

Appreciations

Many people have made a great contribution to the Hardy Plant Society over the 60 years since it was founded, and we owe them all a huge debt of gratitude.

It has been our custom to recognise the persons who have been most significantly involved at the national level with an obituary in this journal. However, there may be a substantial period between a person's active involvement and their death, so their obituary is less meaningful to a contemporary readership. Accordingly, we're going to publish an 'Appreciation' of individuals' contributions when they step down from a key role and are known to many. We hope that such an acknowledgement will provide satisfaction to its subject in a way that an obituary clearly cannot.

Local Groups may wish to identify individuals who have been prominent at Group, if not at National, level and publish appreciations at the appropriate time in their respective newsletters.

Selecting those who might be recognised in this way is no easy matter and others might make different decisions, but our first three subjects are Judy Harry, a former Chairman who has recently stood down as the Society's Horticultural Advisor; Brian Mitchell, very long-serving Honorary Treasurer; and Dee Folkard, amongst other roles former Hon. Sec. and Newsletter Editor. More will follow.

Cathy Rollinson – Chairman



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What better way to show our appreciation than with a 'living bouquet' of peonies at David Barnes' garden in Ilkley, one of the 60 gardens opened to mark the Society's 60th anniversary.



Brian Mitchell

Brian served as HPS Hon. Treasurer 1991–2008. Yes, by all means do the arithmetic! His period of office stretched for over 17 years – truly a stalwart among stalwarts!

Of course the Society needs, and indeed has, its outstanding horticulturalists, but with Brian Mitchell we have had the benefit of outstanding organisational and financial skills, and enjoyed these at a time of significant change in both the size and complexity of the Society. In 1990 David Barker was Chairman, and the redoubtable Barbara White (Hon. Sec.) and Richard Bird (Hon. Treasurer) had just left office. Also, (and a big ‘also’ at that) our numbers were growing and more or less all of our ‘admin’ was under the hats of Barbara and Richard; we had neither a part-time nor permanent Administrator.

We have faced this sort of cliff edge before and since, none of our members coming forward for an essential role, but our member Audrey Mitchell managed to ‘draw her spouse into the Society’ and ‘Hey Presto!’ Perhaps it was because Brian’s skill focus was other than horticultural that we had such an efficient and effective transformation of the HPS into an organisation with a sound administrative framework. His long period of office was first devoted to setting up the post of permanent Administrator and at the same



Dee & Brian at the 2007 AGM at Nottingham

time dealing with the constitutional issues arising from the continuing expansion of our Local Groups. Under Brian’s guidance we pursued both National coherence and the maintenance of Local Group autonomy, a structure which we still operate today. As a Director of the Hardy Plant Company Brian oversaw the development of our (then) very popular booklet publications, maintained today but in a very much more competitive environment.

Brian was an assiduous good attender at the various HPS meetings which came and went over his 17 years in office, as well as a stickler for being on time and behaving formally. So it came as a surprise when, during his last year in office, he announced that he would miss the next Trustees and Officers meetings. When the chairman enquired why, he replied, “I’m off to the Himalaya with an old trekking buddy.” Of course there was a sharp intake of breath from Trustees. “It’s perfectly OK,” said Brian, “this time I will be riding elephants!”

Cometh the moment, cometh the man.

Derek Cooper

Dee Folkard

Dee first trained at St Martin's School of Art, specialising in all aspects of dressmaking and working for a while as a pattern-cutter for the couturier Molyneaux. She tells of how, when sandals were unobtainable during the war, she and her friends made their own. She has made nearly all her own clothes and has an abiding interest in fashion.

Her later career as an HR manager stood her in good stead when in 1995, shortly after she joined the HPS, she was appointed Hon. Sec. She held this post for 7 years, also taking the minutes for all the committees, panels and subcommittees that used to meet at the RHS Halls. Over the years she was managing secretary of the Publications subcommittee, served on the Shows and Events panels, and was Newsletter Editor from 2007 until she retired in 2014.

During that time, she was at the heart of the Society, getting to know everyone – well, almost everyone. On a trip with the Kent Group to the Isle of Wight, at the first two gardens, in Hampshire, she was greeted by the owners with joyful cries of “Dee!” When the same thing happened in the first garden on the Isle of Wight, a fellow passenger turned to her and asked, “Who *are* you?”

Dee is a Life Member of the Hertfordshire Group and was an active member of the Southern Counties committee. For some years she was Membership Secretary, she arranged the lecture programme and was involved with the Group's Chelsea exhibit in 2003 and our hosting of the Autumn Weekend in 2010 – she was always in the thick of things.

With her husband Martin, Dee was a keen member of the Institute of Advanced Motorists. It was a blow when at 73 problems with her sight forced her to give up driving, but she continues to attend any HPS event, anywhere in the country, that she can reach in a friend's car.

Dee loves being with people, and meeting new people, and is ready to talk to anyone, anywhere. This made her an ideal meeter and greeter at any event, immediately making newcomers feel welcome.

It has always been a pleasure to work with Dee, or to go anywhere with her – she has an infectious capacity for enjoyment and the encouraging ability to laugh when things go wrong – an ideal companion on any occasion.

Sandra Hartley



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Dee at a Rutland Group event 2009

Judy Harry



©HPS Library

Judy at a Hertfordshire Group event 2012

I'm biased. I love Judy Harry. Not only that, I love her husband and both her children. We've been friends for forty years, and everything I know about gardening above the ordinary is down to her.

In view of our long friendship I was asked for her HPS history, but I lived out of the world for many years so, apart from knowing that she'd been big, I hadn't much idea. The only solution seemed to be to get it from the horse's mouth. Being the kind of horse that doesn't dwell much on the past she couldn't remember a lot of it.

However: Judy joined the national HPS 'sometime in the 1980s'. The Lincolnshire Group started up soon after, she was invited to join the committee, and eventually became Lincolnshire chairman. The National Executive followed; she was a trustee for three years, then national Vice Chairman. She masterminded Celebration 2000, so couldn't

begin her three years as national Chairman until 2001. I was widowed during that time and she promptly joined me up to the HPS as a gift, and I went with her to Penrith when she handed over to Brian Dockerill. There I saw at first hand that the affection I had for her was pretty much universal. She was described as a speaker with a lovely manner, not to be confused, as she said, with her (non-existent) lovely manor.

Through her articles in this journal and as Horticultural Advisor, Judy has shared her knowledge and love of plants with members of the Society and the public, always in her characteristically friendly and supportive way.

It's not strictly a part of Judy's HPS history, but testimony of her character, in that when I hadn't been out and about for years she took me with her to her lectures and garden events. It was invaluable social therapy for me, and a fantastic learning experience.

She and Mike moved to the Isle of Lewis in May, so this bailiwick will never be the same again, but the Outer Hebrides has gained a woman of great faith, thoughtful and knowledgeable opinions, and a laugh-out-loud sense of humour.

At the end of her half-remembered history she wrote '... if this is for my obituary I ain't dead yet!' What a horrible thought. I hope she lives for years and years, God willing. Weather permitting.

Twink Addison