

Easing shoulders after a week at the wheel

Running a business is stressful. Meetings, finances, keeping the customers happy, sorting out employee problems, just generally being the guy in the hot seat. Business life has never been more pressurised.

I've been an osteopath for more than 24 years, and treating people for stress and other work-related conditions forms a large part of my patient list.

People come to me with all sorts of conditions, particularly neck and back pain – often caused by sitting at an office computer for a long time, with the wrong posture and without a break – persistent headaches, arthritis and abdominal problems.

It's probably useful that I'm a perpetual student, because techniques in osteopathy are developing all the time.

So I always end up doing way more than the compulsory 30 hours CPD training I need every year to maintain my qualification as a registered osteopath, and I learn something new every day.

Fascinated

I've always been fascinated with knowledge, ever since I left Rutherford Grammar School in Newcastle and went to work for Winthrop Laboratories, the people producing brands such as Andrews Liver Salts, Milk of Magnesia and Delrosa cough syrups.

One way or another, I seemed to spend most of the next 20 years in laboratories, working as a scientific officer for the Ministry of Agriculture in Newcastle, Wales and Stratford, and including a three-year degree course in chemistry at Newcastle University.

It was while working for the ministry that I met my wife, Sue, and we came to Kent in 1985 when I spent my days monitoring an automated lab at their Wye regional office.

And if you think that working in an automated environment could be boring, then you'd be absolutely right!

Which is where I began to

I remember buying an early PC, and the not-always-successful quest for an internet connection by dialling Brighton

In our latest feature on owner-managers of the county's SMEs, Tenterden-based osteopath **BILL FERGUSON** explains why it pays to be a 'perpetual student' and why boredom at work is as stressful as being hyper-busy.



Bill Ferguson gave up a career in laboratories to become an osteopath

take an interest in stress, because any doctor will tell you that being bored at work is every bit as stressful as life for a busy executive, racing from meeting to meeting.

I was in Maidstone one day when I picked up a leaflet offering places at a Loughborough University summer school to study stress, its effects and how it can be managed.

At Loughborough, I was inspired to learn massage and the techniques needed to ease aching muscles and joints, and I became sufficiently adept to treat my colleagues at Wye on my days off.

It was now clear that this was the career I wanted to follow, so, in 1989, I resigned from Wye, went self-employed, and embarked on a further four years training to earn my Diploma in Osteopathy, which I was awarded in 1992.

I've been in private practice ever since, and in the intervening years, have also become qualified in acupuncture, cranial and visceral osteopathy

Contact Bill

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and the treatment of sports injuries.

My wife Sue is a chiropodist, caring for people with foot problems, and, as we have our consulting rooms at our home in Tenterden, we live over the shop, so to speak.

Actually, we're both perpetual students, and we've been devotees of computer technology since the very beginning.

Passionate

I remember in 1986 buying an early PC, and having to trail a lead from the lounge to a phone socket in the kitchen in the not-always-successful quest to get an internet connection by dialling a number in Brighton!

I'm a passionate believer in

the value of the web and social media, and I take time every day to post on Twitter and Facebook, sometimes update my LinkedIn profile, and keep my website and blog up to date.

While online marketing is crucial, I also advertise locally, as well as attending meetings of the Tenterden Chamber of Commerce and Wealden Business Group to network with local business people.

But it's still constant study which is most important to me, both in terms of ensuring I'm right up to date with the latest developments in osteopathy, but also in my leisure time.

Apart from work and study any remaining space in my diary tends to be taken up with Tenterden Rotary Club, which I joined in 2000.

I've learned to speak French and Spanish with the Open University, and I still take private lessons in Spanish – always useful when Sue and I take our Christmas and summer holidays in Spain.