

# A Country Practice through three generations

Dr. Pamela Marshall

One hundred years may encompass several generations of one family, but in this instance it spans the lives of two individuals, my Grandfather Dr. Gilbert Marshall (1858-1934) and his younger son, my father, Dr. James Lister Marshall (1899-1961).

Both were born in Co. Armagh, received their medical training in Dublin and continued their profession as Family Doctors in Markethill and surrounding district, of approximately eight miles, from 1887 to 1961. Though still living in the district, and following in the same profession, my interest in this particular Practice remains now as a patient.

Advances in Medicine have been vast in the past century; the alterations in the patterns of practice, the nature of diseases affecting the community and the heightened expectation of patients, are reflected in this rural practice.

1844 saw the development of Anaesthetics, with the discovery of the microbe (bacterium) responsible for infection, together with the pioneering work in 1865 of Lord Lister, when he transformed surgical procedures, eradicating infection with the use of Carbolic acid. More was to follow with the discovery of Penicillin by Sir Alexander Fleming in 1928. This revolutionised treatment, curing many infections, but it was not until the late 1940's that it was available in general practice.

Family Practitioners often find their workload is not solely medical, this will become evident later, but rather the Doctor is required to be a general physician with some surgical skills, a counsellor, dentist, maker of Wills, but mainly a good listener!

Since disease is no respecter of time or occasion availability of the Doctor is important. This has been improved by the introduction of the telephone and the arrival of the motor-car and public transport. Changing disease patterns, technological advances combined with the introduction of the National Health Service in 1948 have moulded the Family Practitioner service to the one we recognise today.

In 1881 medical services for Armagh district were provided by the Poor Law Union. Sir Calvert Stronge, Tynan, was the Chairman, with forty elected guardians. Armagh City had a Fever Hospital in Caledon

Road, a general Infirmary of seventy two beds and a lunatic Asylum with three hundred and four beds, which served Monaghan, Fermanagh and Cavan as well as Armagh.

Markethill Dispensary is mentioned in 1837 in Lewis's Topographical Dictionary of Ireland. It served a district of 40,418 acres with a population of 23,924. Up to 1886, Dr. Joseph Pratt was Dispensary doctor being followed in 1887 by Dr. Gilbert Marshall. His dispensary hours were on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays from 10 a.m. until 1 p.m. at 36, Main Street, Markethill. In 1890 he moved to reside at 58, Main Street with the Dispensary at No.53. 1948 saw the incorporation of the surgery into part of 58, Main Street.

In 1887 any community health care available was provided by the Dispensary Doctor. The poor, those unable to pay, obtained yellow "lines" tickets if they required to visit the Dispensary. A red ticket entitled them to a home visit. The rest of the population either paid in money or kind or in some instances went without medical treatment.

Living conditions for many were bad with damp housing, overcrowding, poor nutrition, no running water or adequate sanitation — the dry Privy or closet being situated outside. Tuberculosis was rampant with no cure, so often it was responsible for the deaths of many family members; those who became hospitalised were transferred to Drumarg sanatorium in Armagh for long spells. Chest conditions were prevalent with many caused by their jobs in the Linen industry or the heavy smoking of Woodbines — "Coffin nails" — from an early age. Infectious diseases provided a large bulk of the illnesses; these were mainly diphtheria, scarlet fever and typhoid fever. The sufferer was dispatched to the Fever Hospital for a minimum of two weeks. Today people still carry the scars of osteomyelitis, rheumatic fever, suppurating ears and stomach ailments such as ulcers. Surprisingly heart attacks were uncommon.

Home births were the rule unless complications arose and the mother was transferred to Tower Hill Maternity Department.

Transportation of the sick was not in the modern type ambulance, but in a converted lorry, there being only



Dr. Gilbert Marshall and his wife Sarah.

one ambulance for the district. More often the local clergyman was imposed upon to move the patient and relative to hospital as he was one of the few with a motor vehicle or horse and trap.

In the 1880's my grandfather used a horse or horse and gig to visit his patients. He kept a horse saddled all night in the stable in case of an emergency call. He later acquired a motor car in 1905 and reference is made in correspondence with Lord and Lady Gosford that they made a gift of a fur coat to him to make motoring more comfortable. With World War Two and petrol rationing my father resorted to a motor-bicycle. He unfortunately ended up a casualty in a bed beside one of his patients in the local Infirmary.

Tablets and medicaments were dispensed by the village doctor. Some of the commoner treatments given were Asprin, Espon Salts, Castor Oil, baking soda,

cough linctus and linseed poultices.

By 1946 the telephone was making some impact on communications in the area, although to help those patients from Markethill, branch surgeries were held at set locations often on a weekly basis. One of these venues was Orange Row in Glenanne.



Dr. Marshall in his gig (around 1900).

