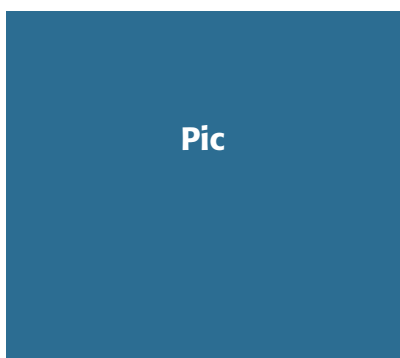


# What has **Ostomyland** and **James Bond** got in common? Well, if it wasn't for **Ian Fleming's super spy - Ostomyland** may never have been created!



Jason Dale is thirty-five years old and lives in West Yorkshire. He has a colostomy and is the webmaster/owner of a website called 'Ostomyland'. [www.ostomyland.com](http://www.ostomyland.com) is an ostomy support community blog/website that Jason funds from his own pocket and it will soon be celebrating its 13th anniversary online.

## Jason tells us how it all began...

Picture the scene. It's New Years Day 1998 and I'm sat in the living room with the family. We're all recovering from the large celebratory lunch, and lounging on the comfy chairs in front of the telly waiting for the James Bond movie to start on ITV1. Snoring from my parents, and my dog, fill the room, as they contentedly sleep off their belly-busting lunch, and I – out of boredom – pick up a copy of .net magazine whose front page promises to spill the secrets of creating your own home page from scratch with HTML code. Soon after starting to read the magazine, I got bored of the Bond movie so I quietly left the room to go to the computer and started to try out the HTML coding projects the magazine had featured.

To my surprise I found the coding quite easy to pick up. However, it's all very well being able to code an internet page but what on earth could I talk about on it? I was new to the Internet. Freeserve had launched about six months previously and so I was still finding my feet online, and discovering what a wonderful resource the information superhighway was. It seemed it had pages on everything...except for a page about life as a "young ostomate" – which was what I had become only six or seven months previous on the June 16th.

Most of the books I'd read pre-op about colostomies were all aimed at the older generation, and failed to answer the questions I had as a twenty-three year old faced with this life changing operation. And so, with my copy of .net magazine on my lap, and my computer humming away, I thought I'd rectify this by putting my story online.

Twenty-one days later, "Jason's Homepage" was uploaded to my 10MB of free ISP web space - a whopping two whole pages of content. One page focused on me, my hobbies and interests, while the other page focused on what it was like to be a young ostomate. It wasn't a lot, but it was my first site. I was mighty proud of the achievement.

At the time of my stoma operation I wrote a diary of my hospital visits, and the early weeks afterwards. I took those notes and wrote a colostomy lifestyle guide aimed for younger people, covering topics that were interesting for all ostomates, but would especially help to allay any fears younger people might have e.g. travelling with an ostomy, sex and relationships, sports and swimming, returning to work or school and so on. I'd submitted the book to health-related publishers but always got rejected with comments that the content was too specialized.

However, I was utterly convinced that it was in demand and of use to people. So once my new-fangled internet page was online, I dug around in my desk drawers and pulled out the manuscript for the colostomy lifestyle guide book with the idea of publishing it online.

Over the course of the following month I retyped and edited it for publication on the internet and uploaded the whole guide in one large update to my homepage. With that one update the number of pages on my website went up ten-fold. By this time I had ditched the personal homepage idea totally, and focused solely on ostomy information and re-launched the site with the title "Living with a Colostomy".

Out of curiosity, I added a free webpage hit counter service to the site, so I could see how many times the pages were visited. I set myself a target of 100 hits in the six months, which I expected to miss by a mile and to lose heart in the project. To my utter shock I shattered that target in the first two weeks and nearly broke 1000 hits in two months.

Then I discovered IRC chat. I thought to myself that it could be a great tool for getting ostomates to talk to each other, to swap notes, or support each other, or even just to hang out with like minded people. After some research I found a program on the net that I could install onto my website and allow people to chat there and then. At first there would only be two or three people in the chat room over the course of the night, but they told their friends, and at its peak it wasn't uncommon to have seventy to a hundred people come through the doors on the night, and it would average twenty or so people online at any one time.

