

OBITUARIES

Dorothy Adeline Frazer (1919-2003)

Dorothy was born on 1st October 1919, the youngest of five children of Kingsley and Adeline Letitia Newman. The family came from Barnsley, in Yorkshire, but soon after Dorothy was born they moved to the village of Badminton, in Gloucestershire. Later, while Dorothy was still a child, they moved to London.

From an early age she was interested in wildlife (especially botany) and in a wide range of arts and crafts. When she left school she trained at the Royal School of Needlework, becoming very accomplished. During her lunch-hours she used to look in the windows of Liberty's, memorise the patterns of the clothes on display, and go home to make excellent replicas from whatever scraps of cloth she could obtain in the era of wartime rationing; her family often wondered how she afford such obviously expensive clothes! In due course her skill was recognised, and she was appointed Wardrobe Mistress of the Royal Shakespeare Company in Stratford, and also ran training courses for teachers.

In the early 1940s Dorothy was married briefly; her young husband was already sickly, and died within a few months. Then after the War she met Oliver Frazer again ("again" because they were actually remote cousins, and as children had met several times at family events). As Oliver was a few years older than Dorothy, she remembered him, and was always annoyed that he had not remembered her. But now that they were both adult, the few years' difference was not important, and they married.

They moved to the Isle of Wight, mainly because Oliver's parents had retired from London to Freshwater in 1939. For a short time, while they were looking for somewhere to settle, Oliver and Dorothy were able to live in a large house named Pitt Place, near Mottistone; the owner was still serving abroad in the Forces, and did not want the house to be left unoccupied. They used Pitt Place as a base to search for somewhere more permanent, and were soon delighted to find Mottistone Mill. They purchased it, and moved in in 1951. The Mill, and their life there, have been described by Colin Pope in *The Frazers at Mottistone Mill* (published by the IWNHAS in 2005).

On coming to the Island, Dorothy dropped her professional needlework, but still occasionally demonstrated her versatility in it, as the following two very different examples show. She repaired the altar cloths at Mottistone Church (where she was a Churchwarden for twenty years and much involved in the community). She also made costumes for Oliver to act as dame in school pantomimes; many will recall his performances at Priory Girls' School, Newport, or Cowes High School.

Dorothy joined the Society in 1952; she was soon elected to Council, and became involved in the Society's activities – at first in support of whatever Oliver was doing, but increasingly developing wider interests. Her inherent reserve caused many people to be unaware of the important contributions she was making behind the scenes.

In 1970 she became the first Librarian of the Society, taking control of a collection of books and papers (mostly concerned with botany or horticulture) bequeathed by E.H. White, a former President. This was the nucleus of our present much larger Library. Dorothy arranged for the items to be housed in a cupboard in the County Library at Newport. The cupboard was locked, but members who identified themselves to the Library staff were allowed access. She introduced a cataloguing system, and supervised the transfer of the Library to our first headquarters in Carisbrooke Road, Newport, and then to our second headquarters in the Rylstone Garden Chalet, Shanklin.

She was deeply involved in the Local Look Exhibition at Brook for many years. She and

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Oliver devoted countless hours to it, before, during and after the opening times. Dorothy particularly offered her artistic talents to all the exhibitors, preparing labels and explanatory texts.

In 1972 she was elected President of the Society. During her term of office she was involved in all aspects of the Society's activities, but was most keenly interested in conservation. It was appropriate that during the same period she was also the Chairman of the Isle of Wight Area Board of the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Naturalists' Trust. When she completed her years as President, in 1975, she became the Conservation Officer of the Society. This led her also to represent the Society on other bodies, such as the Council for the Protection of Rural England and the Island Conservation Areas Advisory Committee.

When Oliver died in 1994, Dorothy continued to live at The Mill, which was rapidly deteriorating. Her life there must have been very difficult, but she was strongly independent and politely declined all offers of assistance. Then one bitterly cold winter evening, with no heating in the house, she did at last give in, and phoned for help. We took her to the doctor, who diagnosed hypothermia, and was able to find her immediate accommodation in Brighstone Grange Residential Care Home; ironically, this was the same building, known as Pitt Place, where she had lived briefly about fifty years earlier. She lived on there for several years, but did not consider it a permanent arrangement; she wanted to stay there in the winters, and return to live at The Mill in the summers. But that was not to be; apart from a few day visits, she never went to The Mill again. She spent her days in The Grange reading, mainly about art.

Dorothy died in her sleep in the early hours of 17th December 2003. On the previous evening she had participated enthusiastically in the Brighstone Grange Christmas Party.

She left the Society a very generous legacy. As it was undoubtedly also in accordance with Oliver's wishes, the Society has gratefully accepted it as coming from them both, and has named it The Frazer Bequest.

John Stafford

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Kenneth Vincent Thompson (1915-2004)

Kenneth Thompson was born in 1915, in Sandown. He was educated at Ryde School, and then articulated with accountants George H. Brown and Sons in Shanklin. In the late 1930s he moved to join another firm of accountants in Singapore.

With the advent of war, he joined the Singapore Volunteer Force, and was taken prisoner when the city fell. He remained a prisoner of the Japanese for three-and-a-half years, during which he was compelled to work on the notorious Burma Railway.

After the war he returned to Singapore, and subsequently re-opened offices in Jesselton, North Borneo, and later in Hong Kong. He became a director of accountants Turquand Youngs & Co, and a Fellow of the Institute of Chartered Accountants.

While living in Jesselton he travelled (often by primitive means) around the country, working on the financial accounts of plantations, and also taking opportunities to observe the birds. When B.E. Smythies' *The Birds of Borneo* (1960) was revised for a third edition by the Earl of Cranbrook in 1980, Kenneth contributed new information on over 50 species. Kenneth's copy of the book contains a personal inscription by Lord Cranbrook, thanking him for his help.

Kenneth returned to live in the family home, Eagle's Nest, Bonchurch, in about 1965, joining the Isle of Wight Natural History and Archaeological Society that year, and remaining a member until his death 39 years later. In 1966 his work in Borneo was recognised by his election as a Member of the British Ornithologists' Union.

For a long time after 1965 he contributed annual notes for the Bird Report (often in a barely legible hand, but worth the effort of deciphering), until his health declined in recent years. He served on the Council of the IWNHAS from 1982 to 1985.

In 1976, at Whitwell Church, Kenneth was married to Phyllis Heaton, whom he had known earlier in North Borneo. They settled at Primrose Bank, Brighstone.

Kenneth Thompson died on 12th March 2004, aged 89. His wife Phyllis survives him.

John Stafford