As well as being the Dispensary Medical Officer my grandfather was Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages for the district; Medical Attendant to the Royal Irish Constabulary, as well as the Glenanne Sick Fund Society. He was a certified Factory Surgeon. He had been responsible for teaching the pupils in the local branch of the St. John's Ambulance Association. Despite his professional duties he acted as a Magistrate on the Local Bench having been proposed by the Earl of Gosford and appointed by the Lord Chancellor, who was known to disapprove of Doctors serving, as he presumed they had sufficient to do already.

In his leisure time Dr. Gilbert Marshall found relaxation in the cultivation of bees. He had sixty-five beehives and produced honey on a commercial basis, shipping it to mainland Britain. Other interests included fishing, photography, with farming and gardening. Locally he joined other individuals in the formation of the Markethill Electric Light & Power Co. at the turn of the twentieth century, when acetylene gas was used to illuminate dwellings.



Dr. Marshall at the wheel of his new "Argyle", 1903.

Chateworth-  
Chesterfield



Dear Dr Marshall.

I enclose a cheque for the money due for the month of June. Please send me any account for looking after Bertie. That you would otherwise send to Mrs Campbell! -

And Coxford and I have

sent you a fur coat a a Xmas gift - you will want one. when you get your motor-car. - I hear the Argylles are very usefull cars! -

With all good wishes for the new year.

I remain,

Yours sincerely  
 Chas Coxford

Dec. 23

A letter from Lady Gosford, Christmas 1902, to accompany the gift of a fur coat for motoring.

1926. In this year my father joined in the Markethill Dispensary, he continued with this combining it was the duties of Police Surgeon. He attended the troops and prisoners-of-war stationed in Gosford Demense.

With the arrival of the National Health Service which revolutionised health care providing everyone with free treatment, there was a great demand and increased workload so a partnership was formed with Dr. D. Good and later Dr. J. R. Nelson. They continued the

work of the practice and by the 1980's they were responsible for approximately 5500 patients in a purpose built Health Centre situated in Newry Street. The General Practitioner remains the lynch-pin in the present service helped by many staff both Nursing and paramedical. Modern equipment and increasing technology are supposedly providing a more efficient service, but I will leave the Patient to judge.



Dr. James Lister Marshall.

Office of the Clerk of the Crown and Hanaper, and  
Permanent Secretary to The Lord Chancellor,  
Four Courts, Dublin,

28<sup>th</sup> day of April 1905

Sir,

I am directed to inform you that the Lord Chancellor, on the recommendation of His Majesty's Lieutenant of the County of Armagh has signed the Warrant for your appointment to the Magistracy of that County.

The Commission of the Peace will be issued to you on the understanding that, without receiving further sanction from the Lord Chancellor, you will only attend the Petty Sessions of the district of Markethill

Application for the Commission should be made to this office, accompanied by payment (which may be made by cheque) of the Fees, which amount to £6.

I am,

Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

Gilbert Marshall, Esq.  
Markethill

August Heston

The following poem and its footnote illustrate very well the changes in the past 70 years.

### THEN AND NOW

1924

Old William went to bed at home  
 With a pain across his chest.  
 The doctor used his stethoscope  
 And said he needed rest.  
 The doctor saw him twice a day  
 Gave morphia injections  
 Said they could only wait and see  
 The family asked no questions  
 The family looked after him  
 His pain soon settled down.  
 The doctor mentioned pleurisy  
 But he had a puzzled frown.  
 (His textbooks gave no help at all  
 Nowhere did they contain  
 The details of an illness †  
 To account for William's pain.)  
 Since William's pain was better  
 They got him out of bed  
 And in ten days back on his feet;  
 Just as the doctor said  
 Old William, well recovered,  
 For five more years lived on  
 Until he dropped dead suddenly  
 When he was eighty-one.



1974

His grandson went to hospital  
 With a pain across his chest  
 The doctor told his relatives  
 He needed total rest.  
 The residents made various tests,  
 Electrocardiograms.  
 The nurses gave him loving care  
 Rubbed spirit on his hams.  
 They put him on a heparin drip  
 And monitored his heart.  
 The physios came daily  
 And moved his limbs about.  
 Progress was satisfactory  
 Till suddenly his clock  
 Stopped; but they were up to that  
 With direct-current shock  
 But he remained unconscious,  
 The monitor by his side  
 Inscribing a sinus rhythm  
 Until the day he died.  
 The hospital did all it could  
 His life force to sustain;  
 It cured the cardiac arrest,  
 But could not retrieve his brain.  
 G R FEARNLEY.

†

There was question on coronary thrombosis in the M.R.C.P. examination in 1927; according to a retired colleague, many candidates had not heard of the condition.



Orange Row, Glenanne.

4<sup>th</sup> Decmber 1934  
 # The Bath Honey Stores Ltd.  
 In account with J. L. Marshall.

3-12-34	1 Barrel Honey. @ 1.4 per cwt containing 5-5-17					23 12 0	
Sb. Cb. 104							



Dr. Gilbert Marshall's Honey label.

Receipt from "The Bath Honey Stores Ltd."