

## DOCTORS IN THE GORING GAP

### Herbert Lavington Evans

Until the late 1880s Goring had no resident doctor, but by the time of the 1891 census, Herbert Lavington Evans was the medical practitioner, living in Thames Road and practising from his home. then known as Ropley, but now called Stow House. He had been born in Clifton, Bristol in 1859 and was educated at Clifton College before becoming a medical student in Bristol and Edinburgh, completing his qualifications in surgery there in 1888. He was a keen rugby player, playing for Clifton RFC 1878-1882 and for Edinburgh University Rugby XV 1883-1887. Such was his excellence that he played for Scotland during his time in Edinburgh. He got married in London to Australian-born Maud Trimmer in 1885. After qualifying Dr Evans worked at Guy's Hospital before coming to Goring. Apparently Maud had organised social care provision in some of the poorer parts of London before marrying.

*'Harry Loft' Evans in rugby kit [Clifton Rugby Football Club]*



For the first time Goring residents had the choice of visiting a doctor's surgery or being seen at home. But of course, payment was required. In the 1890s medical advice and treatment were limited. The major complaints such as tuberculosis were treated with fresh air, rest and a good diet, benefits usually only available to the wealthy. Calling lists were short and transport for the doctor until the arrival of the motor car, was by horse and trap.

Dr Evans became concerned about many of his patients who worked on local farms or in domestic service for very low wages. He strongly supported the local Nurse Fund which was financed entirely by voluntary contributions. This allowed many poorer families to receive medical care and treatment at little or no charge.

In February 1905 Dr Evans was appointed Medical Officer for the Goring Heath Charity. Strongly backing a new sanitary scheme for the village, he talked to the Local Red Cross Society and the National School on the prevention and treatment of rickets (a disease caused by vitamin deficiency).

On a personal level his great love of music led him to becoming the conductor for the local Girls Musical Club. He was given a mounted silver baton as a token of his kindness in giving so much of his time to conducting the girls. The Club entered the Oxford Musical Competition in 1907 and the banner they won now hangs in Church House, Oxford.

The outbreak of WWI in 1914 saw Dr Evans still supporting the Nurses Fund, but attending to the needs of soldiers returning from the battle fronts of France took more and more of his time, especially as the numbers of men repatriated rose steadily. From September 1916 to December 1917 he took the role of Medical Officer at the Red Cross Hospital at Battle House, Goring, replacing Dr Leslie who went to work on the front in Egypt.

6/0/10

Surname Evans      No 68 1 JUL 1910

Christian Name Herbert S. M B      (Mr., Mrs. or Miss)

Permanent Address: Ropley, Goring, Oxon

Date of Engagement 9 Sept '16      Rank Medical Officer Pay —

Date of Termination 1 Dec '17      Rank " Pay "

Particulars of Duties Medical Officer.

Whether whole or part time, and if latter No. of hours served —

Previous engagements under Joint War Committee, if any, and where —

Honours awarded —

*Dr Evans's WWI Red Cross service card [Red Cross]*

On 9 April 1925 Dr Evans died after a short illness aged 65. The Goring Parish Magazine said, 'in the death of Dr Evans, Goring has lost one of the most kind men that could be found. During the whole of his life in the district he has devoted himself to his patients and his generosity to the poorer classes has been most marked. His kindness and promptness in attending and the interest he took in his various cases gained him the affection of all who knew him ...' His friends set up the Evans Memorial Fund for the benefit of children and sick persons in the neighbourhood in acknowledgement of his nearly 40 years service 1887-1925. There is a brass plaque to this effect in St Thomas's Church.

### Leonard Leslie

Dr Leonard Leslie and his wife Catherine came to Streatley from Edinburgh in 1911. He joined the Goring practice with Dr Evans who had probably also served Streatley since his arrival in 1887. The population of Goring had greatly increased in that time, necessitating another doctor for the practice. They were able to rent Elm Lodge opposite the Bull Inn. Some of the house had to be modified to provide a surgery, dispensary and waiting room.



*Elm Lodge [Adrian Turner]*

During WWI, as already noted, Dr Leslie served overseas in the Royal Army Medical Corps and was away from home. He joined up in October 1916, ending his service career as a Major.

His first transport was a motor bike that sometimes on a visit to Aldworth would not climb Streatley Hill. An alternative route by Hook End Lane at Lower Basildon had to be used. Fortunately he was able when seeking a car to take him round his large and spread out practice to be offered a grey Rolls Royce which he was able to buy at a reasonable price from a grateful patient. He reasoned that a large, reliable car was more economical to run than the cost of buying extra petrol.

Dr Leslie became the high earner of the practice with the occupiers of nearly all the big houses in Streatley, Goring, Woodcote and Pangbourne joining his list. He was also Medical Officer to St Andrews School, Cranford House, the PNEU School at Moultsford and the then Nautical College at Pangbourne where he became famous for abolishing hammocks.

