

Jean Harris

Judy Harry pays tribute to an influential and dedicated Hardy Planter.

The old adage that the best things come in small boxes might have been dreamed up especially for Jean Harris, long-time member and dedicated worker for the Hardy Plant Society. Her diminutive stature surely belied her capacity for work, and her influence and effectiveness in the Society.

An early member of the Nottingham Group, she soon became an invaluable part of this busy and influential band of Hardy Planters. It was this group that in 1975 produced the first ever *Directory of Hardy Plants* which evolved over the years to become the internationally known *Plant Finder*. In 1980 the Group was invited to create a Botanic Garden at Wollaton Hall in Nottingham, and for many years Jean was a reliable member of the maintenance team of this garden. She also helped organise outings and holidays for both the Group and her local garden society, and was still doing so at an age when most people are happy to sit back and let other, younger, people take the strain.

At national level, Jean made her mark with her work looking after the ever-increasing number of Local and Special Interest Groups. Her job title was Group Liaison (what we now know as the Groups Co-ordinator). Jean carried out this important work with an admirable blend of tact, encouragement and firmness. It was important that groups fitted in with the Society's constitutional and charitable status, and Jean showed considerable skill in being able to steer a course between



sometimes conflicting interests while keeping everyone on board.

She showed equal qualities as a member of the organising committee of the Celebration 2000 weekend. As it was based at the University of Nottingham, someone was needed to act as a link between the national organising committee and the local Group whose support of the event was vital: Jean was that person and her contribution to the overall success of the event was immeasurable.

During all this time, she was also a keen and active member of NCCPG, later renamed Plant Heritage. As a committee member of the East Midlands Group, she was to be found, for example, lending her support to special Plant Days with an energy and enthusiasm that put many to shame.

It shouldn't be forgotten that Jean was of course a knowledgeable and committed gardener. Many will remember her tiny, but plant-packed garden in Radcliffe on Trent, full of treasures and plants of quality and interest. It reflected its owner in every respect.