

# OBITUARIES

## BRENDA EASTERBROOK (1932–2009)

Brenda was brought up in Tolworth, Surrey and worked as a civil servant in the Paymaster General's office in Holborn, London. In the 1950s the civil service encouraged women to leave their posts on marriage by paying a 'dowry' of one month's salary for every year worked; so in 1955, with her 6 months' dowry money, she moved with her husband John to High Wycombe and there raised three children and a dachshund called Dennis. Widowed young, she moved to Abingdon in 1984, but never lost touch with her many Buckinghamshire contacts.

Brenda had a life long interest in history and archaeology with an early ambition to work in museums, that was thwarted by the lack of opportunity to take the then required history degree. However, working in London afforded her regular access to the British Museum, from where her particular interest in medieval ceramic floor tiles began... She was a long-time member of the Bucks Archaeological Society and remained an active member until her death. In 1978 she reported on her discovery with her husband John of a medieval earthwork enclosure at Stokenchurch (*Recs Bucks 1978, 667–8*). As a member of the County Museum Archaeological Group (CMAG), she took part in excavations, surveying, washing and recording post-excavation material and enjoyed many field walks. She also worked for some time recording pottery from the English Heritage excavations at Magiovinium, Fenny Stratford. Among the many sites she helped excavate were Christmas Common, prior to the extension of the M40, and the medieval dovecote at Fillington Wood (*Recs Bucks 1991*). The wide experience she gained formed part of the successful completion of a two-year study course in 'British Archaeology' at Oxford University, Extra Mural Department. For several years in the 1990s she was the Membership Secretary for CBA's Group 9 (now known as CBA South Midlands Group).

In 1993 she started to take part as an archaeological site monitor for the National Trust. With a colleague she carried out annual surveys at

Chastleton and Boarstall Duck Decoy and took part in the survey at Bradenham Woods, but sadly in 2008, ill health meant she could no longer continue. She had little time for what she called the 'cream-tea-and-shiny-shoes-brigade', as her primary interest was about being hands-on. She thought that she and her peer group had been involved at the best time for amateur archaeology, especially during the 1970s when every County Council seemingly employed an archaeologist and digs paid you (albeit only 'beer money') to take part – not the other way round!

After moving to Abingdon, she spent several years as a volunteer providing regular physiotherapy to a young local boy who had cerebral palsy. She was a stalwart supporter of the Lib. Dems, turning out for elections of all types as a teller at the polling station and veteran envelope-stuffer. She even volunteered for Age Concern Oxfordshire during chemotherapy treatment in 2008 because she was bored. For her, cancer was a nuisance and a frustration. She would say, *'I don't do ill, and I don't do old'*. She had always been extremely fit and strong – just before major surgery in 2008 she cut down by hand and chopped into logs a diseased cherry tree.

Brenda was well travelled, often independently, and a collector of friends on route. As well as travel in the UK and Ireland, she visited Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Italy, Israel, Malta, and had a memorable Mule Trek holiday in Andalucia, Spain not too many years ago. She had many other interests – from the arts and crafts movement of William Morris, the work of Stanley Spencer and Whitefriars glass, to nature and wildlife – especially birds, whose welfare took priority even over her love of cats. She was someone who always knew the answer to even the most obscure of general knowledge questions, an ability she put down to a love of reading encyclopaedias as a child. She was a very practical person, not only as a dressmaker but also a basket maker, potter and a stained glass artist. She could mend pretty much anything with an elastic band and a clothes peg – a

skill helped by the fact that she hated gadgets, so didn't own anything complicated. She liked pottering around in her cottage-style garden or, as she put it, *'letting things grow where they like'*.

She made an enormous number of friends through archaeology and appropriately enough, she was buried in a woodland site where archaeology friends spontaneously added recently minted coins to her

grave (since when, her youngest daughter Lorna, an archaeology graduate, has been surreptitiously adding small finds from many different periods to confuse any far-future archaeologists, a joke that Brenda would have very much enjoyed). She is survived by her three children, and two grandsons.

*Barbara Hurman*

## DENNIS DAVIES

Rev Dennis Davies (1924–2009) was a member of this Society for many years. He gave outstanding service to History in Buckinghamshire, teaching at Aylesbury Grammar School and then at Quarrendon – while at the same time serving Aston Clinton as auxiliary priest. An enthusiastic member of the Scout movement since his youth, he was twice District Commissioner. For many years,

Dennis was Chairman of the Buckinghamshire Historical Association and – when introducing speakers or asking the ice-breaking first question – his wide knowledge of so many topics revealed his unusual distinction of having earned four degrees.

*George Lamb*