

Pioneering GP dies aged 90

ONE of the first GPs in the country in the NHS, who went on to serve his community for over 30 years, has died aged 90.

Dr Donald Lawrence Golightly was a beloved and benevolent presence in Prudhoe and Stocksfield after taking his first role as a GP at the Braeside Surgery in 1954.

Born on June 26, 1924 in Darlington, Donald enjoyed a happy childhood and went on to study at Darlington Grammar School, leaving school in 1940 at the age of 16.

But after spending an uninspiring summer working in a Durham bank, Donald made the bold move to return to school and take A-levels.

Donald was offered a place to study medicine in Newcastle at what was at that time, King's College of the University of Durham.

With no grants or scholarships available, Donald's parents sold many of their possessions to fund their son's medical studies.

Studying in wartime saw Donald doing his bit, fire-watching in the university's Armstrong Tower, opposite the city's civic centre.

Graduating in 1947, Donald enlisted to do his National Service and in the spring of 1948 set sail for Egypt aboard HMS *Franconia*.

Donald was sent to Kismayo in Somalia, governed at the time by Italy, where he undertook medical work in support of British armed forces still based overseas.

Donald's family remember a number of colourful anecdotes from his time there, including a rumour, which he refused to confirm or deny, that when in the path of a charging



Dr Donald Golightly, who has died aged 90.

rhino he calmly lit a cigar and held his ground.

Called home suddenly due to the early death of his father, Donald took jobs in London and various locations in the North, during which time he met his future wife, Ann Maudsley, a ward sister at the Friarage Hospital in Northallerton.

Their first child, John, was less than a year old when Donald took his first role as a GP, forming a partnership with Drs Lockhart and Davis at the Braeside Surgery at Halfway, Prudhoe.

A year later, Donald advanced to senior partner, following the retirement of Dr Lockhart, and Ann stepped in as practice receptionist.

Donald and Ann - who had six children, John, Charlie, Jane, Andrew, Sarah and Kate - were a formidable team in developing the GP practice in Prudhoe.

After 15 years at Braeside, the family moved to a new practice at

Moresby, in Stocksfield, where they remained for over 40 years and where Donald saw out his days.

With his work stretching beyond appointments and house visits, there is a story of Donald rushing to help a worker who had fallen 40ft at West Wylam Colliery, and Ann was happy to patch up lads on the surgery's doorstep late on Saturday nights.

Donald was one of the first to introduce GP training at his practice and enhanced his own knowledge with memberships with the Royal College of Gynaecologists and the Royal College of General Practitioners.

He retired in 1980 at the age of 65, and went on to complete a number of Open University courses in arts, humanities and the sciences. In his late 70s he gained an art degree at the University of Sunderland.

Donald also had significant spells as a Labour councillor on Prudhoe Urban District Council and as a major in the Royal Army Medical Corps Territorial Army.

A devoted family man, Donald loved nothing more than being with his wife and children, and over time with his nine grandchildren and four great grandchildren.

He and Ann enjoyed a 60 year marriage and were, according to the family, 'joined at the hip' until Ann's death in 2010.

His family say he was the 'perfect gentleman'; modest, with a dry sense of humour, he thought before speaking and rarely raised his voice.

A funeral service was held at St Peter's Church in Bywell, followed by cremation at the West Road Crematorium.