

OBITUARY

PAMELA LILIAN BRIMACOMBE

Pam and I first met at my interview for a job as her Conservation Assistant with the then Woodspring District Council in Weston-Super-Mare in 1983. At work Pam shared her knowledge of planning, conservation and trees with colleagues; using her skills in negotiation with applicants and councillors, always courteous and with a sense of humour.

The youngest of three sisters, educated in their home county of Devon, Pam enlivened the conservation office with quotations from poems learned at school and exciting tales of train journeys to school. Reluctant at first to follow in the naval footsteps of her father Commander Valentine Brimacombe, Pam joined the Home Guard when she was 17 years old. Then in 1942 she enrolled in the WRNS as a plane spotter and plotter.

From 1946 to 1948, after leaving the WRNS, Pam worked with the Allied Control Commission in Germany in charge of stores. Rejoining the WRNS in 1948 she was stationed at Culdrose, where she met Kate Marsh-Dunn whom we all know as Dizzie. A posting to Malta followed in 1951, where her father had been stationed in World War II, and she established a troop of Sea Rangers. Demob came in 1953 and Pam's expertise with the Stanley knife and scalpel was used in making models sold in gift shops. Former colleagues remember this skill in use making models for the Planning Department.

After recovering from surgery on her spine Pam worked for Gloucestershire County Council Planning Department in their area office in Patchway, north of Bristol. Here she researched and drew up the Severnside Study. Dizzie was now working for the Bristol Steam Navigation Company and also lived in Patchway. Meanwhile Pam was studying for her

planning degree at Durham, necessitating long journeys in her beloved car with a thermos of coffee to sustain her.

Pam moved to Somerset County Council Area Planning Office in Weston-Super-Mare and on reorganisation in 1975 became Conservation Officer of the new Woodspring District Council. Pam, Dizzie and their dog all moved into a bungalow in Weston with a large garden. Gardening was an important hobby for Pam (along with DIY) making use of her gadgets. These included an automatic watering system for the tomatoes in the greenhouse and latterly an automatic lawnmower that looked like a turtle!

By the time I knew Pam, she no longer smoked the Turkish cigarettes other colleagues remember and she was an enthusiastic surveyor of vernacular buildings, sometimes with the late Commander Desmond Williams. Expertise in recognising details of vernacular buildings is essential in assessing how Listed Building Application works might affect those buildings. Pam gave lectures upon this and other aspects of her work to various groups including SANHS. Preparing and giving expert evidence at Public Inquiries included in 1980 the Inquiry into the possible demolition of Clevedon Pier. Permission was refused and it is now the only intact Grade I pier surviving.

Retiring in 1997 and joining SANHS in 1989, from 1990 to October 2001 Pam was the efficient and enthusiastic Honorary Secretary of the Historic Buildings Committee, organising surveys and visits as well as the minutes and correspondence. Pam responded on behalf of SANHS to referrals from CBA on planning applications, with comments upon their effect on Listed Buildings. In 1996 Pam took part in the Newton St Loe Vernacular Building Research Group Survey organised for Bath & North East Somerset Council by Mary Stacey.

Over the years Pam underwent several hip operations but always recovered to allow dog walking to continue. Remaining cheerful despite declining health it was always a pleasure to meet and talk to Pam until her unexpected death in November 2008. Pam was an optimist and we, her friends in SANHS, will all miss her at our visits and meetings.



ANITA SIMS