Thanks to the inclusion of a message board, the website started to take on the look and feel of a community. People would post supportive replies to complete strangers, make them feel welcome and comfortable enough to vent or ask questions at any time. It is always so satisfying to see people come to the site as an utter wreck, feeling they are alone and helpless, and then over the next year or so be supported to the extent that they would develop into the person who then gives support to others by reassuring them that life does go on and things do get better no matter how bad things might seem at the time.

Soon after this the manufacturer's section of Ostomyland was born. This is where I list the major ostomy

product companies along with their contact details, their best selling products and their new products. I invited the "big four" (Coloplast, ConvaTec, Dansac and Hollister) to have a free feature page on the site, and soon after other companies we're asking if they too could be featured. And to this day I'm still adding pages from companies who ask to be on the site.

About six years ago the site started to outgrow its free web space roots and so I had to face a choice – close down the site, or invest in proper commercial web space. The decision was easy, and so the first of my proper web space accounts were leased. The years came and went, and I hit my 30s. More and more people started to visit the site looking for information on other ostomies, and the decision was made to expand the site from a colostomy site to one that covered all ostomies and so the site name changed from "Living with a Colostomy" to the name of our chat room: Ostomyland.

And so to blogging: many of our members had started their own blogs on various blogging networks and I realised what a great resource they could be for the Ostomyland community and ostomates in general. It has taken a number of years to find a way of getting blogs on to Ostomyland that would deliver a quality feature without risk of destroying the current board database, but it was worth the wait. As many of you know I launched the new message board system in September 2009 and included in that is the ability to create and edit blogs. Hurray!

At last count twelve people help me run the site, be it as a senior admin on the site, or a moderator on the message board, or a chat room operator. Ostomyland couldn't exist without Kathy my "number one" and the other fantastic members who give up their time freely for nothing more than a word of thanks from me because of their love for the community.

To date Ostomyland continues to grow. We've recently broken our six millionth hit, averaging two to three thousand page views a day, and we're welcoming approximately a hundred new people to the main site every single day, some of whom register to be part of the community and stay for years. Whilst it's great to have so many ostomates visit Ostomyland, it is sad that so many people are in need of help, especially those from outside the UK, where it seems so many people do not have access to a Stoma Care Nurse specialist.

Although Ostomyland started as a hobby project, it is now very much a full time job squeezed into my spare time. It's a continual work in progress; we've recently revamped our Ostomy Wiki and launched version 2 - at present 225 pages. The site will continue to evolve to try and reflect the new trends that launch on the net - recent examples of this being the Facebook and Twitter groups pages. And, whilst I am at the helm, Ostomyland will always be a free-to-access/join site.

My parents don't understand why I put all the hours into the site in return for what they see as nothing. My reward is the occasional email of heartfelt thanks that comes in from someone who has received support that has pretty much changed their life. Then I get that warm, fuzzy feeling inside and realise that THAT is why I do this.

I never for one moment thought I would be sat here writing about the history of the website, nearly twelve years on from that bored New Years Day when I picked up the magazine...

And it's all thanks to James Bond... wow!

**Jason Dale**  
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Jason would like to thank the BCA and CA for everything they've done for Ostomyland over the years.

**Jason says:**  
**"The single biggest event in the website's history was when the old BCA (British Colostomy Association) asked their webmaster at the time – Ian – if he would get in contact with me and help the site improve, and evolve. To this day, I am eternally thankful to the BCA for this, as without that one important event I am certain that my skills would not have grown, and the site would not have become what it is today. In my eyes he is Obi Wan to my Luke Skywalker. He is my mentor. He is my friend. I was so sad to see the BCA close down; my heart literally fell at the news. But it's been fantastic to see the CA rise from the ashes and grow from strength to strength over the last few years."**

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