

# David Barker

## Obituary

It is with great sadness that I have to report the death of David George Barker on 8<sup>th</sup> January 2014. Our thoughts are with his wife Kathleen, his two sons and two granddaughters.

David was born on 28<sup>th</sup> April 1928 in Norfolk, where he was first introduced to gardening. He gained a degree in biology at Nottingham University and, having met and married Kathleen, moved to Bedfordshire and taught biology at Luton Grammar School. In 1962 they moved to Essex and David continued his teaching career at Chelmer Valley High School in Chelmsford until he retired.

He and Kathleen moved to their present home in Danbury just over 40 years ago and created a very interesting woodland garden, full of lovely treasures despite the challenges of very dry conditions. Until recently David held the National Collections of Japanese anemones and epimediums; he wrote the HPS booklet on epimediums and contributed information on epimediums to the *RHS Encyclopedia of Perennials*. He took a keen interest in many other genera, and his horticultural knowledge was very wide-ranging so that he was well qualified to run the Society's Horticultural Advisory Panel for many years.

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David served the Society for over 50 years. Here he is with Kathleen (right) and Sally-Ann Turner (left) at Bressingham, 2005

David had been involved with the Hardy Plant Society from its early days, and in 1961 he had attended the Society's AGM at which it was suggested that the HPS should be disbanded! Fortunately Miss Pole came to the rescue, becoming Chairman, and David became Vice-Chairman – a post he held for 27 years. In the 1960s and 70s the Society had coach outings and David organised many of them. In 1985, David arranged the very first residential Autumn Weekend, based in Danbury; around seventy members attended, and the visits included Beth Chatto's garden as well as his own garden.

From 1990 until 1993 he served as Chairman, and he has been one of the Society's Vice-Presidents ever since. One year David met the Queen at the Chelsea Flower Show when he was on the HPS stand; he was very pleased to be given a photograph of that special occasion.

David was a founder member of the HPS Essex Group and, in recognition of all that he had done, was made its President. He served as Chairman of the HPS Pulmonaria Group in its early years, and he was a keen member of other HPS Specialist Groups.



David at the Essex Group 2006

David was also involved in other organisations. He was a founder member of Essex Plant Heritage (formerly NCCPG); for many years he was Vice-Chairman, its representative on the National Council, and the county Coordinator for National Collections. David was a member of the Essex Gardens Trust, working for a while as a researcher. He was also Chairman of the Hyde Hall Garden Society prior to the Robinson's garden being given to the RHS.

David supported local charities, not only by opening his garden but also in other ways such as serving on a fund-raising committee and organising an annual quiz for St Giles in Bicknacre, a residential home for those with learning difficulties.

All who were fortunate enough to know David will surely agree that he was a true gentleman, very caring and always willing to help when he could. He had a lovely sense of humour and was always good company. To quote Alex Pankhurst: "He personified all that is good about the HPS – enthusiastic and knowledgeable, generous and friendly."

David had been involved with the Society for most of its lifetime. Many of us will have fond memories of meeting him at national and Group events and we shall miss him very much. 🌱

**Sally-Ann Turner**