

IN MEMORIAM

Joseph Hughes (1916-2000)

The death of Joseph Hughes, on 18 March 2000, marked the end of a very significant period of contribution to local history, the County Archive Service, and to our Society.

Born at Paradise, Ireleth on 27 July 1916, Joseph (or Fred as he was known to many) was educated locally and at Ulverston Grammar School, leaving to become articled to Curwen and Caldwell, a firm of architects with offices in the Market Place, Kendal. On the completion of his apprenticeship he took employment with the Office of Works in London. He remained there for about a year until he was appointed to a vacancy in the Cumberland County Architects Department at Carlisle in August 1938. It was at this time that he acquired the nickname, Fred, by which he was known to many in the Society. It was imposed upon him by the then County Architect John Haughan, with the same J. H. initials, to avoid departmental confusion.

Joseph's work at Carlisle was soon interrupted by war and he enlisted in the Royal Engineers in 1939. He attained the rank of Staff Sergeant and served with distinction with the Mulberry harbours during the D-Day landings in France, being Mentioned in Despatches, and in Germany.

Following demobilisation in 1946 he returned to his work at Carlisle, eventually becoming the Chief Buildings Inspector, until the local government changes in 1974, when he took the post of Historic Buildings Officer for the Cumbria County Council and moved down to Kendal where he remained until his retirement in July 1981.

His interest in history and historic buildings appears to have been ignited by an enlightened History Master at Ulverston Grammar School, who took his pupils on field trips to places of local interest and especially to Furness Abbey. A period, with his regiment, stationed in Yorkshire, also gave him the opportunity to visit and sketch the wonders of Fountains Abbey.

He joined our Society in 1956; from 1962 to 1973 he was Hon. Secretary for Excursions; 1969 to 1982 he was a member of the Committee for Industrial Archaeology; 1970 to 1973 a member of the Committee for Prehistoric Studies; 1970 to 1975 Hon. Assistant Editor of *Transactions*; 1972 he was made a Vice-President; 1975 to 1982 Hon. Joint Editor of *Transactions*; from 1981 to 1984 he was President of the Society and in 1996 he was made an Honorary Member. His contributions were not only measured in terms of the offices he held, for he published a number of articles and notes in *Transactions*:

- 1968 – Recent discoveries at Dean church
- 1970 – The building of the Courts, Carlisle 1807-1822
- 1970 – Further discoveries at St Oswald's Church, Dean
- 1971 – The plague in Carlisle 1597/98
- 1972 – Cumberland Windmills
- 1972 – Roman altar from Old Carlisle
- 1972 – A Bewcastle Grave Slab

- 1973 – An architectural description of Castle Sowerby church
- 1973 – A Windmill at Bowness-on-Solway
- 1974 – Bromleys of Keswick – a family business
- 1978 – Mill Management at Wigton

Apart from his own work he was co-author, with R. S. Boumphrey and C. Roy Hudleston of *An Armorial for Westmorland and Lonsdale* published jointly by the Lake District Museum Trust and the Society in 1975, and he assisted with the illustration of C. Roy Hudleston and R. S. Boumphrey, *Cumberland Families and Heraldry* CWAAS Extra Series XXIII published in 1978. He was a perfectionist and the mention of his name in the acknowledgement sections of many other articles and notes bears testimony to the advice, help and knowledge he so unselfishly shared with other writers. His involvement in a wider sense was recognised when, in 1976, he was elected a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries and in 1988 he became Vice-President of the Cumbria Family History Society.

Joseph married, in 1942, Ada Dennison, who predeceased him.

Anyone who came into contact with him in his work, in connection with the Society, his many well attended talks on local history, his local radio broadcasts, his interest in stained glass or family history, or simply in passing, could not fail to be impressed by his straight forward honesty, decency, good-will and amiability. In his last few years he was afflicted by a debilitating illness but he never lost his sharp mind or humour. He will be greatly missed by his family and by his many friends and associates.

W. G. Wiseman

Bruce Jones writes:

I met Fred Hughes, as he was known to his friends in the former Cumberland County Council, from the moment I began work as the Archivist to the Joint Archives Committee of the Counties of Cumberland and Westmorland and the City of Carlisle, in June 1962. The then Cumberland County Architect introduced him to me as “someone who might be a useful contact” and as the officer overseeing the scheme to adapt the Alma barrack block at Carlisle Castle into an archive repository.

Fred had become interested in the history of Cumberland by the encouragement of John Haughan, previously County Architect and a member of our Society from 1947. Through Tom Gray, the Committee’s first Archivist who had died shortly after Christmas 1961, Fred had helped in the initial rescue of the Senhouse family archive from Netherhall, Maryport in 1956. He worked voluntarily to put the records in some order and by 1962 he had completed a transcription of two 17th century account books, 1699-1704, kept by Humphrey Senhouse for his aunt, Bridget Hudleston of Millom Castle [1642-1715]. The account books were later the subject of a paper in *Transactions* by the late Professor G. P. Jones [CW2, lxvi, 312-338]. Fred’s interest in heraldry and family history also took root about this time.

Fred was not only a scholar and an antiquary but also an archivist at heart, and he was very concerned with the safety and well being of all original records. When all space in the County Council’s strong-room at the Courts, Carlisle had been taken

up almost to the point of confusion if not actual damage, Fred assisted the cash strapped Cumberland County Record Office by finding room for extra storage in the cellars under the County Architect's building in Portland Square. He also ingeniously adapted shelving at negligible cost from 9" aluminium shelves and timber frames and, in 1962, when the move was finally made of all the historical records from the County's strong-room and from Portland Square to the Castle, Fred's temporary shelving was moved too and continued in use for several years more.

The years 1963 and 1964 were Spartan years for the infant archive service. Fred was a frequent and welcome visitor. For a time he seemed to be able to lay his hands upon an inexhaustible supply of old committee-room tables, which refurbished were readily put to use in the Alma Block, now being transformed from a cheerless barrack block to a Record Office with a warm and welcoming search room – the envy of many who came to Carlisle for the annual conference of the Society of Archivists in 1967. Fred's triumphant *pièce de résistance* was to find a massive adjustable table round which the Joint Archives Committee sat for their quarterly meetings until the creation of Cumbria County Council in 1974. So it happened that with Fred's cheerful and resourceful assistance I received the last of the occasional letters addressed to me as "Dear Miss Alma Block". A good friend indeed!

