

# Is there life **after** dental practice ownership?

**Dentists often put off selling their practices because they are concerned about life after dentistry.**

**What will they do with all those extra hours, how will they cope with leaving behind the identity that has defined them for decades? This series of articles explores the very busy lives of some of Practice Sale Search's clients, former practice owners who have embraced post-sale life.**

**Name:** Dr Benjamin Gaffey

**Age:** I was 45 when I sold.

## **Tell us about your practice/s**

I ran a successful solo orthodontic practice on the South Coast of NSW. Our main practice was Nowra, with a branch practice in Ulladulla.

Jay (my wife) independently operated her solo general dentist practice in Gerringong.

## **Why did you decide to sell?**

When we were 35, my wife and I decided that we wanted to retire early, because life is short, you don't get any repeats, and you also don't know what's going to come about.

We made a 10-year financial plan to accrue property and shares. Seven years into the process, Jay sold her business and I sold mine the following year and continued to work part time for two years.

At 45 years of age, we were fully retired.

## **Tell us about life post sale.**

Jay and I have always enjoyed exercise. This love for sport quickly progressed into competing in endurance events. We are both quite competitive, so what started as social running spiralled into half marathons, then marathons, then 100k runs. Looking for the next challenge, I decided to sign up for an Ironman. It's a gruelling triathlon that involves a 3.8km swim, a 180km bike ride and a 42.2km run. I'd never competed in a triathlon and Jay could barely swim 25 metres breaststroke. Six months later, we completed Ironman Australia. We were hooked.

This led to travelling the globe, competing at multiple world champion-



ships at the half-Ironman distance and other full Ironman races. Each time we signed up for something that would scare the pants off you, we knuckled down and got the task achieved. But what comes after running a 100k race or competing in an Ironman?



**Nominate  
A YOUNG  
DENTIST  
Now**

2025  
**Australian  
Dentistry  
Awards** Melbourne

[www.australasiantdentist.com.au](http://www.australasiantdentist.com.au)  
[ausdentistryawards@gmail.com](mailto:ausdentistryawards@gmail.com)  
03 9502 0792





Knowing that my retirement was coming up, I needed to set myself a goal. Something truly scary. I decided that swimming the English Channel was it.

I spent two years training; 25km a week of swimming became my baseload of training in the first year. This volume would go up and up, eventually peaking at 48km. Constant downpours during 2023 and 2024 limited my ability to swim in the open water for fear of getting sick, and so the black line at the bottom of the pool became my best friend as we spent hours staring at each other.

The English Channel is 33.8km across, it's filled with stinging jellyfish, 15-16 degree water and experiences a whopping 5.5m tidal change. It's also the busiest shipping channel in the world, with boats over 400m long cruising up and down 24 hours a day. Around 2,000 people have successfully swum it. Three times as many people have climbed Mt Everest.

The rules of swimming the channel are

pretty straight forward. Start on one side, clear of the water, swim to the other side and get out completely clear of the water. Don't touch anyone or anything. Food and drink can be passed to you on a pole or tied to a piece of string and dropped. To combat the cold waters, a certain amount of heft must be put on. I ran up about 10kg on the trusty bathroom mat of shame. For directional and logistical needs, a boat accompanies you for the journey and drives you back to England once you're finished.

At 7am on the 1st of August, I walked down the pebble beach near Dover harbour, covered in lard. Conditions were excellent and I just started swimming a nice simple, even pace. I was going to be in the water for a very long time. Plodders get to France, sprinters don't. Every half an hour my crew would throw out a bottle on a string filled with a sugary concoction. Over the course of a day, I would consume more than a 1kg in carbohydrates. Think of that next time you buy a bag of sugar at the supermarket.

Jellyfish poured passed me like a never-ending asteroid belt scene in a sci-fi movie. In the middle of the channel, with a slight

haze, the crew lost sight of all land. All that existed was a 11m fishing boat and a greased-up dentist throwing his arms over in 16-degree water.

The swim went nice and consistent for seven hours, when my crew decided I needed to up my pace, for fear of missing the tide and getting swept north towards Holland and failure. My Australian swim coach put on his best poolside voice and proceeded to bellow at me for the next five hours. I could hear him underwater with diesel engines running. This was the deepest I have ever physically dug. I managed to cross into the shallows of France and safety.

After 12 hours and 51 minutes I emerged at Cap Gris Nez in France on an empty beach. No medal, no fanfare, no participation ribbon. The hardest swim on the planet gets acknowledged by a local pub in Dover that allows you to write your name on the wall. I'll take that.

### Now that you've swum the channel ... what's next?

I have returned to doing triathlons for a sport. I also roast my own coffee, bake bread (I won 'Best in Cookery' at the Kiama show) and brew beer. I've undertaken a registered bike technician course to look after our growing collection of carbon beauties and I am also actively involved in the executive committee of the Kiama Triathlon Club. We travel overseas 3-4 times a year. I'm going skiing in Japan and in August we plan on bike-touring through the Dolomites.

### Do you miss dentistry?

I loved doing my job, but it was always just a job. I can achieve satisfaction and accomplishment in other areas.

### Any advice to others?

Don't let your job or your title define you and become the gilded cage in which you wither. There is more to life than drilling and filling. Find something that scares you and run (swim) at it. ♦



# Nominate A NEW PRACTICE Now

2025  
**Australian  
Dentistry  
Awards**

Melbourne

[www.australasiantdentist.com.au](http://www.australasiantdentist.com.au)  
[ausdentistryawards@gmail.com](mailto:ausdentistryawards@gmail.com)  
 03 9502 0792

