



The History of Wonersh Medical Practice

The Wonersh village medical practice has been present since pre-World War Two days. Single-handed practitioners originally ran the practice, previous doctors have included Dr Bell Nicholl and Dr Gerald Paterson. Dr Bell-Nicholl retired early as he was suffering from Multiple Sclerosis. He used his retirement well and wrote a book on his medical life. There was an amusing chapter in the book about his impersonation of the King of Norway (whom he closely resembled), when he (Dr Bell Nicholl) made a Royal Visit (helped by one of his wealthier patients chauffeuring him in the family Rolls Royce) to Barnett Hill, then a convalescent home for war wounded. Bell-Nicholl's subsequent letter of admission and apology, we believe, amused the King.

Dr Gerald Paterson, who practiced from outbuildings at his home, Mulberry Cottage, stayed with the current senior partner, Dr Graham Hornett (joined in 1964) for just over a year to facilitate the handover of the practice.

The practice quickly expanded as other single-handed practitioners in adjacent villages retired and their patients joined the Wonersh practice. It soon became apparent to Dr Hornett that he needed additional partners. Dr John Symons was the first to join in 1966 and he is still remembered in the local villages for his skill at the darts board. Dr Hornett and John had met as undergraduates at Trinity College, Cambridge and later at St Thomas' s Hospital, London.

John Symons had previously done a year in Newfoundland as a Paediatrician. There, patients would travel 120 miles on a sledge to consult him. He found it difficult therefore when patients asked him to visit them in their homes only 800 yards away. He left the practice after a year to pursue his love of Paediatrics.

Ian Hatrick, another friend from St Thomas' s hockey playing days, was in the Army stationed in Iserlohn in West Germany. Graham flew out to Germany in 1968 and persuaded Ian to join him in practice.

Before long the two doctors needed a third. The advertising for this for this position was seriously impeded by a newspaper strike. However, word of mouth helped recruit the best possible candidate in Dr Sidney Worthington. He began work here on April Fool' s Day 1971. The practice was now so large that a new surgery building was urgently needed and a perfect, though small, plot of land was found in the middle of the village. Overnight an architect was instructed to produce plans to asses the feasibility of building on this site. The area contained a small garage, a large stream (definitely a hazard) and a small goat grazed garden. The stream/culvert was put into a large pipe aqua duct under a fine purpose-built surgery building. The building was re-opened a year later on April Fool' s Day 1972.

The practice at that time, as well as doing standard general practice work, was highly involved in obstetric care. We looked after the obstetric patients referred to Mount Alvernia Nursing Home from other practices as well as our own and in those years delivered many babies (Dr Hornett has a record of 1,100 supervised deliveries).

Before long another partner was obviously needed and Dr Dominique Daulton joined the practice in 1982. By then more space was required and the original building was extended.

Since 1990 there has been great expansion in services offered at Wonersh, we were able to persuade consultants from many different specialities to offer clinics here. We have clinics in Asthma, Diabetes, Orthopaedics, Otorhinolaryngology (ENT), Psychiatry, Psychology, Counselling, Physiotherapy, Ophthalmology, Urology, Minor surgery, Cryo-surgery. We have also developed Video-tele-conferencing with Professor Bailey (surgeon) at the Royal Surrey County Hospital and have facilities for e-mail diagnosis of dermatological conditions.

This expansion was made possible by our purchase of the adjoining property. The Sheilings, as it was called, dated from Elizabethan times; the original meaning of the term Sheilings was a store for woollen bales (Wonersh was once a thriving woollen weaving village).

We were able to persuade the planners that we should join the two buildings by a "Bridge of Sighs" (viz Venice, Cambridge, Oxford) and so we converted the property to give us extensive space and a car-park and in the process have re-united the whole property (and more) as the original garage we bought in 1971 was associated with The Sheilings.

In 1995, Ian Hatrick, who was immensely popular and loved by his family, colleagues, friends and patients, died tragically of cancer at the age of 59. And thus we appointed Dr Shaun O'Hanlon as his replacement. At the same time we had recruited female partners and at the present time

have three: Dr Anne Wilkinson is the partner who manages the medical care of St Catherine's School Bramley; Dr Susan Bodgener, who has developed a great deal of expertise in diabetes and runs our diabetic clinics; and Dr Sian Jones whose enthusiasm we have enjoyed since March 2001.

Computers were first introduced into the practice in 1980 and at the same time as mentioning the word computer one thinks of Shaun O'Hanlon. Shaun advises EMIS, the main supplier of medical software in the UK. He had developed our networks into such a first class system that we are now "paperless" and all records are held electronically. Data management in the practice is thus generally excellent and is a great bonus in our work.

In 1981 the surgery became a teaching practice for Registrar' s in general practice. Dr Wilkinson has now joined Dr Hornett and Dr Worthington as appointed trainers in the practice. The Membership of the Royal College of General Practitioners exam (MRCGP) is the end point assessment of doctors entering general practice and is taken after nine years of medical training. In this practice we have an excellent record of exam results and over the years 5 registrars have received a distinction in the MRCGP exam. We also train medical students from St George' s, The Royal Free and Imperial College Medical Schools. Dr Daulton tutors the students.

No practice operates without a good team of managerial staff and under the supervision of our practice manager, Pam West, we have a team of receptionists (7 at the last count), secretaries, financial assistants. Many backroom staff may not come into direct contact with patients but do so when they handle the many phone queries.

We have two highly skilled practice nurses, Annette Blick and Avril Thomas, whose role has expanded by their own diligence into advanced nursing. They provide clinics in Health Promotion, Travel Advice, Asthma, Diabetes, Warfarin management, Cervical smears and many other duties. The demand on our nurses is as great as it is on the doctors, if not more so.

At Wonersh therefore, we hope to provide as comprehensive service as possible so that visits to hospital are minimised. In this we are encouraged by the Friends of Wonersh Surgery, which is a charity run by patients who raise money or equipment to enable us to provide such an extended service.