



LINGFIELD'S DOCTORS

As far back as 1841 a surgeon by the name of Dr George Chapman (born in Bromley in 1790) practiced in Lingfield. He lived at 'Sunnyside' in Town Hill and his son Edgar was his assistant in the 1850s.

Dr Sidney Austin became another well-respected figure in the village. He was born in Luton on the 9th January 1844 and educated there. Having made up his mind to be a doctor, at the age of sixteen he was apprenticed to a Dr Heale from whom he learnt dispensing and some medicine. He then went to St Mary's Medical School in Paddington and continued his studies there until he had taken his degrees and qualified to practice in 1868. In August of that year he and his wife came to reside in Lingfield and he became assistant to Dr Chapman. Dr Austin was able to purchase the practice at 'Sunnyside' when Dr Chapman died shortly afterwards. He continued in practice until his retirement in 1919.

The practice was a wide and scattered one and necessitated a good deal of travelling, so the doctor's figure as he rode on his horse from place to place was well known. A dogcart and later a Victoria, replaced the horse, the latter being driven by a faithful coachman who was in Dr Austin's service for forty years.

After a long illness Dr Austin passed away at 6.30 on Monday morning 12th October 1925, aged 81. On the day of his funeral the shops were closed and every blind drawn.

Another very popular village doctor was Dr Percy Claude Vincent Bent who took over from Dr Austin and also practised at 'Sunnyside'. During the twenty years he resided in Lingfield, Dr Bent took the keenest interest in all departments of village life and was loved by all for his unflagging cheerful friendliness. He died at the age of 65.

Other doctors in the area during the early 1900s were Dr H Balme, Dr W I L Chubb, Dr Elliott, Dr H R Mill, Dr Preston Wallis, Dr W Rougier Chapman, Dr Walker, Dr J Watson and Dr H F Wilson.

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Further reading: Dr Sidney Charles Austin - an RH7 factsheet