When I joined Kiveton Park Medical Practice in 1986 I came because I liked the area and respected the work already being done here. We worked from a prefabricated building on Walesmoor Avenue and Harthill branch surgery which had 2 rooms and a cupboard for the dispensary (and was more often than not freezing cold!). 32 years later as I leave, we have new purpose built surgeries in both Kiveton and Harthill, 10 doctors and almost 40 staff in total. How things change!

The village had a working Colliery in my early days. It fascinated me, especially driving past it on night calls, illuminated and busy, dominant in the landscape. I never found it unattractive, it was part of the soul of the village. It was in decline then but still such an important part of the lives of many who lived here. It produced a strong community feel but was however also responsible for many of the commonest health problems in our patients at that time; knees or lungs worn out by hostile underground conditions.

As time moved on new doctors came to join me as the ‘old guard’ retired having served the practice well for many years. We have had a settled team with few changes. Generally it has been a feature of this practice that people stay..and those that are here for short term posts often return. It is a welcoming working environment with friendly staff and nice patients! It takes many different sorts of skills to run a practice successfully, to manage its resources and staff, keep constantly up to date, manage developing technology and of course to provide the best quality patient care. The Surgery is full of very talented, committed individuals who together can provide all of this and who would be welcomed in just about any other practice I know. I am proud to have worked with them and commend them to you

I have always felt that the surgery is well connected with its community being as we are, quite self contained in our little patch of South Yorkshire. Patients here don’t have much choice about the surgery they join(!) and we similarly accept all comers. I like to think this has created a sense of interdependence and co operation. Certainly we are aware of the trust placed in us, and forbearance when we cannot do everything for everybody all at once, or sometimes get things wrong. We cherish our role and responsibility. No one in my time at Kiveton has taken that lightly.

To be a doctor is a wonderful calling..all I have ever wanted to be and I have not for one moment regretted that choice. A job full of interest, challenge, meaning and satisfaction. To choose to be a GP brings rare privilege, the opportunity to become a valued part of a community, to get alongside patients over a long period of time, to be welcomed into the lives of others, and share their joys and sorrows as well as the challenge of dealing with the full breadth of illness and disease in all of its stages. I have had the pleasure of seeing my patients be born, grow to adulthood and have children of their own. I have been an observer of all that life brings, good and bad, and been there at the end when no more could be done.

What I have learned from my patients is more than any textbook could teach. Lessons in bravery, selflessness, loyalty, acceptance and resourcefulness, and cheerfulness, sometimes in the face of overwhelming difficulties. I have learned too that these qualities are to be found in equal measure through all walks of life from the humblest home to the grandest house.

I have been made welcome in people’s homes and lives and treated with respect, affection and courtesy, and experienced unexpected degrees of gratitude, even sometimes when my efforts to help have been to little avail.

I have much to ponder, much to celebrate and much be grateful for as I look back.

I have been greatly touched by the large number of good wishes, cards and gifts I have received on my retirement. I am extremely grateful for each and every one and rather overwhelmed. I have loved every minute of being one of your GPs. I leave with a deep sense that I have belonged here.

Dr Derek Say