

How we did it

Husband and wife team **Richard** and **Sally Hudson** met while studying at the University of Bristol and dreamt about having their own practice. Here is their story



I qualified in December 1992, and was awarded the American Association of Endodontists undergraduate award, as well as the Claudius Ash award for Operative Techniques. My wife, Sally qualified three years later and obtained her diploma in postgraduate dental studies soon after.

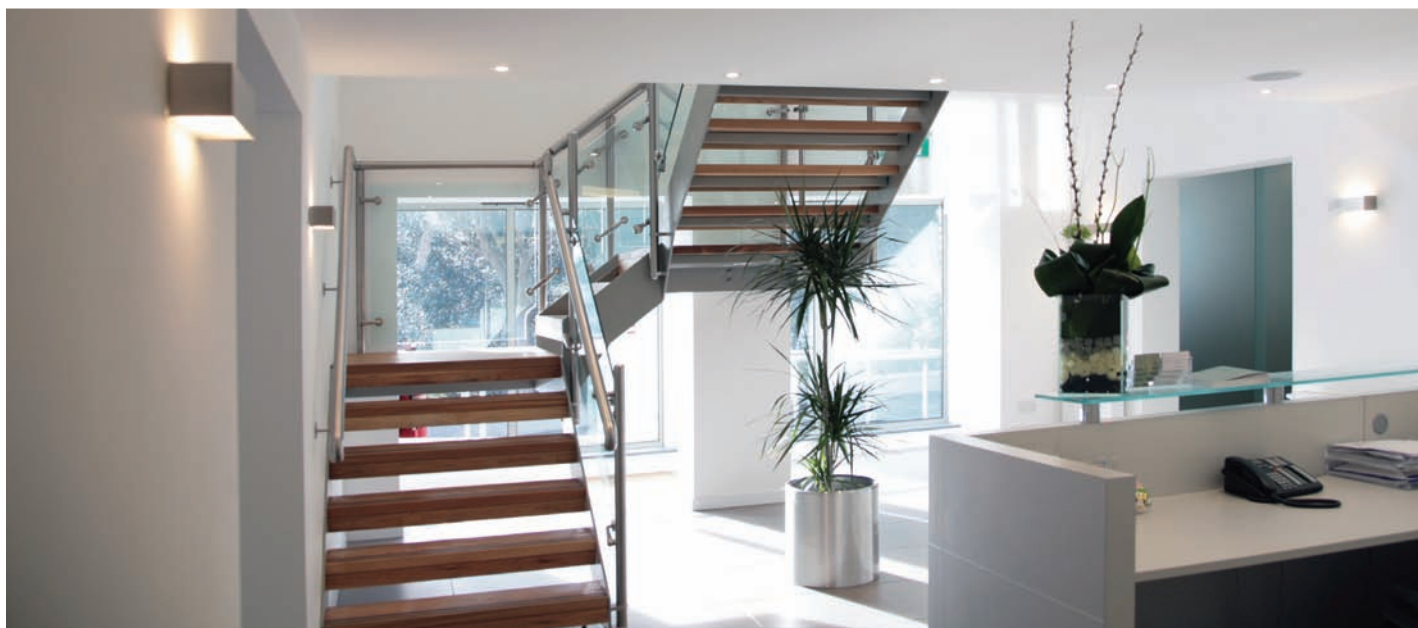
I started my career in at a mixed practice in Oxford then returned to Bristol to join a long established private practice in Victoria Square. I was fortunate to take over the list of one of my clinical ssistants from University, Derek Crayton. This was a great environment in which to practice and I spent a lot of time with Mike Cooksey watching minor oral surgery. Mike was at the dental hospital for many years and had a wealth of experience to share. I have also worked part time in a wide range of practices including a corporate. Along the way, I have attended numerous courses and lectures, the highlight being 'Simply Excellence in Implants' run by Philip Bennett and Koray Feran. Philip has been my mentor ever since.

Sally started her career as a vocational trainee at a very busy practice in Barnstable, north Devon and gained a lot of experience in a very short time. The location was great as I could surf whenever I came to visit! She then worked in a private practice in Newent, Gloucestershire.

In 1999 we opened a cold squat in Newquay, the Green Room. In our nine years there we established a good reputation for sound dentistry in a friendly, down-to-earth environment. However, we outgrew the practice and wanted to offer a broader range of treatments and accommodate our increasing implant referral base.

