

## Gwladys Tonge

Once, twice, three times a lady, as the song goes! For her three years as HPS Chairman (1987–1990) it was always a joy to see this tall, slim, elegant lady. In spite of her increasing deafness, Gwladys' humour and gentle manner allowed her to advise, guide and achieve much for the Society.

It was during her period in office that this Journal was first published in colour. Her forward thinking meant that several new Groups were formed, a policy which we have continued to follow over the past decade. On retirement as Chairman it was fitting that she became a Vice-President of the Society.



Gwladys was a gifted lady: she received several Gold Medals at the RHS shows for her paintings of flowers; she was an excellent photographer; and she was a splendid speaker, and spoke to all newly formed groups at their inaugural meetings. Indeed, she formed her own local Group – Bucks, Northants and Oxon – and served on the committee for several years, later becoming a life member.

*A Gardener's Progress* (1974), is based on her practical experience in creating a new garden. The advice is down-to-earth and still relevant today. The book appeals because it reflects some of our frustrations as hardy planters, as well as possible achievements.

One has to admire Gwladys, for after her retirement as Chairman she continued with further education, taking university courses and passing them all with distinction – quite something for a lady of her age! She also enjoyed and continued to support the HPS by attending Autumn Weekends, garden visits and many other specialist plant meetings.

By 2002 she was profoundly deaf but had already learnt to lip-read. She took up computer classes, which she found exhilarating, for she could carry on conversations with people on the net. Owing to deafness she hadn't attended meetings for some years, but she welcomed members to her garden, several going to see the snowdrops in 2016 when she was 95. Her garden was quite small but absolutely packed with plants, and there were pots everywhere. She had a route laid out for visitors, primarily to prevent them stepping on precious plants!

Her humour was refreshing, summed up in a statement made in 2002. "I feel years younger than I look or, to put it another way, I look years older than I feel! The first way seems more positive."

We remember Gwladys with great affection and shall miss this lady, her knowledge, her smiling face and happy countenance.

Jean Sambrook, Hon. Secretary 1987–91