

# Holistic

## Therapist Magazine

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**100 YEARS:**  
**CELEBRATE TOM**  
**BOWEN'S CONTRIBUTION**  
**TO HOLISTIC THERAPY**

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# 100 YEARS:

## A CELEBRATION OF THE LIFE AND WORK OF

# Tom Bowen

Senior Bowen practitioners **Helen Mary Perkins and Dr Jackie Knott** mark the centenary of the birth of Tom Bowen, founder of the Bowen Technique, and reflect on the impact his work has had on so many lives...

**T**OM Bowen was born in 1916 in Australia. His early career as massage therapist in junior football clubs in Geelong led him to realise that many of the apparently unrelated musculoskeletal and other problems his patients experienced could be traced to the body's connective tissue and fascia that lay just under the skin and affect muscles, tendons and nerves. It is thought that Tom may have studied with an osteopath or physiotherapist and eventually developed a unique set of specific moves associated with different sequences and timing intervals which adjust the tension levels in the muscles and fascia to aid integration of the whole body. This became known as the Bowen Technique and has been proven to provide long term and often immediate resolution of many conditions. The Australian government's own committee of enquiry reported that Tom saw 13,000 people a year and enjoyed a success rate above 80%.

Tom was a remarkably modest and self-effacing man. "Although Tom died in 1982, I was trained by Ossie Rentsch who worked closely with Tom over many years, documenting his methods to safeguard the original Bowen Technique," said Helen. "Ossie always said Tom was a man of few words, focused in the way he organised his clinic in order to treat all those who sought his help, seeing up to 60 people a day."

Jackie added, "Tom was one-of-a-kind, a self-effacing legend; his simple gift which he used to heal local friends and family developed into a technique that is now known the world over. One of the things many Bowen practitioners admire about Tom was his championing of the socially disadvantaged and physically challenged. He was very sensitive to the financial circumstances of his clients, having a reputation for not charging people when aware of their difficulties and providing free clinics for children with disabilities."





Helen elaborated, "Tom transformed his home into one huge clinic, supervising a team of assistants who carried out the initial basic preparatory moves on clients, enabling Tom to personally attend to far more people. His intuition and keen eye for detail meant he was able simply to look at a person walking in or observe facial characteristics and immediately advise the best treatment."

*There's a temptation when going through life changes is to put your own health and wellbeing last, but you must give it priority*

Bowen is a hands-on, drug-free, non-invasive form of holistic therapy that is suitable for all the family. Bowen Therapy appears to influence the body at an incredibly deep level, emphasising its calming effect on the body's autonomic nervous system, thus setting the stage for the body to heal itself. The beauty of Bowen is that rather than forcing the body to change, it asks the body to recognise and make the changes needed to bring the body back to a physiological equilibrium.

The Bowen therapist makes rolling moves over muscles, tendons, ligaments and soft tissue at precise points on the body using only thumbs and fingers; often including pauses between them - an approach which is considered to provide the body time to take on board and process these signals or disturbances. A session of Bowen aims to release tension in the body in order to encourage healing, realignment and balancing to occur. A variety of positive outcomes may be observed from receiving Bowen and include the reduction and relief from pain, relaxation and reduction in stress, and enhancements in mobility and energy. Changes most often observed are linked to muscular pain, particularly in the neck and shoulder, and backache. However, less obvious complaints that Bowen has also been reported to help include fibromyalgia, fertility and pregnancy issues, Parkinson's, hay fever and asthma. A therapist will not treat these specifically but their work may help their client manage them.

Since Tom's death, several schools of Bowen Therapy have sprung up, some remaining close

to Tom's approach, while others have adapted his techniques. Jackie Knott estimates there are over 40,000 therapists trained in a number of variants of the Bowen Technique worldwide, adding, "Most Bowen therapist training is modular in format; following introduction to both theory and practice students undertake practical hands-on study, independent practice and the completion of case history work. To practice, a Bowen therapist must hold a recognised qualification in anatomy and physiology, be fully insured and hold a current certificate in first aid."

In addition to the Bowen Academy of Australia, schools include Bowen Training International (BTI), Bowen Bridge (US), College of Bowen Studies and National Bowen Therapy Training among others. Helen Perkins is one of only 100 instructors worldwide accredited by the Academy, set up by Ossie and Elaine Rentsch who remain true to Tom's approach with Bowtech, The Original Bowen Technique. Bowen Training UK is the primary provider of this Bowtech training in the UK.

The centenary of Tom's birth will be marked during this year's Bowen Therapy Week, from April 12-18. This international initiative spearheaded by Tom Bowen's family in Australia brings together all streams of Bowen therapy to celebrate Tom's legacy. "Many Bowen Therapists across the UK will be running special promotions to raise awareness," said Helen. "For example, some of us will be offering free Bowen sessions for babies and children with a request that parents make a donation to the Tom Bowen Legacy Trust Fund UK."

The BTPA, the UK's independent professional association for Bowen therapists will be running events over the course of the week, with details on their website at [www.bowentherapy.org.uk](http://www.bowentherapy.org.uk). The BTPA is an autonomous non profit-making organisation providing services and benefits to their membership such as access to insurance, marketing support, CPD events and conferences. Details of BTPA's list of approved schools may be found on the Bowen training area on the BTPA website <http://www.bowentherapy.org.uk>.



**Tom Bowen**



**THE TOM BOWEN LEGACY TRUST FUND**

As part of Tom Bowen's legacy to the world, a not-for-profit fund was set up in Australia to provide an ongoing source of funds for children with special needs to improve their quality of life. These are the kinds of children that Tom Bowen treated without charge throughout his 26 years of practice. Many Bowen practitioners follow in Tom's tradition, treating such children for free. Further details can be found at [www.bowentherapy.org.uk](http://www.bowentherapy.org.uk) ■



#### About Jackie

**Dr Jackie Knott** has a PhD in Biochemistry, which led to a career

spanning over 20 years in the NHS and pharmaceutical industry. She trained in the Bowen Technique with ECBS and has been a practicing Bowen Therapist since 2007. Jackie is currently the BTPA Chair.

[www.bowentherapy.org.uk](http://www.bowentherapy.org.uk)



#### About Helen

**Helen Mary Perkins** BTAA, BA(UK) MAR

has over 20 years

as a Bowen Technique practitioner and is also a qualified reflexologist. She is a Bowtech instructor and a committee member for Bowen Training UK.

[www.helenperkins.com](http://www.helenperkins.com).