

OBITUARIES

Joan Marion Harding, 1910–2004

Joan Harding, an Honorary Vice-President of the Society, died peacefully on 19 June 2004 aged 93. She was for most of her life a librarian in the Civil Service, but her main interest was in archaeology and vernacular architecture.

After leaving school she obtained a Diploma at the Institute of Archaeology but, realizing there were few opportunities for women in archaeology, she trained at the Froebel College in Roehampton, and became head of kindergarden at Parsons Mead School in Ashted. She later became a librarian in the Ministry of Aircraft Production where she spent the rest of her working life.

Archaeology, however, remained one of her hobbies and she joined the Society in 1956; some three years later she took up the challenge of directing the excavation of a Bronze Age and Mesolithic settlement site under threat at Weston Wood, near Albury. Many members of the Society look back to the excavation with nostalgia. Anne Bowey, then history teacher at Woking Girls' Grammar School, writes: 'After starting as a novice, I asked if I might bring some sixth formers and she was kind enough to agree at once. Her generosity in giving time, encouragement and instruction never failed. She gave so many young people such a splendid introduction to an absorbing interest, even career, working with like-minded people of every age and walk of life'. There were eight seasons of excavation during which time Joan attempted some experimental archaeology. Finding a storage jar with carbonized grain, she made a replica jar from the local clay, placed grain within it and buried the jar. When it was retrieved the next spring the grain was found to be perfectly preserved. The feasibility of melting copper in the type of clay oven and on carstone hearths such as were found in Weston Wood was also successfully demonstrated. Despite being a very important site, in those days there was no money for post-excavation work and although carefully documented by the standards of the day, the excavation has never been fully written up. It is therefore very pleasing and timely that a new group of the Society is currently processing this material with a view to publication.

Before retirement she attended lectures and studied vernacular architecture, and while teaching evening classes in archaeology for the Workers' Educational Association she decided to vary the syllabus by introducing vernacular architecture to the students. The enthusiasm was such that they decided to form a group to pursue the study of old houses in Surrey and thus in 1970 the Domestic Buildings Research Group (Surrey) (DBRG) was born. Under her guidance and leadership as Founder, DBRG has recorded over 3500 houses in Surrey – a remarkable and valuable contribution to the history of the county.

Her observation was acute and one day, walking up the narrow stairs of a small 'half bay' at the end of a house with an outside chimney, she noticed soot on the wattle-and-daub walls on either side. She realized this was evidence of a hearth preceding the external chimney, and that this bay had been used as a chimney. This was the first time that a smoke bay had been recognized anywhere in the country. Since then, over 250 have been recorded in Surrey alone.

In the early 1970s, Joan Harding was invited to study the houses of Charlwood, which was then under threat from the expansion of Gatwick Airport. She gave an oral report to the inquiry panel who were unaware of the large number of medieval houses in the village and of their historical significance. This helped to secure a decision that no second runway would be built at Gatwick before 2019. Her book on the village – *Four centuries of Charlwood houses: medieval to 1840* – was published in 1976.

Another of her passions was bee-keeping and she became an authority on bee diseases, which involved her driving around the county; but she became more interested in the houses and cottages. This led to her undertaking for the Bee Research Association, a special study of bee boles – recesses built into old walls for the winter housing of straw or wicker beehives.

Joan Harding's contribution to the archaeology and history of Surrey has been outstanding. She was a member of Council from 1962 to 1966, served on the Excavations Committee between 1964 and 1972, and when the Conservation Committee was formed in 1970, she served on it continuously until 1990. She was elected a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of London in 1971, and appointed MBE in 1991 for services to the national heritage in Surrey. She was also a trustee of the Weald and Downland Open Air Museum.

AUDREY MONK

Joan Mary Harries, 1915–2004

We were sad to hear of the death of Honorary Vice-President Miss Joan Harries on 4 March 2004, only a few weeks before her 89th birthday. She had been a member of the Surrey Archaeological Society for many years and had contributed to its activities in both local history and in archaeology.

With the career of Librarian in mind, Joan took a BA (General) degree in History, English and French at University College, London, followed by a Diploma in Librarianship. In 1938 she was appointed to the staff of the University of London Library (Senate House) and, when she retired, had attained the rank of Deputy Librarian, and had been elected as a Fellow of the Library Association. A former colleague remembers well her friendliness and helpfulness to all members of staff, despite the demands which her senior post entailed and has commented on the lasting effect of her work in the Library.

During her career, Joan developed an interest in archaeology. Having taken part in several excavations, Joan, with characteristic thoroughness, set about acquiring knowledge of the theory and techniques of this subject by taking the part-time course for the Certificate in Field Archaeology awarded by the Extra-Mural Department, University of London. In 1974, she was awarded the Certificate, with Special Mention, and in 1978, she was elected a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of London.

Meanwhile, Joan gave great service to the Society as Honorary Editor of the *Collections* from 1973 to 1980 and, on relinquishing this post, was elected an Honorary Vice-President of the Society. While Editor she was also responsible for compiling the general index to volumes 61–70 of the *Collections*.

In 1974, Joan moved to Crondall and, at first, followed her interest in pottery, becoming a competent potter. An exhibition of her work was held in Crondall. She also put to good use her experience in librarianship by cataloguing the Library in the Museum of Farnham, and in history by publishing several articles as well as a major study entitled *Crondall in the time of Elizabeth I: a study based mainly on the Probate Inventories*. This latter was published with the aid of the Farnham and District Museum Society. She also did much to bring the tithe map schedule for Crondall to a state in which it could be readily used, particularly in the study of field names.

This record of achievement might suggest that Joan's interests lay solely in academic work. Nothing could be further from the truth. She enjoyed music, the theatre, antiques and travel.

Her former colleagues and her friends will remember this many-talented woman with great respect and affection.

EVE MYATT-PRICE