we would go through. I'd had the experience of evaluating a snap shot of Bottomleys right now and I had benefited from that.

To my surprise I got an email about two weeks later from the organisers of the event thanking me for my submission and that we'd been put through as finalists!

I was amazed and quite proud of us but also equally fearful. Being a finalist meant more work. Not only that, it meant having to give a presentation to the whole crowd at the conference on Saturday night! I instantly rued the day I let someone sway my better judgement. I've played in bands for over 30 years. We have done some notable gigs in our time but that's being up there with your mates, coping with the nerves as a team and in most cases delivering it both barrels (if we do say so ourselves). I am not a solo artist and I am certainly not a public speaker!

I had to have a word with myself and accept the fact that if I had been stupid enough to press send then I had to man up and start writing the presentation. I had never used powerpoint before so that was a new skill to learn. Basically it's a slideshow - an upgrade from an overhead projector.

I got really stuck into the slide show first before realising I needed to write the speech first...(I have a knack of always learning the hard way). Even though it was a good couple of months off the organisers wanted the whole presentation emailed in less than a week!!! I emailed them my rough draft knowing that I could tweak it before having to deliver it live in a couple of months.

Well, time went by, we got busy, I went windsurfing in Greece and then the day I got back I had to pack and leave for the conference in Liverpool. It was upon us! I picked up Nick and we drove over. There was a good programme of talks and interactive discussions brainstorming lots of ideas that could be useful to us. There was a brilliant keynote speech given by Will Butler-Adams, the CEO of Brompton Bikes. He is a really interesting chap with a valuably weird approach to business that has worked very well for him at Bromptons, and he was sharing some great ideas that would work in any business. It was really good to soak up all the suggestions and learn from the experienced optical entrepreneurs in the top tier of our industry once again. All of a sudden though...it was Saturday evening!

I was sat in my seat giving myself a pep talk about it only being a talk and it would all be fine when they introduced me and called me up. I walked confidently up to the stage (pep talk kicking in). I had the worst dry mouth I've ever experienced and the room was spinning. I started out talking about Randolph Bottomley and how he started it all; talked about my dad and then I quickly realised that this slide show was the first draft that I'd submitted and all my notes fitted with the updated version! I had practiced this gig about a hundred times to my cat Tiger and the kitchen clock. I had to just freestyle through most of the slides and chat about how the team work together to deliver a great experience for all our clients. I also talked about trade shows in Paris, Munich and Milan, the Boutique in the Piece Hall and finally took it full circle with a quote from Randolph Bottomley who used to say "always give people a reason to walk through that door" and how it fitted with the ethos of the event. I thanked the audience and went back to my seat as if nothing had happened. It was good to be anonymous again. It was a bit of a shambles but I was feeling relieved that I'd got it over with.

There were some great talks given by the 9 other finalists and I was pretty sure who would take the trophy. The guy who went on before me really worked the room and was very entertaining and he certainly had my vote. The winner is decided by everyone in the room voting. The votes were counted and I sat there ready to applaud Steve for his win.

What happened next was quite extraordinary. I will never forget the feeling of shock and amazement...fully expecting Steve to be summoned but they called my name instead!



The room really was spinning now!

I had to go up and accept the trophy for Practice of the Year 2019.

It was quite a humbling experience but I'm really proud of the team for giving me all the good things to talk about! The trophy sits on the shelf just above the front desk at Halifax for now, but it will move round and do stints at Lindley and the Boutique.

Do come in and be served by an award winning team! **LiFe**



When there's a lack of wind or surf it's always good to get together with some friends on the island including my mum on squeeze box and have a bit of a jam through some ceillidh tunes (every day's a school day for someone like me).

My folks moved up here about 10 years ago and I don't blame them...it's a really great place and a great community too. A while ago we set up Bottomleys on Tiree and Dad has been testing eyes here for quite some time now. It saves the islanders at least a day out of their lives going to Oban and also keeps my dad out of mischief. The clients get a superior eye exam and better service too (but then I would say that). I asked him a few questions about their new life up here and how it's going.



I see you're wearing quite a funky Theo these days.... How is that working for you and do you still enjoy your Lindbergs?

Wearing my Theo frame initially led to quite a lot of comments, even from a leading Ophthalmologist who has a house on the island. I appreciate the design and engineering behind the Theo frame, but the same could be said for my Lindbergs.

Theo and Lindberg represent two differing

idioms of eyewear. In effect, you make a statement with your choice of spectacle frame. Theo is bold and "in your face" whereas the Lindbergs are more subtle yet still exuding quality and comfort.

My current Lindberg is fitted with Zeiss DriveSafe lenses, designed specifically for behind the wheel, and I find they give excellent vision of dashboard and controls. They have an especially good anti-reflection coating, which reduces glare and helps with the quality of vision when night driving.

I know I find it difficult to switch off but we met a lady at the festival who was wearing Theo as sunglasses and I noticed she had another one as her regular glasses. How do you feel about offering Theo and Lindberg up here for the good people of Tiree?