The issues we faced with our old practice were:

- Inadequate parking for both staff and patients – the more

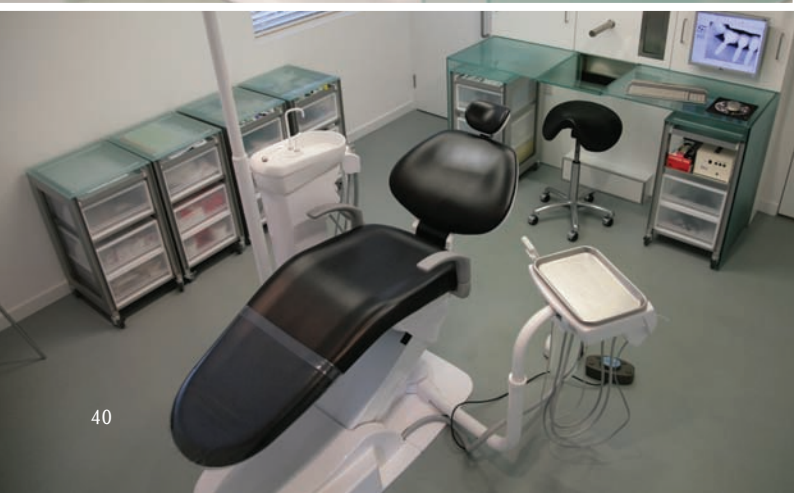


stresses we could remove then the better the experience

- No spare surgery – it is so much more efficient to have a clean, prepared spare surgery to use while the other one is being cleaned after a long procedure. It also means we can carry on working in the event of an equipment failure
- No consulting room – we wanted a consulting room away from the dental chair to discuss treatments, present reports and show patients our portfolio of before and after photos. A small open plan reception/patient lounge – which gave no privacy when dealing with delicate or personal matters. We still wanted open plan, but with more space to protect privacy
- We were posting our laboratory work to a great technician and, with the help of email and digital photography, getting nice results, but we really wanted a technician on site as I feel this is the way to get really great results
- We wanted to be able to offer more than just dentistry – and have consulting rooms, which could be used for other therapies and disciplines.

Towards the end of 2006 we began looking for a suitable property in which to relocate. It had to fulfil our wish list – so had to have lots of parking and be huge! We found a building in a perfect location that had the potential to be adapted to our needs. We had our offer accepted in December 2006 and immediately set about looking for an architect.

We looked through back issues of *Private Dentistry* and certain practices really stood out, namely the ones designed by award-winning architect, Richard Mitzman. After a very productive meeting with Richard, we got cracking on the design. Both Sally and I had strong views on how the practice should look and feel. Richard drafted preliminary plans and these went through several changes and refinements before we were all happy. A few more tweaks at the request of the fire officer and we were there. The process of working with Richard was really satisfying, especially choosing all the colours, finishes, fixtures and materials. Mitzman Architects have a great relationship with superb suppliers of lighting, flooring – pretty much everything!





Our aim was to create the ultimate in design and experience. We wanted to provide an exceptional facility in Cornwall and bring 'West End dentistry to the West Country.'

In April 2007, we were the proud owners of Trenance Lodge Restaurant and Guest House – 4500 square foot of the 1970s finest. The location is stunning in one of the prettiest and most unspoilt parts of Newquay, set within an acre of tranquil gardens, overlooking the Trenance Boating Lake. Access is easy via grand granite gateposts to the first car park, with ample space and parking for 30 cars. A sweeping drive then leads up through the gardens with mature trees and palms creating a sub-tropical feel. The practice is located at the top and has the feel of being 'in the canopy' – a serene experience!

We didn't anticipate how much more red tape there is now compared to setting up nine years ago. Building regulations are far more stringent and very careful design and planning were required.

We finally went to tender in October 2007 and work commenced in January 2008. The builder we chose lives about two minutes walk from the practice, making him easy to get hold of. He works to a high standard, which is vital for the crisp finish required with modern design. The size of the building was daunting, being three times bigger than our last practice, though the size of the grounds would make access easy for the build. We had to gut and completely re-design a tired building that had previously been run as a restaurant and B&B. It was dark, with lots of small rooms and very low ceilings. It was a very big project to manage on top of running a busy practice.

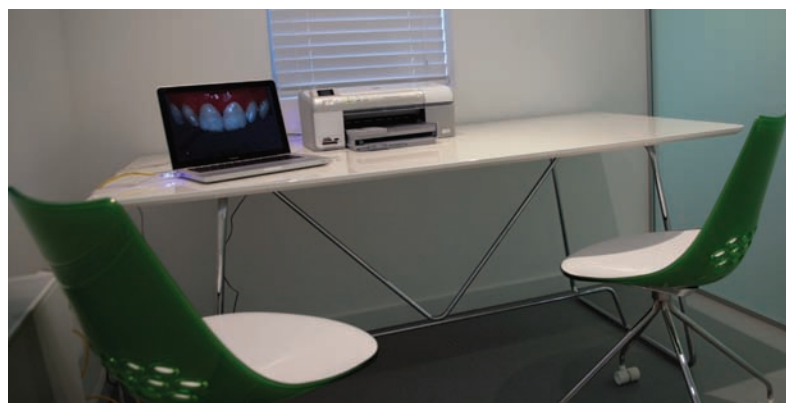
The mental preparation was the easiest part as Sally and I are both quite driven, enjoy a challenge and work well together. We were both totally committed to the project and neither of us is afraid of hard work, which is just as well because the project has required lots of dedication. Financially, we had a proven track record and prepared a business/financial plan to show the banks. Sally is a fantastic negotiator and after meetings with several banks we got the

best deal from our current bank, RBS. Our accountant and pension/tax consultant gave us excellent advice. They recommended putting our new property into a SIPP (self invested pension plan) as the most efficient way to create a pension for ourselves, whilst working in an environment we would love.