He loved golf and the Goring & Streatley Golf Club became almost a second home for the Leslies and their daughter Nan. In due course he was appointed a trustee of the Club. Despite being an old hand in general practice with over 30 years of experience, Dr Leslie always treated his patients, junior doctors, locums and assistants with kindness. They all learnt a great deal from him about general practice affairs, medicine and life in general and he was ready to listen to others. His favourite advice was 'be kind to your patients'.

Dr Leslie was energetic, outgoing and had a fund of stories that he would keep for particular patients knowing that he would get some back to add to his collection. He was also a budding musician who played the cello after dinner, accompanied by his wife on the piano.

Olivia Pemberton in her recollections of Mrs Morrell, the owner of Streatley House, said, 'Emily Alicia was terrified of death. It came slowly and she took to her bed for the last few days. At the end she asked Dr Leslie, the family doctor, if she was dying. Good heavens, no, he replied as if surprised at such a question although he was well aware that she had only a few hours left to live.'

Dr Leslie's daughter Nan married another partner in the practice, Dr Clifford Thomas.

In April 1952 Dr Leslie died. Among the many tributes Goring Parish Council stated, 'we salute the passing of a family doctor whom we were privileged to have in these two small villages.' In obituaries, Sir Robert Hutchison, ex-President of the Royal



*Dr Leslie at his daughter's wedding reception at Thurlie Grange, 1936 [David Thomas]*

College of Physicians and a Streatley resident, said 'he was an outstanding example of the best type of country practitioner' and R C Robertson wrote, 'his knowledge of medicine was first class but his knowledge of mankind was away in a class beyond rating.'

### **Lancelot Gerard Bourdillon**

Dr Bourdillon was born in Cape Town, South Africa in 1888. He was educated at Tonbridge School and qualified at St Thomas's Hospital in 1912. He went out to the First Balkan War 1912-13 to help the Turks and caught typhoid fever in Turkey.

At the beginning of WWI he joined the First Field Ambulance Corps of the RAMC and went to France, serving right through to 1918 as a regimental Medical Officer. He was awarded the DSO, MC and Bar and the Croix de Guerre and was mentioned six times in despatches. He left the RAMC and went back to St Thomas's, graduating with his MB and BS. He joined the Goring practice in 1923 and moved into Ropley, a part of which was converted into a surgery with a waiting room and dispensary. The house was the first in Goring to have a telephone. Surgeries were held every day, including Sundays.



*Stow House, formerly Ropley but renamed by Dr Bourdillon. [Bernard Novell]*

In 1922 he married Sylvia Reiss, daughter of Charles Reiss, the Treasurer of St Thomas's Hospital. The family owned a house in London and Hill House in Streatley, which was later given to the Youth Hostel Association.

Both families supported social reform. Lancelot and Sylvia had worked for the Oxford and Bermondsey Mission (boys clubs) and the Star Club (for girls). They also strongly supported charitable trusts who raised money to enable poor families and elderly people to receive medical treatment and appliances not otherwise available to them. Children and mothers were also sent to local convalescent homes. They spoke regularly about the Dr Evans Memorial Trust, the WI Infant Welfare Service and organised fund-raising appeals for the Royal Berks Hospital in Reading.

## World War 2

With the outbreak of war in September 1939, the Goring and Streatley practices were facing a crisis. Dr Bourdillon had decided to join the RAMC Reserve and urgent steps were needed to strengthen the medical team. Clifford Thomas, the senior partner at Pangbourne persuaded Dr Wysard to stay until the war ended. Fortunately Colonel Beit, a retired Indian Army medical officer and now living in Streatley, offered his services. Also living in Streatley was Sir Robert Hutchison, ex-President of the Royal College of Pathologists. He agreed to help and frequently assisted the practice. When asked for his fee it was always £5 regardless of the patient's ability to pay. On this basis and with Dr Leslie and Dr Thomas they were able to tackle the problems ahead.

### *Colonel Bourdillon, RAMC [Emma Steed]*



By December 1939 200 evacuees had arrived in Goring together with their teachers. The Alexandra Orphanage went to Elm Croft and the Royal School for the Deaf took over Cariad, The Grange and Nun's Acre. April 1940 saw a Red Cross Supply Depot established in Long Meadow and in 1941 Flint House was opened as a Red Cross Convalescent Hospital with 40 beds. Dr Leslie contracted a severe case of spinal meningitis and was off duty for three months.

Wartime life became more stressful: ration books, gas masks, petrol coupons and restrictions on street lighting added to problems, especially during the hours of darkness. Bus services were severely curtailed and trains were slow and dirty.

