

Dr. Anne Millar by her colleague Dr. Peter Rose

Anne Millar, known affectionately by everyone as Dr Anne, died on 21st October, thus ending a 60 year period in which she gave dedicated service to Benson.



Anne moved to Benson in 1953 when her husband Andrew became a partner in the practice in Dorchester on Thames. They built a house in Mill Lane and had the foresight to add a surgery on the same site. The surgery was small but was probably one of the first purpose built surgeries in Oxfordshire. At the time Anne had a young family but she started working in the practice as an assistant in the mid-60s. For the next 20 years all medical services in Benson were run from the family home.

In 1970 the Dorchester partnership split up and the main practice moved to Berinsfield. Anne and Andrew became partners in the new practice in Benson. There is currently discussion in the news about lack of access to GPs; not so for Anne and Andrew who were on call 24 hours a day, seven days each week, and everyone in the village knew that they only had to knock on their door for medical assistance.

Anne was an excellent doctor, sometimes forthright but always doing her best for her patients. She was a skilful clinician and I learnt a lot from her when I joined the practice. Over the 30 years she was a GP, she served the Benson community. During all this time her positive attitude, enthusiasm and energy were undiminished. There was no common room in the original surgery, so she provided refreshments at her kitchen table after surgeries. At the same time she provided invaluable support for her colleagues and attached staff. She was highly respected by colleagues because she was approachable and thoughtful, full of expertise and good sense. When Andrew died in 1982, she continued to practice for a further 8 years, during which time she helped to plan and build the new surgery in the centre of Benson, as part of her succession planning.

Anne was particularly interested in child health and was expert both in the care of sick children and child development. She ran the baby clinic in the Village Hall for many years, ably assisted by her lieutenant Mrs Parks. There will be many people in Benson today, both parents and children, who benefitted from her skills.

Anne was involved in the modernisation programme of Wallingford Community Hospital in the 1970s. This was an innovative project, establishing one of the first 'community' as opposed to 'cottage' hospitals in the country. When she retired from the Benson practice, she continued briefly as the medical director of the hospital.

Outside of medicine, Anne had many interests. She was a superb gardener with an encyclopaedic knowledge of horticulture, the Latin names of plants and composting! She was devoted to her dogs and her daily walk with them on Swyncombe Woods was sacrosanct. She made huge contributions to village life. Anne was a long standing WI member and was president for several years. She was instrumental in setting up the Benson Area Play Scheme (known as BAPS) which provided multiple activities for school-age children for two weeks in the summer holidays. She had a wonderful ability to conscript many adult helpers into the scheme; it was hard to say 'no' to Dr Anne!

She helped to establish the Mill Stream Day Centre, persuading the local council to build a room for this purpose as an extension to the new sheltered accommodation in Mill Stream. She was a member of the committee until her death. She served on the Parish Council including a spell as chair, after retirement from medicine and also helped in the planning of the new parish hall. Anne was a founder member of the Benson Ecological Study Team (BEST). She was an active member of the church and played violin in the church orchestra for years. She instigated the building of the new lych-gate in the

churchyard to celebrate the millennium. She was insistent that the structure was built using traditional methods.

Even in retirement, she was still 'Dr Anne' and recently I can remember seeing her in the surgery waiting room recently, deep in conversation with old acquaintances. She had the unique ability to recognise and acknowledge everyone and give them her time.

Many of you will have your own stories about Dr Anne but one anecdote, told by Rev. John Burrell at her funeral service, sums up her kindness and her single mindedness. Soon after John moved into the vicarage, she arrived unannounced on his door step, stick in one hand and tape measure in the other. She announced 'I have come to survey your garden'. While John held the tape, she measured up the flower beds and over the next 2 years helped to renovate the garden.

After these many years of service to Benson, it was truly fitting that the parish council should honour her by naming a road Millar Close.

Dr Anne, Benson will miss you, but we will never forget the legacy you have left behind in this village.

Peter Rose