

## Special Feature

# Diary of a Tooth Fairy

My own dental history began inauspiciously. Family folklore tells that I bit the dentist's thumb, but I'll swear that was my little sister. Now that she's an Anglican minister, she's surely been forgiven!

### Ivory Towers

In truth, my dental history was uneventful right through school, college and early-married life; but then we moved to Derbyshire. "Oh dear, Mr Forster," muttered the dentist at his surgery in downtown Clay Cross, a surgery boasting the nameplate 'Ivory Towers'. "We seem to be heading towards false teeth, don't we?" Mid-twenties and false teeth on the horizon - I couldn't believe it. Apparently it was all because I love distance running - let me explain. Runners are loosely tethered to the nearest cake tin or biscuit barrel. They snack incessantly. And it's the teeth that take the strain - a recipe for dental disaster; the die was cast. The prophets of doom were, however, kept at bay, during five years in Derbyshire and a further five years in Milton Keynes; but then we moved to Oxfordshire. For the past fifteen years my teeth have been coaxed into the twenty first century by a wonderful NHS dentist. With the aid of dental advances, false teeth were avoided. I couldn't, however, go to the church and sing that uplifting hymn, 'Crown Him with many crowns' without a sacrilegious smirk. My days, though, were numbered. March 2007 was the turning point. The inside of my mouth



resembled a graveyard in the aftermath of a Kalashnikov attack. The springtime abscess was the final straw.

I couldn't fault the service.

Five minutes after arriving I was seated in the all-too-familiar black chair.

"Dear me, Mr Forster," the dentist said, shaking his head,

"We'll try antibiotics but, failing that, your front tooth will have to come out and, I'm

afraid, we're talking about a dental plate." Even I knew that this was the equivalent of the long predicted false teeth. I left the surgery armed with antibiotics and painkillers.

### The Prediction Comes True!

Thursday was bad, Friday worse. My upper lip swelled up grotesquely. Further measures were called for as unscrewing my head was ruled out.

So it was that I sat in solitary splendour, corpulent lip to the fore, in the village surgery at nine o'clock on the Saturday morning. Within minutes an empathetic doctor, one who should surely have had wings on her back, was examining me and doubling the dosage of antibiotics. It worked! Sunday morning dawned fair and despite a face like a char-grilled prune, I was able to fulfil a speaking engagement in Chipping Norton church. Ten days later, pain free and face remoulded, the dental plate was fitted and the tooth fairy was smiling again. The Clay Cross prediction had come true, but at least it had the decency to wait a further thirty years!

**Bob Forster**