

Facing the challenge

A look at one practice owner's journey to success.



A recurring theme in business ownership is the term 'challenge' – and for Hamish and Imogen Bury, launching their dental squat practice was no exception.

The couple have converted a former police station in the Wiltshire market town of Malmesbury into Malmesbury Dental & Specialist Referral Centre, a multidisciplinary clinic providing private general dental care and specialist referral services, completing the renovation and surgery fit-out in 12 months. Two

surgeries have been fitted out, and two additional surgeries are ready to go when demand requires.

Imogen is the clinical director and a periodontist, and her husband Hamish is the managing director.

Despite the impressive speed of the build, the venture was not without its challenges. There were initial hurdles in purchasing the building and obtaining planning permission for the change of use, as well as the complexities of a full building renovation. Alongside the practice build, the couple

balanced the project with existing work commitments and the arrival of a new family member mid-project. They did well to emerge from the experience and open the doors still smiling!

Hamish recalls, "We were passively looking for a location. Imogen was working as an associate, but had always dreamed of owning her own practice. One day, we happened to drive past the old police station, and the building suited our vision. The offer window had closed the week before, but we felt it had not been widely publicised, so we challenged it."



With an agreement with a developer seemingly on the cusp of finalisation, Hamish had the sales process reviewed, suggesting it was in the public interest. The couple got their wish and received the keys to the property some seven months later, in March 2025, with builders at the ready. Both were keen to avoid a turnkey solution, preferring to retain an overview.

Family Design and Build, a local family-owned construction firm, and Hague Dental, the independent dental equipment and surgery design company, worked together to bring the couple's vision to life, with Hamish overseeing the project. Works began in July 2025, and Malmesbury Dental & Specialist Referral Centre opened in April 2026.

"I was working two days a week elsewhere, but by December, I needed to be full-time on the project. From January, I was fully focused on marketing, website development, compliance, recruitment, and all preparations for the opening. We wanted to build a practice that would last us 20 to 30 years, so it was important to do it well from the start.

We succeeded, and the building has a beautiful feel."

The design features reconstructed stone walls, natural stone flooring, an oak-framed porch and a stunning, airy entrance. Less obvious is the high-quality insulation, which helps regulate temperature, improves energy efficiency, and creates a quieter environment. All of this reflects the couple's focus on comfort and on providing an exceptional patient experience.

Hamish says, "The patient experience was very carefully considered. We wanted to achieve a welcoming, light and premium feel. This included a beautiful limestone floor at the entrance to the porch and the waiting areas, custom-made chairs, and beautiful paintings. We also have a patient and chaperone drinks bar for refreshments pre- or post-appointments. The corridor to the surgeries is spacious and features a large viewing window into the decontamination room, providing full transparency in line with our clinical standards and showcasing what goes on behind the scenes. Our surgeries are equipped with the highest specification cabinetry and equipment,

including luxury upholstery on our dental chairs."

Hague Dental was instrumental in helping Imogen and Hamish select the best treatment centres for the practice.

"From the outset, we were looking for equipment that would support both the patient experience and the way we wanted to work clinically. One of the most valuable parts of the process was visiting Hague's showroom in Horsham, which allowed us to consider all our options."

They chose the Belmont S6 chairs with a folding leg rest for two of the surgeries.

"The surgeries are slightly smaller, so the design works better from a space point of view. They are also easier for elderly or less able patients to sit down and get out of, which was an important consideration. We chose the Belmont S8 chairs for the other surgeries because they offer a very high specification and can be set up ambidextrously, which gives us greater flexibility. The delivery cart can be returned to the back of the chair after treatment, allowing the clinician to speak to the patient at the end of the appointment without the distraction ➡



☞ of the nurse clearing the cart beside or in front of the patient. It creates a calmer and more considered end to the appointment. All our chairs are in Eucalyptus with upgraded luxury upholstery.

"A well-considered behind-the-scenes setup makes a real difference to how smoothly the practice runs for both the team and our patients, and Family Design and Build, our building company, deserve a special mention. This was their first dental project, and they delivered a superb result, working very closely with Hague Dental to develop a strong understanding of the dental-specific

requirements. It has been a journey."

As with any carefully managed project, Hamish and Imogen have built in room for expansion to meet growing demand. They have planning permission to build a single-storey rear extension, which will ensure the practice can serve the community well into the future and provide a teaching space to support and educate dental professionals in the local and wider region. Once built, this will accommodate state-of-the-art staff facilities and two additional surgeries, transforming the practice into an impressive six-surgery

multidisciplinary specialist referral centre.

"We have a great team to provide a range of services, including two periodontists (one of whom is Imogen), an endodontist, and an oral surgeon. We also have general dental practitioners with special interests in family dentistry, airway dentistry, and dental implants, as well as a hygienist," explained Hamish.

The specialist referral centre not only serves the local general dental community but also receives referrals from GDPs in Swindon, Tetbury, Chippenham and beyond.

Hamish added, "Our focus is on ☞

“Complementing the area’s existing services and offering specialist care to those who need it. It is great to have a network of local dentists now working alongside us, all of whom have referred patients. It has been an exhausting 20 months or so, but everyone is happy.”

In May 2025, Hamish attended the British Dental Conference & Dentistry Show, with little knowledge about the complexities of starting a practice. However, just 12 months later, in May this year, he was sharing the highs and lows of the build with delegates at the show. Presenting just five weeks after opening the practice doors, it was a raw and honest reflection on the realities of building a practice from scratch.

When asked to share some sage advice, he joked, “Don’t sign up to speak at a conference five weeks after you open!” But added, “The hard work has paid off, and the results speak for themselves. By sharing our experiences, we hope to inspire others. Our message is that if you are willing to work hard and put in the hours, you can create something really special.”

