



For immediate release, 26 October 2023

The Worshipful Company of Spectacle Makers mourns
Past Master John Baker FBDO

The Worshipful Company of Spectacle Makers announces the death of much-loved and respected Past Master John Baker FBDO, on 24 October 2023.

John Baker was a major influence in optics over many years. As President of the Association of Dispensing Opticians, John played an important role in bringing about the amalgamation with the Faculty of Dispensing Opticians which led to the foundation of the Association of British Dispensing Opticians in 1986. He had previously been active in discussions with the Department of Health and the then British College of Ophthalmic Opticians (now the College of Optometrists) about the recognition of dispensing and the need to train dispensing opticians to the highest standards, equipping them for a lifetime of service to the public.

He remained a very proud life member of ABDO as well as an honorary member of The Federation of Ophthalmic & Dispensing Opticians. He also received the special award of Honorary Liveryman status from the Worshipful Company of Spectacle Makers in recognition of his many years of service to dispensing optics and his lifelong commitment to better eye health.

John was always passionate about his profession, advocating for continuing education and professional development, and proper protection of dispensing for vulnerable groups like children. He served for 24 years on the General Optical Council and was respected across the sector for his wisdom and collaborative approach. He always looked forward and outwards, building and using connections wherever he could. He was particularly proud of the expansion of qualifications and membership from the UK into other parts of the world. His influence and encouragement resulted in growth in the membership of both ABDO and the Worshipful Company of Spectacle Makers and both organisations now have strong international representation.

John served as the Master Spectacle Maker in 2005-6, with his wife Catherine supporting him. During the year they were able to meet influential figures in the City of London, diplomatic heads and royalty, always pursuing the message of the importance of eye health and the need for professional guidance on all matters relating to vision.

John was diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease in 2006. He and his wife Catherine faced the challenge head-on. Both were determined to learn as much as they could and find ways of living life to the full, for as long as possible. The physical impact meant that John had to withdraw from national activities but his strong and active interest in optics remained clear to the end. He enjoyed hearing about new initiatives in dispensing, he applauded the work done to increase the profile of dispensing opticians in eye health and he continued to champion the need for collaboration and co-operative working across the field of eye health. He will be much missed by all who benefited from his support, guidance and wise judgement.

[PHOTO attached. Past Master John Baker. Photo Credit Jeff Smorley, text above © WCSM]

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Notes for Editors

The Worshipful Company of Spectacle Makers was founded by Royal Charter in 1629. We are the only City of London Livery Company dedicated to the cause of better eye health. We believe that nobody should be held back because of poor vision. The Company's main purpose has remained the same for almost 400 years: to support better vision for all and inspire future generations committed to visionary eyecare. See www.spectaclemakers.com. Contact: Mrs Helen Perkins, telephone 020 7236 2932 or email clerk@spectaclemakers.com