

OBITUARIES

John Lea Nevinson

John Lea Nevinson was the son of an architect and spent his boyhood at Cobham. He was educated at Shrewsbury and Exeter College, Oxford. He came from a talented family – his relatives included the amateur cellist B G Nevinson (whom Elgar celebrated in the *Enigma Variations*), the artist C R W Nevinson, and the war correspondent H W Nevinson. More distantly, he often claimed that the ‘real’ Dick Turpin had been a member of the Nevinson family.

John Nevinson became a life member of the Surrey Archaeological Society in 1928, by which time he had joined the staff of the Victoria and Albert Museum where he became an internationally respected authority on costume and embroidery. In the 1930s he compiled the *Catalogue of English domestic embroidery of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries*, which is still the standard work on the subject, and published an outstanding study of the costumes of the 17th and 18th century wax funeral effigies at Westminster Abbey in co-operation with the late Dr L E Tanner. During his life he contributed scores of erudite, stylish and sometimes amusing articles on dress and embroidery to learned journals, exhibition catalogues, collaborative volumes and magazines. He also found time to edit reprints of works by John Evelyn and other historical texts. All his writings were based on wide research, and knowledge – research and knowledge that was ungrudgingly shared with fellow scholars in many countries. He was always ready to provide good advice.

At the outbreak of the Second World War, John Nevinson was responsible for seeing many of the museum’s treasures safely stowed in the deeper recesses of the London Underground system, after which he transferred to the Ministry of Education. He stayed with this ministry until taking early retirement to devote himself to scholarship and to the work of the Walpole Society (of which he became treasurer), the Costume Society (of which he was a founder member) and the Surrey Archaeological Society. All three societies have benefited greatly from the unstinting gift of his time and talents while, over the years, he has also been a generous and unobtrusive benefactor of projects that appealed to him.

John Nevinson was elected Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries in 1953 and, from about this time on, was frequently to be seen on excavations in the county and beyond (as far beyond as Glastonbury and the Hebrides) – ‘acting as a pair of hands’, as he often put it. A pair of hands that were not above injecting the occasional practical joke into the serious business of digging or manipulating spoil heaps and stone piles. And at lunch time there were stories and experiences to be related to the amusement of all.

John knew Surrey well, a knowledge partly acquired through long and somewhat Chestertonian walks across his favourite hills, sustained at friendly pubs – preferably ones that served real ale and were without canned music. He first joined the Society’s Council in 1954 and, after becoming deeply involved in library and museum matters, became a Vice-President in 1969. Following the death in office of Dr ‘Peter’ Skelton, John Nevinson stood in on an acting basis until his election to President of the Society at the AGM in 1971.

His term of office was one of the most significant presidencies in the Society’s history. Dr Skelton had pointed out new ways ahead during his all too-brief tenure and John took the helm with energy and enthusiasm. This was the time when ‘rescue archaeology’ in the face of motorway and other development in booming Britain was catching the public’s imagination. The new president guided the Society with skill and tact as it entered the difficult new era first with an *ad hoc* team to meet the challenge of motorway construction and then with the employment of its own county archaeologist: the first in the country to be employed by a county society. This was followed by the establishment of a small professional team to cover part of south-west London. All this was done with the aid of public money and required changes in the

Society's structure. It is no coincidence that the Society also achieved charitable status and became a limited liability company during John Nevinson's presidency. The frequent presence of his 'pair of hands' at excavations run by professionals made an informal but notable contribution to maintaining the essential bridge between professional teams and amateur society.

After giving up the presidential chair in 1975, John continued to serve as Vice-President and was for several years the chairman of the Society's Museums Committee. He also continued to play an active and much appreciated part in maintaining liaison between the Society and other bodies involved in archaeology in Greater London.

As became a museum man with an outstandingly good memory, there seldom seemed any boundary to his knowledge in the fields that interested him, and these were many. His approach was always, however, lighthearted and practical. He was the most unstuffy of men and a stern critic of pomposity while maintaining a natural dignity that made him the perfect clubman and gained him entry to all social circles. Sadly, he was involved in a traffic accident early in 1985 and suffered injuries and consequential complications from which he did not recover. He died early in the morning of 30 July in his 81st year. His wisdom and warm sense of fun will be missed by all those who were fortunate enough to know him, but our sadness at his passing is more than tinged with gratitude that he walked this way.

D J TURNER

The first paper in this volume has been specially commissioned in commemoration of John Nevinson's particular interests – Editor

George Greenwood

It is with great regret that we record the death on 27 August 1985 of George Greenwood at the age of 72.

George was the Society's local secretary for the Walton and Weybridge District from 1971 onwards. He was a dedicated local historian and played an active part in many societies, being a founder member of the Walton and Weybridge Local History Society in 1964, its Chairman from 1975 to 1980, and editor of its publications including the newsletter *Dialstone* for 20 years. He was also a member and editor of the Esher District Local History Society.

He had an unrivalled knowledge of the history of north Surrey, particularly of Hersham, where he lived and he was always willing to put this knowledge at the disposal of anyone who approached him. His frequent lectures were always both entertaining and instructive.

George's output of published material was considerable, including *Notes towards a history of Hersham: a Dictionary of the history of Walton and Weybridge* (with A G Martin); a *History of the urban district of Walton and Weybridge 1895–1973*; *Hersham in Surrey*; *The charities of Walton-on-Thames*; *Surrey topographical prints*; *The Elmbridge water-mills*; and separate guides to the history of Kingston upon Thames and Woking.

George was very much a community-minded man. He represented Hersham South in Elmbridge Borough Council (and its predecessor Walton-on-Thames & Weybridge Urban District Council) for 14 years. He also served as County Councillor for Hersham for eight years, and played an active part in the affairs of the local Conservative Party. At the time of his death he was also a trustee of Painshill Park, and the Treasurer of the Oatlands Palace Excavation Committee.

Many people will remember George Greenwood for his cheerfulness, friendliness and his enthusiasm for life in all its aspects. He was always so active and young in heart that it is hard to believe that we shall no longer enjoy his company. He will be sadly missed.

AVRIL LANSDELL and JOHN PULFORD

Charles W Phillips

The Society has lost a very distinguished member by the death of Charles Phillips, OBE, MA, FSA, on 23 September 1985, aged 80. Phillips joined the Society in 1950, and was elected an Honorary Member in 1955. He served on the Council from 1967 to 1971. Equally talented in administration and field archaeology, he was also a brilliant excavator. Although he excavated on many sites in Lincolnshire, Wessex, Mendip and Anglesey, he is perhaps particularly well known, and still widely remembered, for his spectacular rescue work at Sutton Hoo, just before the outbreak of war in 1939. He became a FSA in 1933, and was Honorary Secretary of the Prehistoric Society during its first difficult decade.

Phillips was Fellow and Librarian of Selwyn College, Cambridge, until the war, when he served in the RAFVR. In 1947 he succeeded O G S Crawford as Archaeology Officer of the Ordnance Survey, and greatly improved the effectiveness of the Survey's archaeological activities. During his tenure of this office (he retired in 1965) he played a decisive part in building up the Survey's national index of sites and finds, and in extending the archaeological coverage of the general maps (on which he lectured to the Society in 1956); he developed the period maps, and revised Crawford's 'beginners' handbook, *Field archaeology in Great Britain*. He was the author of many key papers and reports, and some of his reminiscences appeared in *Antiquity* a year or so ago. It is hoped to publish the memoirs he completed not long before his death.

An imposing figure, Charles Phillips was yet notably modest and reticent, but generous with his knowledge and encouragement. Those who were privileged to know him, however slightly, will not forget his integrity and his worth.

E S WOOD