

XVIII OBITUARY

John Mansell Fleming

1914–2006

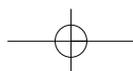


John Fleming, who died on March 1 2006, was a loyal member of our Society from the time he joined in November 1949. He became a member of Council in 1961 and took on the role of Country Meetings Secretary in 1969, being largely responsible for the organisation of the Pilgrimage along Hadrian's Wall in that year and again in 1979. He was President of our Society in 1981 and 1982.

This was not the sum total of John's service to the history of the North East. A keen photographer from the age of 11, he recorded all manner of old buildings, specialising in railway stations, engines and other artefacts relating to railways. This collection is now included in SINE and can be consulted on the internet. He was a founder member of the North Eastern Railway Association and was its chairman between 1961 and 1976 and subsequently Life President until his death. He also edited its journal *Express* between 1979 and 1985 and contributed to the third volume of the history of the Association, being largely responsible for the technical drawings. He

was also a member of the Newcomen Society and the Stephenson Locomotive Society. Other interests were his garden and the establishment of the Gosforth Local History Society, now sadly in abeyance.

By ancestry a Scot, John was born in Gosforth on 19 June 1914 and educated at the Royal Grammar School, Newcastle. While he had ambitions to train as an architect he actually enrolled at Armstrong College, Newcastle, for a degree in science; but after a year transferred first to work at Parsons at Wallsend and then for Balfour Beatty in Edinburgh. Meanwhile he had applied to the Civil Service for a placement. His hopes were realised, and he was directed to the General Post Office in the Telephone Engineering section. He started work in the Brighton office and was there during the Battle of Britain. Subsequently he transferred to the



office of the Engineering Chief Officer in London with its responsibilities for telecommunications with the British and, later, American forces.

After the death of his father Daniel in 1944 John applied for transfer to Newcastle to enable him to keep an eye on his widowed mother, who had broken her leg subsequent to her husband's death. The transfer took place in the autumn of 1945, when he moved to the Newcastle section of the General Post Office Planning (Telecommunications). There he remained until his early retirement in 1969, when the Post Office ceased to be a constituent part of the Civil Service.

He married Dr Margaret Walker on 21 June 1946 and she was a constant support in his work for the Society. Their son Charles was brought into the fold virtually as soon as he could walk!

Constance M. Fraser