

# Interview with Ann John

## General Manager At J.J. Thompson (Orthodontic Laboratory)

JJ Thompson Orthodontic Laboratory is the sole distributor for SomnoMed® in the UK.



I joined J.J. Thompson in 1984 as a junior in the wirework department and the only female technician in a team of 17. After working in almost every department in the lab, I found my forte in fixed appliances where I eventually became Head of Department. I joined the lab's management team in 2000, and in 2007 I stopped manufacturing appliances altogether, moving into management full time.

In 2010, I became the Managing Director of the company, and when J.J. Thompson was acquired by BUPA Dentalcare in 2016, I became General Manager of both J.J. Thompson and our sister sales company, Eurodentic Ltd.

**Ann John**



### Q&A:

#### **Q: Why did you choose to work with SomnoMed?**

**A:** J.J. Thompson was one of the earliest members of the British Society of Dental Sleep Medicine. We sent technicians to Germany to learn how to manufacture appliances and put a lot of time and energy into our sleep department. Although we had several clinicians working with these appliances, we never managed to make it work commercially. At the time, there wasn't much take up for education and training on how to take that critical protrusive bite and manage the appliance. As a result, appliances would often come back to us for costly adjustments.

When I first met SomnoMed, I was very impressed by the quality of the appliances, and the idea that they would make the appliances AND deal with the training aspects was attractive. I have to admit though, I was a little sceptical that they would stay in the UK long enough to carve a position for themselves in this very difficult market- we had seen so many companies try and fail. So for a while, we continued to manufacture our own appliances as well as distributing SomnoMeds, it gave us a chance to see how SomnoMed worked and it wasn't long before we stopped manufacturing sleep appliances in the lab - as SomnoMed appliances were so good, including the support offered.

#### **Q: How do you feel their devices differ from others on the market?**

**A:** There are a lot of different styles on the market these days, with some labs still manufacturing the types of appliances we used to make (IST/TAP) and copies of these. I know from experience that SomnoMed are leading the field in terms of appliance design. They've refined their designs over the years,

with all changes geared to making the appliances slimmer and more comfortable for patients.

Plus, they're one of the only companies that can manufacture devices when the patient has very limiting dentition.

#### **How easy is it to work with SomnoMed?**

**A:** It's easy, stress-free and communication is good. We've established a good working relationship over the years and we've now got a straightforward and efficient workflow. It has been a pleasure working with them.

#### **Q: What is your opinion on Intra-oral scanning (IOS) versus impressions?**

**A:** We've been promoting digital dentistry for years now. With intra-oral scanning, we can receive digital impressions instantly, from any location, and they're highly accurate. But physical impressions do still have their place. For example, if there's anything that we want to question or check, we will still print the model, so we can manually look at the bite and turn the model in our hands. Sometimes, it just helps to see the physical model.

#### **Q: Do you see the demand for Mandibular Advancement Devices (MADs) increasing in future?**

**A:** Yes, I do. We know that there are a lot of people out there suffering from sleep apnoea, and it can have such a profound impact on their lives, as well as the lives of their families. The treatment pathway is unclear - for physicians and patients and shockingly it's an area of medicine that is still being largely ignored.

It is reassuring to know that SomnoMed are still working hard in the UK to improve this.