

Barbara Eastop

Jonathan Cotton

Barbara Eastop, who died suddenly on 19 December 2003, aged 74, was one of a dwindling band of genuine hands-on amateur archaeologists. She was also totally committed to 'community involvement' in its fullest sense, long before the phrase, if not the deed, was fashionable, and shared a diverse range of interests with a wide circle of family and friends.

An early member of the West London Archaeological Field Group, set up in 1967 to help Roy Canham with his excavations then under way in Brentford, she soon became an indispensable member of the team: always available to help on site, and never, ever, missing a Tuesday evening's finds processing session. Though always dismissive of her own contribution, she was nevertheless particularly good at encouraging new volunteers, and in inducting them into the mysteries of trowelling and of washing and marking. Belonging to that wartime generation for whom the phrase 'waste not, want not' was a guiding principle, her ability to conjure virtually anything out of nothing was an especially valuable asset in straightened pre-PPG16 days.

Her van – usually a venerable VW – was her trademark, and a number of archaeologists (this one included) have good cause to remember her mercy dashes ferrying tools, fencing and finds trays between sites across west and south-west London. The van was often put to other uses too: transporting whole cooked turkeys (with all the trimmings) from her house in Kew to waiting WLAFG members packed into the Brentford headquarters each Christmas; even, on one memorable occasion, carrying the headless auto-icton of Jeremy Bentham from UCL down to the Textile Conservation lab at Hampton Court for an overdue wash and brush-up.

Latterly she was a much respected member of the London and Middlesex Archaeological Society's Archaeology Committee, and many will remember her as an ever-present steward at LAMAS archaeology conferences. Her local knowledge and contacts were second to none, and she could always be relied upon to act as a

powerful but scrupulously fair advocate for the interests and needs of the amateur archaeology sector. It was through her determination and that of Gill Clegg, for example, that WLAFG maintained its local presence in Gunnersbury Park Museum long after the professionals had moved back into central London.

The affection in which she was held in London's archaeological circles could be gauged from the number of archaeologists who attended her funeral in early January. She will be much missed, and our sympathies are extended to her husband Victor, daughters Dinah, Jemima, Rebecca, Susannah and son Frank, of whom she was so proud.

