

DR JOHN STUART BAMFORTH, GENERAL PRACTITIONER

Dr John Stuart Bamforth, retired General Practitioner. Qualified Liverpool 1956. Died September 2016.



I felt a pang of sadness on discovering that the annals of the Liverpool Medical Institution were unfortunately lacking an obituary for (John) Stuart Bamforth and after a few minutes reflection accepted that I had unwittingly landed in some sort of seat.

If you didn't know Stuart in life, here is a short introduction. Stuart Bamforth was one of the partners in the teaching General Medical Practice in Stockbridge Village in Huyton in north Liverpool, at that time known as Cantril Farm, from late 1960s to the early 1990s. In 1990, he had been recently widowed. The NHS had been through a difficult period. Although the reincarnation of Cantril Farm as Stockbridge Village forecast some improvement in the lives of its residents, our practice had to consider a move to new premises. Stuart weighed things up and decided to retire. In retirement, he moved with his beloved second wife Sheila, to the Lake District, near Overton, Cumbria.

Over the years since, he would occasionally join a small collection of old, superannuated acquaintances for a chat about old times and a light lunch. He always gave the impression of being quietly happy.

From the time I joined the practice - initially as a trainee - I became increasingly aware of his shrewd accuracy in clinical assessment and diagnosis. Over time, I came to appreciate his qualities in the complementary discipline of teaching. He was able to conduct episodes of teaching, part of the day to day apprenticeship of general practice so that at the conclusion of such an episode the apprentice had miraculously worked out for her(him)self most of the necessary ideas or solutions required for the successful management of the clinical problem. I remember vividly the moment when I started to understand how gentle and skilful he was able to be. The realisation came as I was preparing to visit a patient dying with cancer at home, halfway up one of the nine tower blocks which our practice covered. Although by now I was a partner, I still felt that a short discussion with Stuart would be helpful, but he was already out doing his own visiting list. I found that I could play out in my mind how such a dialogue was likely to go and experienced a kind of clarity which helped me to approach this visit with a slightly altered emphasis, short on expectations, long on confidence and honesty.

In later years, over a number of light lunches, he seemed hardly to have changed, save for an impression of stressless contentment.

Dr Tony Smerdon
Retired GP