

Keith Allison (1930–2009)

By Paul Stamper

Keith Allison, who died aged 79 in November 2009, was one of the pioneers of research on deserted villages, one of the friends who walked and dug with Maurice Beresford in the early days of the subject soon after the end of the Second World War. He was one of the first diggers, aged just 20, to join Maurice Beresford at Wharram Percy in 1950, and that 'first excavation team', including Keith, is pictured at work in Beresford and Hurst's *Wharram Percy* Batsford volume of 1990 (p.28). Their collaboration continued, and he was thanked for his help in the North by Beresford in the Preface to *The Lost Villages of England* in 1954, and was acknowledged in the Preface to *History on the Ground* (1957) for accompanying the non-driving Beresford with car, tent and cooking gear for a period of intensive field-work. Meanwhile, he published what had started as his undergraduate dissertation as 'The Lost Villages of Norfolk' in *Norfolk Archaeology* 31 (1955), 116-62. Later, was one of joint authors, with Beresford and Hurst, of the studies of deserted villages in *Oxfordshire* and *Northamptonshire* published by the Department of

English Local History, University of Leicester, in 1965 and 1966. Then, in 1970, he published an attractively-illustrated short overview, *Deserted Villages*, in Macmillan's 'Sources of History' series; this should have been reprinted, but never was. His continuing support for and advice on the Wharram project was acknowledged by Maurice Beresford and John Hurst in the first volume of the Wharram series. His wife Sheila, who survives him, was also involved at Wharram, as later was their daughter Clare, as the excavation cook.

In his professional life, Keith was for thirty years editor of the East Riding of the Victoria History of the County of York, bringing out the first six volumes in the county series. Other publications included the highly-regarded *The East Riding of Yorkshire Landscape*, published in 1976. In retirement his interest in local history continued, with a focus on the area around Cottingham, near Hull, where the family lived.

Keith had a wry, dry and irreverent sense of humour; he was a modest, and much-liked man.