The doctors were hard pushed and it became necessary to hire locums from time to time. They had to cope with a scattered parish and no signposts, all of them having been blacked out. Visiting lists often exceeded 40 a day. Every partner worked six mornings a week and two evenings, with Sundays kept for emergency cases.

Dr Bourdillon's wife made repeated calls for new blood donors. She also continued asking mothers to take steps to protect their babies from diphtheria. Inoculation at the Infant Welfare Clinic would protect all children between 1-5 years and free vitamin supplements were also available.

Serious road accidents occurred, especially those involving Army transport. A truck turned over on Streatley Hill and six soldiers were killed. Two Army despatch riders died in a collision with another Army vehicle.

1944 saw the arrival of American troops at Basildon House but the Home Guard was stood down and in the following year VE Day was announced. Dr Bourdillon retired from the RAMC holding the rank of Colonel and returned to his practice in Goring.

### **Post-war**

Peace returned but few saw little change in their lives. Almost everything was still rationed and in short supply. In 1948 the Government passed legislation to set up a National Health Service – free at point of use.

On a happier note, Dr Bourdillon was able to develop his love of bird watching when on holiday in Scotland. He also enjoyed sailing there and on the River Thames where he kept a boat moored at The Temple.

On 4 January 1950 Lancelot Bourdillon died, aged 61. An obituary in the *Goring Parish Magazine* said, 'Colonel Bourdillon endeared himself in so many ways to the people of Goring. There must be few who do not have cause to remember this doctor whose life was devoted to the relief of pain and misery. We shall miss his cheery manner and ready smile. He was loved and respected by his patients and all his colleagues.'

The inscription on his grave in Goring churchyard reads:

*God is Love / In memory of our beloved husband and father/Lancelot Gerard Bourdillon/ born 1888 died 1950/ doctor in this village./Also his wife, our beloved mother Sylvia Caroline/born 1893 died 1958.*

When Dr Bourdillon died the Bourdillon Memorial Children's Playing Field Fund was set up to raise money for a new recreation ground. It was successful and land to the rear of the current Primary School was purchased. Just over £400 had been raised by public subscription which also enabled grass to be laid and two sets of swings and a seesaw provided. It was named the Bourdillon Playing Field in the doctor's honour and was opened on 1 November 1952 by his widow. Goring Parish Council became the trustees.

### **Clifford Thomas**

In 1934 a young doctor from Torquay was invited to join Dr Bourdillon and Dr Leslie. This was Clifford Thomas who became a partner in the practice in 1935 and subsequently married Dr Leslie's daughter Nan in 1936. In 1938 the couple settled in Pangbourne where Dr Thomas ran that village's surgery until 1967 when he retired.

### **James (Jim) Francis Monk**

Jim Monk was born in Delhi, India. He came home to England at the age of three and was brought up by a maiden aunt. He was educated at Winchester School and Trinity College Oxford, followed by medical training at St Thomas's Hospital and the Radcliffe Infirmary.

He qualified in 1941 and was appointed a house surgeon at Bradford Royal Infirmary.

Called up for National Service, he joined the RAMC in 1942. For the next four years he served in hospitals in Tunisia and Italy. At the end of the North African campaign his hospital was closed. Morale was low, but Jim had the opportunity to get out into the desert and see birds that were new to him. With the war ending, he was posted to a malaria research unit in Woolwich. In January 1947, on a visit to his mother, he met Diana who had come with his cousin Jenny to collect hen food. A courtship began, taking place in London night clubs for fun and sewage farms for birds!

In December 1947 Jim joined the Goring and Streatley practice as an assistant to Dr Bourdillon and Dr Leslie. He did all the distant calls to Checkendon, South Stoke and Woodcote where the branch surgery was in the back parlour of the local village shop with only a hand basin and the floor for examinations. A new surgery was not built in Woodcote until 1964.

In February 1948 Jim and Diana were married. Once Dr Bourdillon had died in 1950, his widow agreed to divide Stow House so that Jim and Diana could live there, Jim having the rear part for accommodation and his surgery.



*Glebe Cottage. Dr Monk's surgery was through the archway on the right of the photo. [GGLHS]*

In 1957 they moved to Glebe Cottage (next to the Miller of Mansfield) which had been bequeathed to him by a grateful patient. They entered fully into the social life of the community. Diana joined the Sailing Club. She bought half a Firefly 12 foot sailing dinghy whose owner agreed eventually to sell her the other half, although he never subsequently asked her for any money.

