

## Pauline Cooper

Shropshire Group and the wider Hardy Plant Society were shocked and saddened to learn of the sudden, unexpected death of Pauline Cooper on 8th January.

Pauline joined the HPS and the Shropshire Group (SHPS) in 2001 after retiring from her business designing children's theatre costumes. She quickly became known for her enthusiasm and commitment, and for several years organised the Group's Plant Fair, served on the Committee and later became Group Chairman. Pauline and her husband Derek organised the Group's celebration of the Society's 50th anniversary at Arley Hall in 2007 and were pathfinders for summer garden visits. Latterly Pauline also coordinated one of SHPS mini groups – informal groups in different parts of the county who meet together to visit gardens in their locality.

Pauline is best known nationally for her role as the Seed Distribution Coordinator, a position she took up in 2014. The Distribution dates back many years, run originally by a husband-and-wife team, then by a paid manager, eventually evolving into a volunteer-only scheme dispersed over several areas of the country.

Pauline's most significant contribution to the Society has been organising the Distribution with around 80 volunteers while moving towards exploiting the power of the internet to deliver one of the Society's charitable objectives. This role demands both sound horticultural knowledge and excellent organisational skills, and Pauline's passion for growing plants from seed and pursuing the correct nomenclature, her proficiency and enthusiasm have made the Scheme the success it is today.

It may surprise some members to learn that the HPS Seed Distribution (with typically 2000 varieties) is some 10 times larger than that of the RHS, that we generally have several varieties in our list which are not in *Plant Finder*, and that Pauline mailed our seed to about 20 different countries!

Pauline kept her light under a bushel. She had worked in information gathering for Carl Sagan, populariser of science; she had various roles both locally and nationally with Save the Children; her design skills were such that some of her theatre costumes appeared at a birthday party of one of the royal princesses; and at one time she was an Elder at the Stoke Quaker meeting. In everything she did, her contribution can be well summarised by a nautical metaphor: she had a good and clear sense of direction coupled with a gentle hand on the tiller.

Pauline enriched the life of the Society and will be sadly missed by her local Group and the entire HPS community. We have lost a good friend.

Our sincere condolences and deepest sympathy go to Derek and her family.

Anita Chapman

