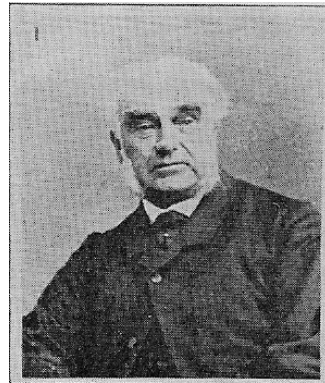


Village Echoes

IN SICKNESS AND IN HEALTH

With the National Health Service very much on our mind in recent weeks it is interesting to see the myriad ways that our Villages coped with illness in the days before free medical assistance.

There was always at least one doctor resident in the parish and usually two. One of the earliest was Dr Samuel W Newington who lived at Tattlebury for 40 years until his death in 1868. As well as being the parish doctor, he established a mental Asylum. He was from a family of medics originating in Ticehurst with Samuel Newington senior, who died in 1811, who also made a particular study of treatment of the 'insane'. A series of doctors followed Newington including a father and son called Collingridge during the early 1900s who continued into the war years.



Dr S W Newington

During World War One an Auxiliary Military Hospital was set up at Gore Court in two of the cottages. It treated 327 patients between 1915 and 1919. A Miss Harris was Sister-in-Charge.

A surgery continued to be held at Tattlebury, although not a very convenient location. In 1922 a joint practice of Doctors Marshall and Harvey based at the Manor House on the High Street until 1930 when it too moved to Tattlebury. In 1976 the surgery moved to West House, West Road, next to what is now Viva, the hairdressers. One of the doctors came down to Kilndown to hold a regular surgery. The consulting room was in the old Kilndown Stores and Post Office. Patients wanting to see the doctor had to wait outside in an old shack with a corrugated roof that was obviously freezing in the winter. West House surgery eventually outgrew its situation making it necessary to move to the present Old Parsonage site. In the continuing tradition of raising funds for medical care, the incumbent Doctors Hugo and Llewellyn personally raised a loan to buy the land. The existing house was then converted.

It was essential to belong to an insurance scheme to be called upon in times of illness. Long before the welfare system was established the Goudhurst Benefit Society was set up in June 1838. It ensured that anybody contributing to the scheme would be able to call upon a 'medical man' for consultation and medicine. Any bottles issued with medicine had to be returned to the doctor 'clean and sound' or a payment of 6d was demanded.

Specifically for children, Goudhurst Infant Welfare Centre was founded in 1928. A room in the Ex-Service Men's Club (now Goudhurst Club) was loaned for use twice a month. There was no charge, only 1d for tea. The picture below, from 1935, shows a rather crowded scene of mothers and babies, nurses in uniform and presumably the only man centre stage, a doctor. The movement originated in Britain in the 19th century as a voluntary initiative when maternal mortality rose even as infant mortality fell.



Before the National Health Service came into being, organisers of local nursing associations were responsible for employing district nurses and paying their salaries, building homes for them to live in and other expenses. All these associations undertook fundraising to meet their outgoings. One such branch was the Goudhurst District Nursing Association started in 1911, affiliated to the Kent County group. Like all such groups it relied on subscribers, outside help or jumble sales to raise funds. District nurses were required to carry out many duties from inspecting children for nits, to visiting the sick and delivering babies.

One well-remembered lady was Nurse Stack who retired in 1945 after eighteen years of service. She was also fully involved in village life such as being President of Goudhurst Ladies division of the British Legion. She was also a founding member of Brandfold Tennis Club, which originated indoors in the village hall in 1946. She died in 1977 aged 95. Finally, another fund raising group was Goudhurst Hospital Committee that was founded in 1921. This was in aid of Tunbridge Wells General Hospital, as it was called in 1935. It shows that not everything changes as we are still raising money for healthcare and the NHS despite vast improvements to our welfare system.

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