

OBITUARY

MADGE LANGDON, BA, BPhil

Madge Langdon, President of this Society 1996-1997, died peacefully on 2 February 2004 after a period of declining health. She is missed as a committed and industrious member of the Society with boundless interest in and enthusiasm for archaeology. She joined the Society in 1958 and from 1976 served on and faithfully attended Council for many years. With her husband, Charlie, she also served for a period as joint acting secretary and she had only recently retired in 2003 as Administrator of the Society's Maltwood Fund.

Although she was born in Kent on 3 April 1919, it was during her formative years in Yorkshire that she developed her great love of the outdoors. Her chosen career was administration in the Civil Service. Success eventually brought her to the South West with postings first in Bristol and last a senior position at Puriton Ordnance Factory near Bridgwater. It was here that her passion for archaeology and its organisation (and for Charlie, the man she was to marry in 1963) flowered. She joined the Prehistoric Society in 1956 and was an active participant in its programme of field-meetings at home and abroad. She served as Assistant Treasurer from 1972 to 1997 and so won the respect and admiration of its members that she was made an honorary member in 1993. She was one of the first to join the Bristol Archaeological Research Group when it was formed in 1962. Two years later she was one of those instrumental in founding the Bridgwater & District Archaeological Society and for the next 40 years was active in promoting it and its work.

This impressive record of commitment to the organisation of archaeology was achieved by someone who was emphatically not an armchair archaeologist. Madge, from her early involvement in the excavations at Camerton, took every opportunity to learn and develop the skills and knowledge required to participate in and organise archaeological fieldwork. She took part in, among others, excavations at Butcombe and Cadbury Castle, Congresbury. Not surprisingly when in 1969 the M5

Research Committee was looking for people to assist in the fieldwork and excavation required in the path of the motorway across Somerset, Madge was one of the key local archaeologists whose help was secured. Among the sites she helped identify, her discovery and recording of the Roman port at Crandon Bridge, Bush Marsh, was probably the most significant. The site lies where the Polden Hills meet the mouth of the Parrett. Its discovery changed our understanding of the development of Somerset in the Roman period by proving that the axis of communication along the Poldens had an outlet to the sea. Her interests were wide, as illustrated by the contents of the 1981 report of the Bridgwater & District Archaeological Society. In it she co-authored all three main papers ranging from a Romano-British site at Combwich to post-medieval material from the site of Bridgwater castle.

It was entirely consistent with her character to take advantage of new educational opportunities to work for, first a BA (Hons.) in Geology with the Open University (1977) and later in 1987 a BPhil with her thesis entitled, 'Settlement in Central Somerset from 11th to 17th centuries'. She used these skills to further foster public interest in the archaeology and history of the area with ventures like an exhibition on the history of Highbridge, assisting in the team responsible for the redisplay of the archaeology gallery and reorganisation of the collections at the Admiral Blake Museum, Bridgwater, and writing the history of her own parish church.

Among the many who knew her, memories of her friendliness, generosity of spirit, energy and good humour will be cherished. It is fitting that she lies buried near the south porch of the parish church of St Peter and All Hallows, West Huntspill, at the heart of a community where perhaps she was best known as Secretary to the Parochial Church Council and a very active bellringer.

DAVID DAWSON