



The Practice would like to say goodbye, good luck and a big thank you to Pauline Exton, Scanning Clerk and Marie Bell, Phlebotomist, who are both retiring in March after 49 years and 20 years respectively of service!

The end of an era by Pauline Exton

I never thought as I stepped off the bus on a cold November morning back in 1962, that 49 years later I would still be opening the same side door at 40 North Road. It was quite a daunting prospect as an 18 year old, only three months out of school, with very little work experience, and having spent only two weeks with my predecessor on an initiation course, to be put in charge of running a GP Surgery. But I need not have worried, in all the time spent working there, I was only every treated with kindness and respect.

Because there was only one consulting room for three General Practitioner's, and no office for me, every morning I had to trolley all necessary paperwork through to Dr Galletly's dining room – now part of the reception area – and work at a beautiful mahogany dining table until surgery was finished. Whilst one GP held surgery, the other two would be visiting their patients in the local hospitals.

After morning surgery was finished, the consulting room became my office for a few hours, until the 2.00pm surgery when the whole trolleying process was repeated again. The only good thing to come out of this was that by 4.00pm, when evening surgery started, they turfed me out and I was able to finish work very early! The rest of the day was spent as it is today, answering the telephone, writing prescriptions, organising the visiting list, filing letters, typing letters, ringing hospitals and patients and, of course, making tea – no coffee in those days.

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When the GP's consulted with patients they wrote all their notes in a Day Book. My worst job was trying to read what they had written and try transferring this to the patient's Lloyd George folders. The only thing a GP had in front of him when consulting in those days, was the patient. What a difference modern technology has made to this scenario!

One of the biggest changes for me, that has evolved over a long period of time, is that instead of being the sole employee doing everything, the workforce has become so numerous, and fragmented into its own different departments. I realise that with the growth of the Practice, this was inevitable but knowing a little bit about all that was going on had its advantages too.

I am not sure how long it was after I started work that the two younger GPs, Dr Sweetnam and Dr Smith, decided to introduce an appointment system, something they could never convince Dr Galletly to embrace. This not only meant that I would be able to meet the patients at last, but perhaps more importantly, that I would have to have a room to call my own. And so, what is now the museum was turned from an old dispensing lab into a very small office where I could greet patients on arrival. I remember the first morning being very chaotic, but things gradually settled down and I hope it was a benefit to both Doctors and patients. At least for two of the GPs the old Day Book was abolished and they had the patient's notes to hand when consulting.

I enjoyed meeting the patients but one thing I didn't enjoy was the embarrassing smell of burning rubber. Disposable gloves were unheard of, and one of my jobs was to sterilise the rubber gloves in a saucepan in Dr Galletly's kitchen. Invariably I forgot I had put them on to boil until the pot ran dry!

One of the other pervading smells in the winter was the eucalyptus on Dr Galletly's handkerchief when he had a cold. A third image of that little room was the morning tea sitting side by side with the urine samples in a variety of jars all shapes, sizes and volumes which had been left by the patient's to be tested. We never could convince them we only wanted a 'wee' drop!

Dr Galletly was a keen gardener and would often insist on me doing a tour of his beautiful garden – in work time, of course. Occasionally the youngest General Practitioner, Dr Smith, would take me on his rounds with him, but I much preferred the ride through Grimsthorpe Park to the trip down Tongue End.

After five years I had met and married my husband David and after a further two years I left to have our daughter Helen. By this time Dr Galletly had retired and the Practice had outgrown 40 North Road. Dr Sweetnam and Dr Smith moved into what was known as Bourne Health Centre, sharing it with the other GP Practice in the town.

Over the next few years I occasionally worked on a temporary basis for the Practice when they were short staffed, until finally taking a part-time post as a Receptionist, which I found very hard work but very rewarding.

Eventually the two Practices based at the Health Centre outgrew these premises and it was announced that the Galletly Practice was moving back home to 40 North Road. When I told my husband they were turning my old office into a small museum, his only reply was "and are they going to put you in it"? Fortunately, they never did but until recently I did work in the old consulting room where I had originally started out. And who would have thought that after 49 years I would end up as a Scanning Clerk in what used to be Dr Galletly's bedroom?!

My time at 40 North Road has been a very happy time, and I would like to thank all the patients I have met over the years, the staff I have worked with and the General Practitioners I have worked for for making it so.

Farewell, good luck, and we will miss you