

families readily able to call in a doctor. Certainly data from the 1920s gathered by Taylor hint that this was commonplace, as it was elsewhere. A fuller discussion on factors behind usage would also be instructive, if only because Hatfield states that with the advent of the National Health Service the need for domestic medicine “largely disappeared”. This, surely, is only one consideration; reasons for change in self-care are complex, as Hatfield herself implies through her discussion on the blurred distinction between “official” herbalism and traditional plant remedies.

There is much in the volume that prompts constructive debate. Aside from its value as a case study, the book is a salutary reminder of the need for interdisciplinary studies to investigate the current state of herbal medicine; such work is demanded by the increasingly complex interests in herbs as medicinals and nutrition supplements.

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Dick Maurice, *The Marlborough doctors: six generations of one family's medical practice since 1792*, Stroud, Alan Sutton, 1994, pp. 99, illus., £12.99 (0-7509-0831-9).

This short, attractive book describes a medical practice which is at the same time unique and archetypal.

It must be at least unusual for a new general practitioner to be greeted by his first patient: “Your great-grandfather brought me into the world, your grandfather looked after me in my boyhood and early manhood, your father looked after me in middle and old age. I want you to see me into my grave”. But, in this instance, the newcomer could claim not merely three, but five, generations of direct descent in the same practice. This is indeed unique.

For decades now most young doctors looking for their lifelong general practice would imagine as their ideal pattern a small town in beautiful country, not too far from a university city; a partnership of four or five,

with no rivals; an up-to-date health centre with a good team of helpers and beds in a well-equipped small hospital. Add to that the care of a well-known school and a family tradition of mayoralty in the town—the structure of the Marlborough doctors’ practice is outlined. So too is one archetype of England.

The Maurice family has now had ten members in the practice. The first, Thelwall, started to work in Marlborough in 1792, more than a hundred years before the motor car and telephone appeared. He visited patients in Swindon, Devizes or Hungerford, sometimes on the same day. Each was ten miles or more from Marlborough in opposite directions. His great-grandchild doubts if he covers such distances in his car today. With his one partner, Thelwall managed a seven-day week. It was rare for either of them to have a whole day off, even a Sunday. He died at the age of sixty-three.

The book is written by two doctor members of the family. It gives a clear, straightforward account of changes in general practice, in medicine more widely and in the life of this prosperous town and its surroundings. The changes in practice are from heroic medicine, based partly on faith and trust, to a medicine in which drama is less common, but material help more the rule than the exception.

Among the illustrations there are two very touching and attractive family portraits of the second generation (1840), a photograph of all ten brothers of the fourth generation (three sisters missing) and a painting of the local hospital, designed for the purpose (1866) by Sir Gilbert Scott, the most famous architect of his day, in what might be termed Elizabethan Gothic style—more like a small residence than a cottage. Its successor has grown into a local hospital which remains in active use.

The book is a notable record. There seems no reason why this medical dynasty should run out.

John Horder, London