As is often the way, we over ran by three months, which was frustrating and towards the end we were thinking 'never again!' but the end result was worth it. We finally opened in September 2008.

A truly uplifting experience

Richard Mitzman helped us to bring the dream alive. He was originally a practicing dentist and used that insight to create a purpose-built practice that is a triumph of aesthetic beauty. Using space and natural light, Richard has created a truly uplifting experience, which is more akin to a spa than a traditional dental surgery. The extra surgeries have improved efficiency, the consulting room is a far more appropriate place to communicate than with patients than 'in the chair' and the advantages of an in-house laboratory go without saying.





Since we opened, we have seen a steady increase in elective procedures. We feel this is simply because it looks and feels like the right kind of place to have this kind of treatment done. Happily, we have also seen a steady stream of new patients. Our plans for the practice over the next couple of years are to host lectures/courses, recruit an orthodontist and install a CT scanner so we can provide everything under one roof.

We still feel euphoric about what we have achieved and were thrilled to have won the 'WOW' awards reflecting our 'investment in improving the patient experience'.

The new Green Room is a beautiful and uplifting space to work in. Our patients have been surprised and delighted with the Green Room and the most typical reactions we hear are 'wow, it's amazing' or even 'I could live here!'

Another angle

Richard Mitzman, the architect, shares his views on the Green Room's transformation

Before the Green Room was transformed into a dental practice it was a restaurant/B&B, which was unbelievably claustrophobic with low ceilings and wooden beams. However, as soon as we removed the beams and low ceiling, the claustrophobia feeling disappeared.

Richard and Sally were terrific, we were singing from the same song sheet from the off and we all quickly agreed on how we wanted the practice to be. As I was a very long way away and Richard had already done a practice, we decided that he would project manage the practice while Sally would manage the project finances. I was consulted whenever they hit a problem, and it all worked very well.

The first thing we wanted to do was to lighten the building. We understand that glass borrows light, which means that light can be taken deep into the practice. It can transform an area. Glass is a great material, not only because

An unexpected bonus has been the additional consulting rooms. We have two beauticians, an aesthetic practitioner and two osteopaths. We have seen a lot of cross-referral helping us all to flourish. Also it's nice to have more people around.

On reflection, we wouldn't have been so ambitious about how quickly we could complete the project and, therefore, would not have re-located our lab technician, Steve Lusty, so early on. Unfortunately, because of the project delays, he ended up working out of our garage for a few weeks prior to the final opening with only our cats for company! My advice to anyone embarking on a similar project is plan every aspect extremely carefully and don't under-estimate how much time you need to put into it. Be clear about what you want, work hard to make it happen but do be realistic about deadlines – watch a few episodes of *Grand Designs* and you get the picture!



it lets light in, but it also so easy to clean and be seen to be clean.

Our surgeries have a different circulation for the staff and patients. The staff move around the middle while the patients move around the outside. This makes it feel calm and relaxed, people don't trip up over each other and there are no bottlenecks! We used glass for the corridors, letting light stream deep into the internal surgeries.

Each surgeon has two surgeries, so once you have finished with one patient you can walk next door into the other surgery and it'll be clean so you can get straight to work on another patient. This means that each surgery can be cleaned without the dentist losing any treatment time – and imagine the stress it relieves too! We also design a separate consulting room – it's a very useful area. The upstairs (which was the B&B) has been made into consulting rooms and a dental laboratory.

Our surgeries recognise the major issue infection control has become. We developed the concept of the storage wall (which can be accessed from either side) and the glass shelf over many years in many practices. We designed the three drawer trolleys to be used for all the disposables. The trolleys reduce clutter, are easy to clean and save time, after all, the less that is out, the less you have to clean.

All the dental equipment and furniture in the Green Room was their choice, it's their personality. But I believe that the dental equipment should be as simple as possible, versatile and not over engineered. I like the dentists I work with to have strong ideas as it stops everything ending up the same.

I choose like-minded clients who want to push the boundaries and recognise the concept we have developed. Nothing is prescriptive in our surgeries – anyone can work in them. [PD](#)

Companies involved in the project

Main contractor

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Graphic and web design

Phil Zschiesche

Dental chairs

**Belmont Voyager (I'm left
handed and these allow
switching between left and
right handed)**

Equipment suppliers

**Beaver Dent
T: 0800 015 5866**

Internal etched glass

**PAR Glass Design,
141 The Broadway, West
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**Software of Excellence
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The team:

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Suzy Donnellan (therapist)
Simone Scott (receptionist)
Nikki Bracey (nurse)
Janine Stawski (nurse)
Ania Szewczyk (nurse)
Stephen Lusty (technician)**