

OBITUARIES

Keith Pryer

Keith Pryer died on 11 October 1988, while returning from holiday in Italy. He had been a member of the Beddington, Carshalton and Wallington Archaeological Society since 1955, taking on many active roles in that Society, notably that of President (1962/3), but also Vice President and Chairman of the Research and Preservation Committee. He had been for several years Local Secretary for Surrey Archaeological Society, and was also active in the Friends of Whitehall (Cheam), making the visiting public welcome to that historic timber-framed house.

Keith's interest in local archaeology and history sprang partly from a deep commitment to the area in which he had lived since a boy, and partly from a wider interest in European archaeology, particularly that of the Classical civilisations. He took part in many local excavations in the 1960s and 1970s, and was always available to follow up and research chance finds made in the area. His enthusiasm and good nature played a large part in the popular and civic acceptance of the importance of archaeology in the area.

Keith's knowledge of local archaeology and history was encyclopaedic, shown by his publication *The Beddington portion* and his writing-up of Alan Gilbert's excavation at The Park, Carshalton (*Collections*, 70), both in 1974. That he did not publish more is a measure of his modesty and generosity; those of us who have published sites in the area will be forever grateful for his advice, information and support, unstintingly given.

As well as taking this behind-the-scenes and supportive role, Keith was also willing to act as 'front man' for local archaeology both in lecturing - his talks on Hadrian's Wall and Herculaneum were especially popular - and in committee work. His lack of private transport never stopped him attending meetings, whatever the weather.

Failing eyesight in his last few years forced Keith to give up many of these activities, which he did with good grace. He was never one to hold on to a position if he thought someone else was better equipped for it. He will be remembered by the donation of a visible memorial to the Carshalton Water Tower Trust, but most of all in the hearts of his many friends.

CLIVE ORTON

Philip Shearman

Philip Shearman, President of Nonsuch Antiquarian Society since 1966, died on 13 May 1989 aged 77. His interest in local history and archaeology stretched back to the 1930s when after qualifying as a teacher at University College London in 1932 he came to Ewell, to teach in Sparrow Farm Road school. He specialised in history and games and became interested in the topography of the Ewell area. He assisted A W G Lowther in many local investigations, notably Purberry Shot, Ewell, where he remembered helping, almost single handedly, to conserve and lift the Romano-British oven that they had uncovered. On his retirement he became one of the part-time lecturer/guides at Hampton Court, where he contributed notes on a variety of aspects of the Palace.

It was in the years after the war that his interest in local history flourished, a period when few others were working in the Ewell area, and in 1955 he became local secretary for the Surrey Archaeological Society, a post he held until 1980; he also served on the Society's Council on several occasions. He updated and provided a new preface to the third edition of Cloudesley Willis's *History of Ewell and Nonsuch* in 1969. He became interested in the history of Henry VIII's palace at Nonsuch and was involved in the excavations there in 1959/60, and his interest in the Royal Palace continued over the years.

Philip will perhaps be best remembered for this topographical work. His many publications on local topography included his study of the 1577 Survey of Ewell (*Collections*, 54), he was a member of the Surrey Record Society and in 1968 was jointly involved with C Meekings, in publishing the transcription, with topographical background, of the medieval Cartulary of the manor of Fitznells in Ewell. His work in the field of historical research was recognised in 1959, when he was elected a fellow of the Society of Antiquaries.

STEPHEN NELSON

Thomas Ernest Conway Walker

T E C Walker, the Society's longest-serving member, died on 14 February 1990. He joined the Society in 1926, and served on the Council on several occasions; he was made a Vice-President in 1969. He was elected to the Society of Antiquaries in 1955, and was actively involved in the formation of both the Leatherhead and Esher Local History Societies. He served on the Committee of the latter for 21 years, and in recent years was its President.

John H Harvey writes:

My acquaintance with Conway Walker began soon after I joined the Surrey Archaeological Society in 1944. He lived at Cobham, and I was in Great Bookham, adjoining Cobham on the south side. He had long been engaged in work on local history, a subject which I had taken up in 1935, and at the end of the war we both became involved in the plans for 'post-war archaeology' in the county, and this led to the formation of the Society's Surrey Local History Committee in 1946. At the same time we became involved with A W G Lowther in the creation of the Leatherhead and District Local History Society. Thanks to joint memberships, the new venture got under way without injury to the interests of the county Society. Conway Walker and I were both involved in the Surrey Local History Committee and in the Leatherhead Society from the start, and in both capacities were in almost constant touch for a dozen years or more.

