

# Bridge Of Allan Health Centre

An interview with Dr Alexander Stuart

BY ALISON LOGIE

Dr Stuart is the most senior of five partners in the Bridge of Allan practice. Originally from Troon, he has been with the practice for 22 years.

## Where did you train?

After Cambridge University I married and decided to come back to Scotland. I did house jobs and some GP training in Edinburgh Royal but came to the Stirling and Falkirk district for GP vocation training.

## Did you always intend to be a GP?

I always wanted to do medicine and had a hankering for cardiology for a while but settled for General Practice as it has more variety.

## Were you very idealistic when you started out?

I still am. We don't just see medical problems. GPs are patients' advocates. It's not just the patients' health - it's their whole wellbeing that one is concerned with.

## What's the most tiresome part of your work?

Probably the administrative side. The main problem is political interference. General Practice has come in for a lot of bashing recently - often based on facts which are inaccurate. Criticisms are made by the government who have made mistakes and GPs have been blamed. For example the NHS 24.

The previous DOCS system worked well with the local GPs and a triage system of nurses centred at Stirling Royal. Now in the NHS 24 the time span between patients calling and seeing a doctor is much greater. It was brought in without enough consultation.

## Has the internet changed the way patients behave towards you?

Some people come in with a mild form of illness but after reading information on the internet worry unnecessarily. The doctor can reassure the patient. I'm not against the internet but it has to be used with discretion.

In this practice we are totally computerised. We don't use paper records at all. This is of great benefit to the patient as we can access records very quickly but it does mean we don't look at the patient so much!

## What have been the major changes in primary health care since you started?

The major change is certainly the political interference. There seems to be more of it. We also see fewer heart attacks and strokes because patients' blood pressure is better controlled because of better monitoring. The number of acute asthmatic cases is down too. Mammography and colonoscopy services have improved and have allowed for early diagnosis of cancer.

There have also been huge changes in the Health Centre itself, with the extension, new heating and windows - and now the building is too small! Also, no longer is the whole family on call and that's beneficial to the GP's family life.

## What do you like most about your work?

Seeing patients and the variety of the work. It's an intense job - working for three hours and seeing a patient every ten minutes. There are not many jobs that are so intense, but we are lucky that we have job security.

And we have a fantastic team here!

## Bridge of Allan 100 Years Ago

### Remarkable Discovery

On Friday last, while the workmen were engaged in widening and improving the Airthrey Mill Road, they discovered an underground cave, cut out of the embankment. The entrances to the cave are not large, but the cave itself is between 6 and 7 feet in height, and about 15 feet long and 18 broad. Great interest has been taken in the discovery, and large numbers have been inspecting the place. Speculation has been rife as to the probable use of the cave, some persons believing that it may have been used for smuggling purposes, while others are of the opinion that it has some connection with the early copper workings of the Mineral Wells.

*Stirling and Bridge of Allan Reporter,*  
May 8, 1909

### Another Discovery at the Cave

Last week we intimated in these columns that a discovery of a cave had been made by the workmen employed in widening the Airthrey Mill Road. In the course of their operations the workmen have made a further discovery of a kiln, measuring 7 feet in diameter, and 2 feet 6 inches in depth. In front of the kiln they also found the furnace which had probably been utilised for the purpose of drying the grain. This later discovery goes to substantiate the theory put forward by various people, that the cave had at one time been used for smuggling purposes.

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