

Dennis John Turner, BSc, FSA, FSAScot

1932–2013

Gerry Moss

London archaeology has lost a great supporter with the death in January of Dennis Turner from a long battle with cancer. He was involved in many aspects of London archaeology, particularly south of the Thames in Surrey. His interest in archaeology dates from his school days at Whitgift School (now Trinity School) Croydon. He joined Surrey Archaeological Society (SyAS) in 1948. On leaving school he joined the LCC in a junior clerical role. One of his first actions was to ask the LCC for permission to monitor the archaeology of the Festival of Britain site in his spare time. Although refused, it did result in the LCC archaeological officer being asked to keep an eye on the site.

At the LCC he was put in charge of the prints in the Members' Library. The Members' Librarian was Ida Darlington, who also led the archaeological section of the London Natural History Society (LNHS). Hence it was with them that Dennis directed excavations at Merton Priory; Stane Street, Morden; and Orchard Hill, Carshalton, which were first published in *Trans. London Nat. Hist. Soc.*

After his National Service in 1950–52 he briefly returned to the LCC, but left later in 1952 to join the BBC where he worked for the rest of his career. Through a four-year sandwich course at Borough Polytechnic he obtained a Diploma in Technology, later converted to a degree, and became a chartered engineer.

With Peter Marsden in 1962 he excavated at 199 Borough High Street the site of King's Bench Prison. As a result of this SyAS, LNHS and Cuming Museum set up the Southwark Archaeological Excavation Committee to organise the excavation of the many sites in Southwark under threat from redevelopment. Later Lambeth was added to their remit.

Dennis also led the excavation of three sites in Mitcham: Short Batsworth, just off Church Road, which was a

prehistoric burial site; Mitcham Grove; and Sir Julius Caesar Adelmare's house in London Road.

His interest in medieval moated sites led to him being a founder member of the Moated Site Research Group (1971–86). He served 1975–85 on the Committee of the MSRG. Later he was also active with the Medieval Settlement Research Group that was formed from the merger of the MSRG with the Medieval Village Research Group. In addition he was actively involved on an international scale with Ruralia (for Medieval Rural Archaeology). In 1964 he excavated the moated site at Burstow Rectory, and in 1965 he excavated the site at Moat Farm Hookwood.

In 1966 he moved to Reigate and directed further excavations at the medieval kiln at Bushfield Shaw, Earlswood, and Bletchingley Castle. The kiln yielded some characteristic decorated sherds. It was concluded that the kiln was slighted after one season's use with a particularly striking 'face on front' jug left on top of the remains of the kiln, perhaps as a marker of the potter. For many years his holidays were spent excavating Breachacha Castle, Coll and then Achanduin Castle, Lismore, Scotland.

He served on the Council of SyAs 1961–65. In 1965 he established *Surrey Archaeological Society Bulletin* which he edited with his wife Molly until 1969. From 1969–76 he was Honorary Secretary of Surrey Archaeological Society. As such he found himself organising the hire of professional archaeologists who were funded by Surrey County Council. Due to the liabilities this might generate, he oversaw the Society becoming a Company Limited by Guarantee. On retiring as secretary in 1976 he was elected a Vice-President of the Society. In 1990–94 he was President of the Society and he served on many committees including the Library Committee, which he chaired until he

retired in November 2011. In 2004, as part of the 150th anniversary of the Society, he was much involved in the activities in Southwark where the Society was founded. To mark the millennium he started the Village Studies project that planned to record the history of Surrey villages from maps starting from recent maps and working backwards. It was particularly designed to follow the history of individual houses and possibly identify unrecognised ancient buildings.

In 1969 he was elected to the Society of Antiquaries, where he acted as Health and Safety Advisor. He was awarded the Society of Antiquaries Medal in 1997. In 1981 he was involved in the formation of the Carew Manor Group and was chairman until 1999 when it merged with the CADHAS. From 1991–2004 he served on the council of the Council for British Archaeology (CBA). In 1997 he was appointed to the City of London Archaeological Trust as the CBA representative and remained a member until 2011. He was also a trustee of Merton Priory Trust (2003–13) and Surrey Historic Buildings Trust (1991–2011). Dennis was a member of Southwark Diocesan Advisory Committee and an active member of Surrey Dendrochronology Project Committee. From 2005–08 he was President of Southwark and Lambeth Archaeological Society. In 1992 he was involved in the founding of the Standing Conference on London Archaeology in the wake of the Rose Theatre affair and remained on the committee until its winding up in 2009.

Dennis was a scholar who had high standards that he also expected in others. Publication required a thorough analysis in the light of recent developments in the field. He was scornful of publication that merely repeated the views of others without recognition of outdated views. His advice and contributions to London archaeology will be greatly missed.