The file of Conway's letters covering 1945 to 1963, when I left Surrey for York, shows his many-sided activities and interests, but is retrospectively remarkable for the light it throws on his extremely reserved character. In less than a year we had progressed from 'Dear Mr' to 'Dear Walker' and 'Dear Harvey'; but it was not until 1985 that we eventually got onto Christian-name terms, after Conway had stayed with us, at York and in Frome, on three or four occasions. At least once, after we had known each other well for some thirty years, he actually expressed his satisfaction at still having a friend with whom he was on surname terms: he strongly opposed the trend towards instant intimacy.

This did not in any way denote unfriendliness: at all times he was a kind and generous man and a scholar glad to share his many-sided knowledge with those who could and would appreciate it. His standing, though unrecognized by the greater world, was that of a polymath: he was at home in archaeology, history, archival research and also genealogy, and combined this with an immense knowledge of English literature and literary history, as well as of folk-lore and the byways of local life. Only gradually as the years unfolded did I come to realize the wide scope of his keen interest; not until 1969 did we discover that, like my wife and I, he belonged to the Garden History Society and keenly studied gardens in all parts of the country, as well as country houses, furniture, paintings, and all related subjects.

In spite of his reserve, Conway was full of enthusiasm in its best sense, always ready to make a long journey in pursuit of knowledge or just for the pleasure of the day. He was, to name one subject particularly close to his heart, a promoter of the saving and restoration of Painshill Park more than twenty years before anyone thought of starting a body of friends or a trust for the purpose. In 1951 he succeeded in organizing a visit to Cobham

by Rex Wailes, the outstanding expert on old mills. This was firstly to get a report on what was left of the machinery of Cobham Mill, but a large part of the day was spent in exploring the then wilderness of Painshill and in examining its Waterwheel.

Conway was an inveterate traveller: in his earlier life on a push-bicycle, since (as he told us) his mother would not let him drive a car on account of the danger. On a bike, he covered hundreds of miles in the hilly counties of Durham and Northumberland in the course of revising those volumes of Arthur Mee's *King's England*. Later on, with a car, he visited hundreds of historic buildings throughout England, Scotland and Wales, as well as most of the famous gardens. Every year he made a spring voyage of rediscovery to the gardens of the Thames Valley, from Kew and Hampton Court to Windsor. Further afield, his ancestral ties with Dorset often took him to Dorchester and further into the West Country; and, in search of his Walker forefathers, up to Eastwood near Nottingham. Notwithstanding his lengthy journeys by car, Walker lived up to his name and never faltered in active pedestrianism, stepping out briskly on town pavements and through great estates at a rapid pace, always able to find energy to rush up to some eyecatcher or to diverge to inspect a grotto. When rising 79 he wrote that he had climbed the 285 steps up the tower of Worcester cathedral, having never lost a schoolboy fondness for going up towers: 'I expect Worcester will be my last'. Five years later he insisted on getting up the belfry ladders to see the panorama of Frome from the top of St John's steeple.

Conway had another side. He did not suffer fools gladly and was outspoken in his condemnation of some 'antiquarian' work as absolute piffle. He was forthright in expressing his honest views and may have made a few enemies in his time through this honesty. What came through over the years was the breadth of his knowledge, the scope of his generosity – not least with valuable and hard-won information – and his kindness and concern for his fellow men and women. In a quiet and retiring way Conway Walker was a great man; and in an age little given to such refinements, remained throughout his long life a true gentleman.

Alan Andrew Wylie

The sudden death of Alan Wylie on the 29th October 1989 at the age of 78 has deprived the Society of a Vice-President with a passionate interest in all aspects of its affairs and of an able administrator who was always willing to devote his considerable professional skills to the benefit of the Society.

On leaving school, he entered the accountancy profession as an articled clerk and after qualifying as a Chartered Accountant, apart from a period during which he worked and travelled widely on business abroad, he pursued his career in the commercial field in the Guildford area. An active sportsman, especially in his younger years, he was extremely proud that in his favourite activity of swimming he attained Olympic standard, although business commitments at a crucial time prevented his active participation in the Games.

Living and working as he did in Surrey, he maintained throughout his life a deep interest in the history and conservation of its heritage, not least in his active membership of the Society and similar organisations. In 1959 he was appointed an auditor of the Society, a post which he held at first jointly then as sole auditor until 1979. On his retirement from that post, he was appointed a Vice-President and subsequently Chairman of the Finance Committee, so that for a period of some thirty years he advised on and guided the Society's financial affairs. Indeed, at the time of his death he was actively engaged in a project to promote the Society's activities to the public at large and attract additional funding to the cause he loved.

His commitment, enthusiasm and guidance will be sorely missed and he leaves a gap that will not be easily filled.

A C SARGENT