

**DR JOHN DUFFIELD OF MARCHAM  
FEBRUARY 1910 TO FEBRUARY 2010.**

**Dr John Elwes Duffield** died on February 13, just two days after his 99th birthday, in his own home, and is survived by his three children, Gervase who is a Vale Councillor and represented Oxford Diocese in the central C/E Synod for 20 years, John who is well known in the City as a leading Financier, and their sister Mary Jean who is the wife of a retired General. Both his own wives predeceased him .

- o o o -

Like my brother and I, my father started his main education at Cothill school. Then he went on to Malvern College. After a year in forestry and agriculture, he graduated in Zoology from St Catherine's College, Oxford University before switching to medicine. He won a postgraduate Commonwealth fellowship to Chicago University where he met his first wife, Jean Stelman. His medical training was divided between Oxford, Chicago University and St Mary's Hospital, Paddington. His UK medical work began with a group of GPs in West Malling, Kent, but was soon interrupted by WWII. He immediately joined P&O, and spent the war as medical officer in fast liners which as troopships could outrun U-boats, or in other convoy duties. His most alarming adventure was in Convoy HX-84 inward bound from Halifax, Nova Scotia, in which he was the only doctor among the whole 37 ships. They were surprised on 5 November 1940 by the German surface raider Admiral Scheer. The sole escort vessel, an ancient liner converted in emergency into an armed merchant cruiser, was the Jervis Bay (Captain Fegen). She valiantly turned towards the Scheer but the accurate German gunnery blew her out of the water before she got near enough to land a shot,

but her action and self-sacrifice earned the convoy valuable time, allowing the ships to scatter and reducing to five the number the Scheer could sink. The one-sided battle is today made famous by the film San Demetrio, London which tells the story of a tanker the Scheer had set on fire, but which was courageously reboarded by part of the crew amidst danger of imminent explosion, and against all the odds sailed into Liverpool with most of her precious oil still intact. The bravery of that crew was matched by the heroism of the Jervis Bay.

After WWII Dr Duffield returned to become a medical officer at Coulsdon Mental Hospital in Surrey specialising in psychiatry before becoming a consultant for many years in the Oxford area based at Littlemore hospital, where he and his family lived in the grounds until returning to one of the family homes in Marcham. Initially he had been part of a team based at the old Radcliffe Infirmary where he was involved in pioneering neurosurgical research in a small team under the Australian Professor Sir Hugh Cairns, with Professor Witts and Dr Macdonald Tow. The project ended with Cairns' tragically early death. My father held regular outpatient clinics at the old Radcliffe Infirmary, and lectured to Hospital auxiliary medical staff at Dorset House. Before and after his formal retirement he was regularly involved in legal work, both as an expert witness in serious (often murder) trials advising Judge and jury, as he put it, 'whether the defendant was mad or bad', and visiting Reading and Oxford prisons frequently. He was asked to join the Parole Board but he grew increasingly to dislike it, feeling that it let villains out of prison far too easily, and so he resigned.

He was ever a countryman, and as a Zoology graduate, keen on nature from his Oxford days. He went on an Oxford University expedition to British Guyana, and discovered quite a few insects there previously unknown to science. The specimens are now in a London science museum.

The Duffield family have lived in Marcham for centuries, first in Marcham Park (now Denman College), and later in various Church Street and other Marcham properties. My father grew up in and lived most of his life in Marcham. When he moved from Littlemore Hospital where our family lived in the grounds (the house was demolished to make way for the new roads), he established himself at the Tithe House next to Marcham church. There he spent the rest of his long life. He found a huge garden between the Tithe House and the cemetery, but it was in a very run down state. He spent most of his spare time restoring and extending this magnificent garden through which flowed two small streams from the Denman College lake down to the Ock. He had an excellent stonemason called Alf Taylor who restored all the dilapidated walls and built new paths revealing all the skills of a mason as against the usual boring and ugly concrete. My father restored and renovated that large garden. and enjoyed sitting in it in his old age.

I cannot conclude without paying tribute to Florence, our more than excellent carer. After a series of less satisfactory younger carers, Florence (from Zimbabwe) looked after my father's final years with great skill and dedication, and became a firm family friend to whom our whole family is grateful.

*GERVASE DUFFIELD*

**TO ALL OUR LOYAL AND VALUED CUSTOMERS**

**It is with deepest regret that we have to inform you that we will be closing the Marcham Post Office and Stores on the 30 April 2009.**

As you can imagine it is not a decision we have made lightly, but one we have been forced into making because we have been unable to agree terms for a new lease with our landlord.

We have been here almost 14 years and have very much enjoyed our time here. We have met a lot of people during our time, many, sadly are no longer with us but we will remember everybody with fondness.

Thank you for making our stay in the village a pleasant one.

We wish you all well for the future.

***David and Julia Ball***