



Scenes from the celebration.

# Super sweet 15

**Eddie MacKenzie** attends a birthday party.

**S**potty teenagers dancing to the latest Wigfield or Vanilla Ice record, that is my memory of the last 15th birthday party I went to. So when the invitation to attend the celebration of DPAS' anniversary arrived I knew it was going to have to be something special to compete with that level of entertainment.

Yes Dental Payment Administration Services (correctly pronounced in abbreviation as D,P,A,S, rather than 'deep pass') is now 15. The company, which now has over 65 staff members, 650 customer practices and some 350,000 patients on plans, decided to celebrate in style. Even the even the journey down to the venue was a pleasure. Salisbury's rolling fields bathed in the summer sun and the appearance of Stonehenge on the way added to the sense of occasion before the arrival at the gloriously picturesque home of DPAS, Place Farm.

The tithe barn that now houses the dental payment plan company was first erected in the 14th century, and is the largest thatched barn in the country. It felt somehow out of place arriving by car into the grounds, a horse and carriage would have seemed much more in keeping. After being welcomed in the fully refurbished offices we strolled down to the marquees where the celebrations were beginning.

Champagne and canapés were served to the guests as the DPAS dignitaries worked the crowd

and thanked everyone for their attendance. The medieval mood brought on by the architecture was added to by the folk music played in the background. Though the wandering minstrels may have been musically traditional, in appearance were anything but. The Cosmic Sausages (the superb and insanely named band) were clad in Hawaiian shirts and Bermuda shorts along with long brightly coloured stripy socks, in short they were an absolute picture of incongruity – but they proved a hit as they toured through the crowd posing for photographs and trying to lure onlookers into song. At one point the band members all produced fake moustaches and serenaded a poor unfortunate (and hugely embarrassed) guest by making her the centre of attention for the Italian classic Besame Mucho.

After the nibbles and noise, Andrew Warren, DPAS director, called everyone to attention and announced the buffet was serving food. During the meal, the band toured the tables doing a song for each. I bullied our table into choosing the classic 'Wild Rover', but other songs performed included Dolly Parton's 'Jolene', Tom Jones' 'Delilah', and the Abba classic 'Waterloo'. Saving the best for last though the final table chose 'Chitty chitty bang bang', a tune which managed to bring even the shyest of diners out in voice!

After the final performance Andrew Warren again called all to attention

before introducing Quentin Skinner, DPAS chairman, to say a few words. Quentin explained his speech was 15 minutes long to celebrate the 15 years of DPAS, then joked everyone should be grateful it wasn't their 25th birthday!

Whilst fighting with the wind to keep hold of the pages of his speech, Quentin told the story of DPAS story from its inception in 1996, its continual growth, through to where it finds itself today. In 2000 DPAS launched its first stand at the BDTA Showcase, and a year later they exhibited at the BDA Conference. In 2005 the company moved to their current home, Place Farm, this was perfect timing as it gave the space for the massive increase in size the company underwent in 2006 (following the introduction of the new GDS Contract).

As Quentin spoke the DPAS admin staff emerged from the offices and filed down to the marquee just in time to hear him praise their efforts and thank them for the work they put in. After explaining how the company had grown in the past, and paying tribute to where it is currently, he then went on to explain how he saw the company progressing in the future, before finishing by asking everyone to join him in a toast to celebrate the company's 15th birthday.

Following the toast there was the cutting of the enormous celebratory cake, and the serving of strawberries and cream.

**The company, which now has over 65 staff members, 650 customer practices and some 350,000 patients on plans, decided to celebrate in style.**