Our Tiree branch should have a small collection of both Theo and Lindberg frames - they represent some of the best eyewear the world has to offer, and thanks for bringing them to the attention of all our clients.



Ok...is there anything else you'd like to say to our great clients in West Yorkshire?

Just thank you to all our clients old and new - thank you for supporting our independent family run business, now in its 72nd year. **LiFe**

Theo's on Tiree

Every year I pack the van and get stuck into a 6 hour road trip to Oban. I get up there in good time and sleep in the back of the van on the dock so I'm ready to roll on the ferry at stupid o'clock the next morning. I've been making the journey to Tiree for nearly twenty years and it never gets easier. It's a beautiful voyage up through the Sound of Mull, stopping at the isle of Coll before taking a right and heading across the water to Tiree.



Tiree is a small island with a population of about 650 and I come here every year- mainly to see my folks who live here, but also get some windsurfing and surfing done and go to Tiree Music Festival with them. Quite often the weather will be against TMF but they persevere and make sure everyone has a great time anyway.

It's still quite a novelty to go to a music festival with my mum and dad and I certainly don't take it for granted. In my time I've played quite a few festivals up and down the UK and it's good but it doesn't beat just going to watch with your folks. TMF is different to others in that there's a good chunk of Scottish ceillidh bands. These guys are the rock stars of events like this and whilst they've had some big names play like Toploader, The Frattellis, The Hoosiers, Martyn Joseph and many more, the headline

acts are nearly always Tiree bands like Skipinish, Trail West and Skerryvore. They really get the big top jumping



Even though I always take my work with me and keep in touch with the team most days, I still manage to fit in some great sessions on the water when the wind gets up at Crossapol, and enjoy a few days surfing at Balevullin. The beaches are something else here, you wouldn't believe it was Scotland some days!



The walk round York

We told you about one of our crazy ideas in past newsletters. On Sunday 20th November 2019 Nick Cossins, Martyn Duffy and yours truly foolishly did the York Marathon!

It was great to do this with two colleagues who are as stupid as me. Nick took the next weekly meeting dressed in his t-shirt and medal and explained the lessons he learned from his experiences on the race, and how they can help us at Bottomleys.



I can't quite believe that I finished it but I have a medal to say that I did; however a day and a half after I was still lame. Nick and Martyn seem to have bounced back a bit quicker than me and they have their own stories about the race that I'm sure they will be happy to share with you if you ask them nicely. For me it was a journey into what is possible when everything in you is telling you otherwise. A few people

understandably had laughed and told me I would never do it so it's good to have proved them wrong. More importantly though, I proved to myself that it's possible to push past what other people think of you and go for it anyway. I don't know if I'll be signing up for another but if you're thinking about it I'd recommend it...you never know what you're capable of!



WELCOME ABOARD

I'd like to officially welcome all our new clients from recent months.

Steven F, Teresa R, Brenda P, Jack C, Jacqueline T, Ann L, Peter S, Dorothy T, Leah S, Stuart R, Lynn T, Alison P, Janet B, Scott V, Elizabeth B, Nicola U, Ben W, Lizzie L, Mark H, Neil M, Jacque M, Francis G, Mary H, Elizabeth S, Maureen M, Jan G, Patricia R, Carole C, Janet T, Catherine S, Jo H, Struan T, Florence D, Susan B, Andrew C, Allan W, Karen L, Graham L, Marjorie E, Saffron W, Karen C, Licia B, Sally W, Alison M, Alan G, Adrian B, Vicky H, Nigel S, Kirsty H, Richard H, Maria H, Edward C, Julie A

WELCOME! WE'RE GLAD YOU FOUND US.

Bottomley Opticians LiFe is a monthly conversation about the life and inner workings of Bottomley Opticians...

Its great to keep in touch and we really value having a strong relationship with you all. We're quite a small company and the only real way to grow is by offering the best service and products, and by word of mouth our reputation spreads. We are sharing some of the actions that directly contribute to what makes us different as an opticians and an independent business.

For new clients, as we grow I don't always get to meet you. This unusual publication is an open dialogue between us so that you can get to know who we are as a company, and painful as it can be, we like to show some of our personality. We're not a faceless corporation.

For regular clients, many of you only come in once a year or once every two years. We can go a long time without seeing you and a lot can happen in a year or 2 so we like to keep in touch. We have realised that a lot of you are members of families who live at the same house and we have tried to have all of you named on the envelope. This has proved quite tricky and we have sometimes sent more than one copy to the same house. So...

We will send out one newsletter per household and if you're a couple or family it will be addressed to the lady of the house. If you are the lady we ask that you share this with your partner and family. Any offers or vouchers we send can be used by any of your family and friends as many times as you like.

Your feedback is invaluable. I'm extremely interested in what you have to say. I enjoy writing LiFe and responding to comments.

Please send your thoughts and comments on what we're talking about to

jim@bottomleyopticians.co.uk

Every month I will try to rise to the challenge of writing something about us worth reading. If I've failed in your eyes to do that, you can unsubscribe by just sending an email to jim@bottomleyopticians.co.uk