

DR ANDREW PATRICK MILLAR by Dr Andrew Millar (Junior)

I was brought up in Benson having been born in 1954. My parents Dr Andrew and Dr Anne were the local GPs. During my mother's long widowhood since 1982 she became better known locally than Dad. You may know she was buried in 2013 along with Dad's ashes (which were on her wardrobe in a plastic container –with the ashes of her dogs which were kept in fine wood and brass boxes). During the internment we heard a whistling sound and looked up to see a red kite circling low overhead. Brian Bull whispered "I think that's your Dad doing his final fly-by"

Dad was a WWII fighter pilot and spent four years in the remote and neglected Far East. There was much less intensity to the fighting than anything which occurred in the Battle of Britain and the war over Europe. Dad was obviously one of the lucky ones who survived, as, indeed, all the survivors must have been.

Our family house in Mill Lane had a Japanese officer's sword above the kitchen door, a cigarette box with RAF wings in the living room and a carved model Spitfire in Dad's study next to two framed certificates with the King's signature. At Sunday teatime we would say 'tell us about the RAF Dad!' –Dad, aka 'Dr Andrew Patrick Millar DSO DFC MB BS DRCOG' (as addressed on some GP's letters) would always oblige. One favourite (we must all have been less than five) was how he parked his aeroplane in a cloud to escape some Japanese fighters.

When I was a teenage schoolboy Dad started to write his 'memoirs'. He would sit in his study tapping his typewriter with two fingers while referring to his log book to see what memories he could conjure up. Doubtless there were 'rose tints', some omissions and some misting twenty years on, but I believe they represent his most faithful recollections. Dad tried to get the collection published without success.

Via a circuitous route, Dad's memoirs came into the possession of Fighting High Publishing run by Steve Darlow in 2012. Steve tracked me down (via Mum's obituary in the Benson Bulletin) and said he wanted to publish the memoirs as accounts of the war in the air in the Far East are very rare.

I had read the memoirs originally when I was about 17 and had not looked at them again until 2014. It astonished me that Dad did all this when he was the

same age as my children are now – early twenties. The endurance, danger, resourcefulness, courage and extreme luck of the survivors are unimaginable by today's standards. To take off with a map on your knees, unreliable weather reports and negligible radio to explore unknown mountains above hostile terrain and judge the return flight to within a minute or two of fuel reserves seems little more than foolhardy, but was a run of the mill sortie. On top of this were the constant tropical skin diseases, the chronic amoebic dysentery and the recurrent bouts of rigors from malaria. This continued for four years. Towards the end of the memoirs Dad keeps remarking that he must have gone mad; I find it amazing how these young men, boys really, kept going at all.

At the end of the book he remarks he was tired of risking his life and wanted to return to his medical studies which he had voluntarily left to join up as war broke out. His career in medicine brought him to Benson where, as well as General Practice he became a gliding instructor, cricketer (for Ewelme) and a patron of local clubs.

Dad never forgot his squadron motto 'facta non verba' and was fond of opportunities to say it. He had an enduring loving relationship with Mum whose motto, by contrast, might well have been 'facta et verba'.

My sisters and I are delighted to see his memoirs going into print; it is written in the voice of the sixties with a political incorrectness which needs to be understood and forgiven. We have made no attempt to edit any of it.

If you are interested in the book you might like to look at:
<http://fightinghigh.com/theflyinghours.htm>