

The Dog comes with the Practice: Tales of a Junior Doctor in Ireland and Canada

by Tom Baskett

Paperback, 163 pages
Clinical Press, Bristol ISBN 09781854571014
December 2020

Thomas Baskett is Emeritus Professor of Obstetrics and Gynaecology in Canada and was President of the Canadian Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists. He has many textbooks and other writings to his name, written in a very readable style.

This book is a series of 25 short chapters, each narrating an episode in Tom Baskett's life in the 1960s as a medical student and junior doctor in Northern Ireland covering General Practice and Obstetrics, with a few tales from his time in Canada in the 1970s thrown in. I found the read a relatively rapid one, that kept my interest and made me reluctant to put it down. I recommend one allows oneself a generous quota a day!

Tom's style makes this an easy read. It reads as tales given after dinner by the fireside, except when he inserts short phrases to explain medical terms. It is humorous and self-deprecating, but at times serious and poignant, describing the limits of 1960's medicine. He admits at times he has exaggerated to make a point but is open when doing this. As a historian, I found it a worthwhile read for its background descriptions about practice at the time. This ranges from finding his rugby playing more important than school exam results when getting into medical school, to a description of the curriculum, bedside teaching methods and the 'sign of the bloody feet'. As in 'The Pill and the Pope', another of his books, he does not pull his punches when discussing the attitudes of Catholic priests towards the health and fertility of women.

In conclusion, a good read, with education and thought thrown in that should appeal to a wide audience.

Peter Carpenter
January 2022

Published online at www.bshm.org.uk