

BOOK REVIEW

The Life and Times of a Victorian Country Doctor - a Portrait of Reginald Grove Volume 3: Life as a Medical Man
by Peter Flower

Paperback, 744 pages
Brown Dog Books, ISBN 9781839524950
July 2022

This book is the third part of a biography of the author's grandfather who practiced as a GP in St Ives in Huntingdonshire from the late 19th century to the end of the Second World War. The primary source materials are family letters and diaries from the early part of Reginald Grove's life but the author has also drawn on extensive secondary sources relating to the social history of the period.

Reginald Grove had a traditional Victorian middle-class medical education through public school, Cambridge and Guys. The book describes details of life as an undergraduate when Grove took full advantage of the many sporting activities available, particularly rowing and skating. He also took a keen interest in brass rubbing and photography.

Moving to London for clinical training, Grove's life became less sheltered and more challenging. The late 19th Century was a time of scientific and technical innovation in medicine and the book includes a thoughtful discussion of some of the ethical and social dilemmas that faced medical students then.

Grove's father was a GP in poor health and Reginald was needed to assist in his practice as soon as qualified. I found the description of Grove's and his father's professional practice and family life in the period before World War 1 particularly interesting. The chapter on the role of the doctor's wife and the duties of the various medical assistants and domestic servants is illuminating. The book also includes accounts of Grove's courtship of his wife Hilda and details of the health of the doctor and his family.

When he started in practice, Reginald Grove travelled by horse but later he was a pioneering motorist and the author gives a vivid account of the travails of early car ownership.

The book is a long read and includes detailed information about numerous members of the family. The book will appeal to students of medical education, general practice and social history.

Chris Derrett
November 2022

Published online at www.bshh.org.uk