Jim played cricket for the Goring Cricket Club but his real interest was the study of birds. Tunisia had stimulated his interest in their migration from the desert and this was revived with a visit to Algeria in 1973. Two years later, and almost on his own initiative, Jim launched a new check list for the Ornithologists Union to cover parts of the world for which updates were unavailable. Over 32 years he filled every important office in the OU, including being editor of IBIS the national magazine for those studying ornithology. He also became a world authority on the wryneck, Britain's only brown woodpecker which had been found in the Goring area in 1948-1950. In his birdwatching activities Jim used hedgerows to provide cover when observing species. One day he was crouching behind a hedge in Rectory Road when two riders passed by. Their horses, seeing his movement, shied with the inevitable result for both riders and their steeds.

### *Jim Monk [Diana Monk]*

Jim resigned his position as the senior partner in the practice on the opening of the new Medical Centre in Red Cross Road on 1 April 1981.

A much loved family doctor known for his compassion and kindness, James Monk died on 8 May 2014. He had been in medical practice for 33 years. He then spent the following 33 years in retirement at Bridge Cottage, a peaceful and idyllic finish to a very full life.



### **Roger Dixey**

Born on 11 November 1915, Roger Dixey was brought up in Devon where his father was a GP. He was educated at Shrewsbury School and Clare College, Cambridge. In 1943 he entered St Bartholomew's Hospital to read medicine. National Service intruded and he was sent off with other fourth year students to help clear up the Belsen Concentration Camp, an experience he never forgot.

Whilst at Bart's he met his future wife, Susan, who was a nurse. They were married in 1947 and Roger joined the Goring and Streatley practice on 7 July 1951. This was the last meeting at which Dr Leslie presided. Based at Elm Lodge in Streatley, Roger covered Streatley, Goring and Aldworth. He did, however, discontinue the Sunday morning surgery after church.

In 1953 he set up a branch surgery in Compton, saying that he felt there was 'rather a shortage of patients'. He held weekly sessions in a wooden hut by the sports hall. In 1969 the partnership agreed to close the branch, although by this time Roger had acquired a patient list exceeding 200.

The work schedule at Elm Lodge was demanding: morning surgeries were held from Monday – Saturday, after which he started his house calls. On Wednesdays and Fridays



there was an additional surgery and he was also on call most nights, although this was a role shared with Jim Monk, and likewise every weekend. On Thursdays, after completing his house calls, he took a half day holiday. Somewhere squeezed into this schedule was a surgery one afternoon a week in Compton.

Elm Lodge dispensary had only the most basic medicines available. Minor operations were conducted in the surgery. His son Andrew remembers the sterilisation of instruments taking place in a boiler on a cooker in the kitchen.

Rowing, first experienced at Shrewsbury, re-entered Roger's life. He became one of the main founders of the National Schools Regatta held over the Pangbourne Reach of the Thames. With Susan they hosted crews for the Henley Regatta for 30 years and in token of this support, Shrewsbury named two rowing boats the Roger Dixey and the Susan Dixey.



*Dr Roger Dixey making a harpsichord [GGLHS]*

He took up carpentry and became skilful enough to make a harpsichord and spinet. Music was another of his passions. Over the years he sang in several choirs, including the Oxford Bach Choir.

There are many stories about Roger Dixey, his sense of humour and his love of life. May Cooling, the senior telephonist at Goring Telephone Exchange often helped him with his spelling. She once discussed the problem of not being able to sleep and he advised her to count telephone numbers. Susan used May to keep track of where and when Roger was visiting in case of any emergency. She always seemed to know which patient he was seeing. Roger was convinced that May listened to all his conversations hence her knowledge of where he was.

Fishing on the Thames was a popular pastime and at weekends many an unfortunate fisherman would turn up at Elm Lodge with a fish hook embedded in his finger. To remove the hook and at the same time ensure the patient couldn't move, Roger would take him into his workshop and clamp the offending finger into his woodworking vice before proceeding to take out the hook. The look of horror on the fisherman's face always brought amusement to Roger's small children.

Roger was a dedicated and skilful GP. Always enthusiastic, he endeared himself to the young, many of whom he helped and remembered him with affection.

### Postscript

The opening of the new Medical Centre in Goring on 1 April 1981, with Dr Dixey as the senior partner, heralded a change in the way in which patient care would be delivered. Patients would no longer be treated at the doctors' individual surgeries. Each doctor would attend to his own list of patients, but there would be no night calls or weekend work. The future would see nearly everybody dealt with through the new centre and subsequently referred or admitted to the nearest hospital if necessary. It was a fundamental change that signified the end of an era for medical care in Goring, Streatley and the surrounding area that had lasted for 94 years.

*The Medical Centre, Red Cross Road 1991*  
[GGLHS]



**Michael Brodie**

### Acknowledgements

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### Sources

Goring Gap Local History Society archives, *Goring Gap News*, *Goring Parish Magazine*, Kelly's Directories, *Reading Evening Post*, Streatley St Mary's Church Magazines and the *Sunday Times*.