

A big THANKYOU to Walderslade from Dr Pete Lane

As I retire after 35 years as a GP in Barnsley I wanted to extend a huge thank you to both colleagues and patients. I have had such a wonderful career and it has been a privilege to serve such an amazing community.

I trained as a doctor in Birmingham and clearly remember driving up the M1 to Barnsley in 1984 to be interviewed to join the Barnsley GP training scheme. It was during the miners strike and I followed a coking convoy surrounded by riot vans all coming off at Junction 37. I had never been to Barnsley-looked it up in the good beer guide and its only comment was “Barnsley-the beer desert of the north!” I was rather anxious!!

I need not have been. I was interviewed by the esteemed Dr Donald Fairclough who was senior partner at Walderslade and a keen educationalist. I was warmly accepted and soon got to realise what a great place Barnsley was. I learnt the language! Yes-broad Yorkshire took a while to master. I got a taste for John Smiths, found the best fish and chips in the world and realised you needed a hearty appetite to manage a Barnsley chop! I also discovered ferrets, dog oil and goose grease-quite an education.

I had a great start which involved 2 years of training posts at Barnsley Hospital. It was a great place to learn and allowed me to get to know many consultant colleagues and those enduring relationships were so valuable throughout my career.

When I completed my GP training I joined Ashville Medical Centre where I had trained, and got my head down to develop as a GP (and bring up my young family). Within a few years I had my second contact with Walderslade when Dr Dave Griffiths who then ran the GP training scheme invited me to apply and become a GP educator. I was pretty inexperienced but was “encouraged” to have a go and that began the very satisfying educational side of my GP career. I recall Dr Farmer being one of my early trainees when I was probably still going through an “experimental” phase. He came out alright though and has been a great colleague over the years!!

I will never forget a trip down Denby Grange drift mine where I took a group of trainee GPs. Until then I had no real idea of what a working mine was actually like or the physical demands it put on the miners. I then understood why lots of

Barnsley men looked like they had eye liner and the multiple grey scars from cuts that got coal dust in them-work tattoos from the coal face!

When I started as a GP there were no mobile phones and I knew where all the local phone boxes were to organise urgent ambulances and admissions. GP appointments were 5 minutes long and computerised records had not yet been introduced. Morning surgeries ended at around 10.30am and the senior partner often went to the races in the afternoon before evening surgery!! At the walk in surgery in Athersley I once saw 58 patients on a Monday morning! So not much has changed!!

My third contact with Walderslade was when Dr Fairclough rang me and asked if I would consider becoming a medical referee at Barnsley Crematorium. I applied and have continued the role ever since.

In 2004 I received a phone call from Dr Dave Griffiths asking me if I would be interested in applying to become a GP partner at Walderslade.

I clearly remember being interviewed upstairs in the old house which had a strange mix of old settees and upright chairs in what I think was once a bedroom. I was offered the job.

THAT DAY SAVED MY LIFE!!!! THANKYOU WALDESLADE

At that time I had become fatigued and rather despondent as a GP. I got such a warm welcome from all the Walderslade team and felt I had come home. What struck me about Walderslade was the really high level of patient care that was both expected and delivered. This had been Dr Donald Fairclough's family practice and I am delighted to say this strong ethos of local family care proudly remains.

It rekindled my enthusiasm for being a GP and educator and I felt so well supported. It reminded me what a great career General Practice is.

General Practice has changed so much over the years.

I used to rely on text books to keep up to date - now the internet offers an amazing resource and our service becomes helpless if the computers go down.

We have developed nursing and multi-professional teams, have dedicated services for chronic diseases and offer an ever increasing range of services.

The health service currently has a lot of challenges at all levels but General Practice remains the cornerstone for community health care.

But the essence of being a GP hasn't changed. We help people manage their health issues from cradle to grave. I have dealt with the lows and highs of many peoples life journeys and developed the highest of respect for the countless people who by and large manage their own illnesses or care marvellously for those close to them. This is inspiring to me. I also recognise the often unsung tireless contribution of community services, and in particular the McMillan service in supporting End of Life Care, an area I led on for the practice.

In equal measure there is such humour in Barnsley - sometimes coming out of the darkest of situations. Those that know me will be aware of my sometimes irreverent style with the occasional swear word (I was kindly given a swear box by a concerned patient!) I have laughed a lot with patients and think that while we sometimes have limited control over aspects of our health and lives, humour remains a powerful tonic! Many many thanks to the countless patients who have shared both ups and downs and often a joke or two.

So whilst the demands and expectations of General Practice become more complex and ever increase, and we are all aware of big funding gaps in the NHS system, Walderslade is not sitting back!

Jayne and the partners have been busy recruiting and re-structuring. I am delighted to see so many new and enthusiastic faces in both the clinical and admin teams to help move things forwards. I do feel sad and a bit guilty for not being part of this transition going forwards.

To the staff:

For those of you who have worked at Walderslade longer than me, and those who have more recently joined.....YOU ARE DOING AN AMAZING JOB. WELL DONE!

You have also put up with me. My rants, grumpy bits, frustrations and also when my swearing has got a bit OTT. As you know I have viewed you all as my own personal management team... Thank you

Do I have any regrets?

Well yes, for often taking Walderslade for granted. I feel I have spent so little time supporting our nursing and HCA team and indeed all our members of staff. It is easy to take it all for granted. I am finally starting to realise how much I have relied on you all and how much I will miss you all. I have felt very strongly supported and that I belong here which makes me a very fortunate guy. It has been an absolute privilege working with you all and I am so proud of the care we collectively provide for our patients. I have been pretending that I won't miss this but I will.

If I have any advice to give the Walderslade team it is:

1. Don't let humour escape from Walderslade. It has been scientifically proven to improve wellbeing!
2. Feel proud every day you come to work. You provide an amazing service to our 13000 patients - they get a really good service - believe it!

I have spent most of my GP career involved in education and on retiring from clinical practice will continue to work with Health Education England to try and improve education and training for the growing wider workforce in General Practice. I will also be spending more time with my wife Chris and being a Grandad.

It is humbling to receive so many good wishes.

Thanks again.

Dr Pete Lane