

## Surgery News

I'm afraid that this month starts with the sort of news that nobody will want to read. Sadly, Dr Debbie Letton has decided to hang up her stethoscope and quit General Practice. She will be leaving us at the end of June.

Dr Letton has been with us in one guise or another for a very long time. She first worked here in 1993 as what was called a "Retained GP", under a return to work scheme for young Mums coming back to practice after a maternity break. She had another career break from the end of 1997 until March 1999 then rejoined the practice. She eventually became our very first female partner in 2001.

Since then, she has made a tremendous contribution to the success and development of the practice and has been many people's favourite doctor. On occasions, she has been so popular that it has been quite difficult to get an appointment with her, but a lot of patients have preferred to wait to see her, rather than trying on of the other doctors. She will be sorely missed.

As soon as a decision is made about how we replace Dr Letton I shall let you know through these pages. For the time being though, I am sure that everyone will wish her every success and happiness for the future – whatever she decides to do next.

It's difficult to believe as I write this that we are supposed to be in the middle of winter. As seems to happen every year, there were dire warnings a month or two ago about this possibly being the coldest winter for ages. Look at it though! It might be grey and gloomy but temperatures are ridiculously high. It's certainly keeping the fuel bills down and I can't say I've missed all the exercise that shovelling snow provided last year.

Please don't let the mild weather put you off checking on elderly neighbours and friends though. I know a lot of older people don't get out and about much during the winter months even when the weather isn't too dreadful, so even if they don't actually need anything fetching or carrying, they'll probably be glad to see a friendly face.

We have had a lot of positive comments about our redesigned garden, even though many of the old plants which used to brighten up the front of the building have now disappeared. The "new Betty", also known as John Birkin who is the husband of one of our receptionists, did a great job of changing us over to a low maintenance design which looks really good.

I'm glad to say that Betty (the original) still has her own small patch at the back of the surgery which is dedicated to flowers and plants that will help to support the local bee and butterfly populations. I can't imagine the surgery garden without her input and at least some of the traditional plants that she loves.

Next time you come to the surgery, you will notice that we have now installed a do-it-yourself blood pressure reading machine in the waiting room. We hope a lot of you will use it. As part of our efforts to keep you all fit and well and to spot early signs of problems, we try to record readings for as many patients as we possibly can. However, some people still manage to slip through the net. If you know that you haven't had your blood pressure checked recently, please use the DIY machine while you are waiting for your appointment then give your reading to the doctor or nurse so that it can go on your records.

We are intending also to install a weighing machine of some sort soon for the same reasons. I promise it will be a discreet one - not the "I shout your weight out so that everyone can hear" variety. Again, if you know that we don't have an up to date weight for you, please weigh yourself and tell the doctor or nurse the result.

Finally, if you want to opt out of having your medical records uploaded to the NHS spine, it is approaching your last opportunity to let us know. Realistically, I need to hear from you in writing no later than 1st March

to be sure of getting your wishes properly recorded and actioned. It seems that most people don't feel strongly about the issue, but if you do, now's the time to say so.

Hugh Cronin  
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