

OBITUARY

Hilary Healey

NDD, MPhil, FSA

14 January 1935 – 13 May 2013



Hilary was born and bred in Lincolnshire and dedicated her life to it. With her family she moved about the county to experience life in cold and draughty rectories, the last one being at Algakirk when her father was the Bishop of Grimsby.

School days over, Hilary entered Lincoln College of Art and completed her NDD to become a teacher, and held a post as teacher of art at Spalding Girls' High School. She was very much a daughter of Lincolnshire, even visiting Lincoln for a holiday.

In the later 1960s Hilary's lifestyle changed completely when she switched to a career in archaeology to work with the Lincolnshire Archaeology Units and then became involved with The Heritage Trust of Lincolnshire.

She was one of Ethel Rudkin's protégées, working with her on digs, and research into medieval pottery kilns in the Toynton and Bolingbroke areas, to become an expert in this field. Mrs Rudkin's expertise was wide, to include Lincolnshire dialect, landscape, history, collector of artefacts, and supporter of budding historians and archaeologists. It is no doubt true to say the Rudkin mantle fell upon Hilary.

She was ever willing to help others find their way around the heritage of their areas in the county. Many will recall receiving snippets, guidance to find out more and encouragement

to publish. There were few areas of Lincolnshire on which Hilary did not have knowledge, whether it be archaeology, buildings, history or people – her knowledge of Lincolnshire was vast.

Hilary was an active member of Lincolnshire Local History Society, which was to become the Society for Lincolnshire History and Archaeology (SLHA) in 1974. She first appears as a member of the executive in 1967, and her name has always been on that list. Sometimes it was as an elected member, and always as a representative of one or more committees.

Committees were set up when the Lincolnshire Local History Society became SLHA. She was on the Archaeology Committee and for a long time Chairman of the Local History Committee. If that was not enough, she has been long associated with the publications of the Society, being joint editor of *Lincolnshire Past & Present*, initially with Terence Leach from the first issue in 1990, then with Chris Sturman, and finally with Ros Beevers, until the present time – 23 years must be a record for such a post. In addition to this Hilary compiled and edited the quarterly Bulletin for many years. She even had a spell at editing the *Lincolnshire Family Historian*.

When SLHA moved to Jews' Court Lincolnshire Heritage, the company running the bookshop and the trading arm of the Society, was

established, and Hilary was for many years a Director of the company. In 1974 SLHA became a member of the Council for British Archaeology and Hilary was appointed the representative to attend meetings in London and elsewhere.

All this would be enough for most active people, but Hilary had time to use her drawing skills to illustrate fenland scenes and houses, capturing the essence of this special landscape. These skills are to be enjoyed in many local publications. There was regularly a sketch on the first page of *Lincolnshire Past & Present*. Her own publications are few, like her *Fenland Glossary*, but her contribution to wide ranging books, essays and magazines is endless. Her book on Pinchbeck mills is ready for the printers, but too late for her to enjoy it.

Hilary's contribution, like that of Terence Leach and Ethel Rudkin, is a massive benefit for Lincolnshire, but many individuals and heritage groups have sadly lost a willing friend, one who was always prepared to go that extra mile – driving all over the county – to help, give talks, advise, and support projects. Although her cars had OBE on the plate, Hilary was very humble, never seeking glory, and never wanting recognition for anything she did. It is now, looking back, that we realise that, in Tom Lane's words, we had a treasure – a Lincolnshire treasure.

We extend our sympathy to her sister Ana.

Pearl Wheatley