

XV. STEPHEN POWYS MARKS

24 April 1932–8 June 2020

Stephen Powys Marks, Vice President of the London Topographical Society since 1989, died aged eighty-eight in June 2020. He became involved with the Society from the 1960s and he did much to establish the Society in the form it is today. He was a highly efficient Secretary from 1966 to 1983, encouraging new members (including our Treasurer Roger Cline), attracting them by the sale of older LTS material, and



Stephen Marks, 2019. © Dawn Collins.

organizing satisfactory storage of the Society's publications. He established the *Newsletter* in 1975 — the first issue (called the preliminary issue, now no. 00 on our website), announced the appointment of Ann Saunders as Editor of the Society's publications — and he continued as the Newsletter Editor until 1989. The early *Newsletters* are all available on the Society's website, as is his history of the Society, published in volume 24 of the *Record* (1980). He lived in Camberwell Grove, and was very active in the Camberwell Society, editing a facsimile reprint of Blanch's *History of Camberwell* in 1976. He became a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries in 1979. His own notable collection of London topographical material is now held by Texas A & M University. After he moved with his family to Somerset in 1978 he concerned himself with local conservation and green issues and also with Powys family history, acting as publication manager of the Powys Society that promotes the appreciation and enjoyment of the writings of John Cowper, Theodore (T. F.) and Llewelyn Powys.

Historical topography was only one aspect of his activities. His grandfather was the architect Albert Powys, secretary to the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings; his mother trained as an architect under Clough Williams Ellis, and, following the family tradition, Stephen trained at the Bartlett School of Architecture, developing a strong interest in conservation. In the 1980s, when he was a much-respected planning inspector, his most famous

case was the celebrated inquiry into Lord Palumbo's proposal for a building on Mansion House Square by the modernist architect Mies van der Rohe; his recommendation of refusal was accepted by the government. Earlier, he was an influential Conservation officer for Westminster City Council and was responsible for many of the reports on the newly formed conservation areas created after the Civic Amenities Act. This marked the shift from the post-war belief in wholesale rebuilding to the desire to preserve the best of the past. One outcome was the formation of ASCHB (Association for Studies in the Conservation of Historic Buildings) whose *Transactions* Stephen edited from its inception in 1976.

BRIDGET CHERRY

Patrick Frazer, Hon. Secretary of the Society from 1983 to 2011, added the following memories of working with Stephen:

Stephen Marks was one of the four heroes of the Society who put it back on its feet after the death of Marjorie Honeybourne at the end of 1974. She had combined the roles of Editor, Treasurer, Membership Secretary and Publications Secretary, but left its affairs in some confusion. Stephen, together with Ann Saunders as Hon Editor, Peter Jackson as Chairman and Anthony Cooper as Hon Treasurer, got to grips with the problem.

Stephen launched the *Newsletter* the following February, as a way of keeping closer contact with members, reporting that he and Anthony Cooper had been hard at work on the Society's accounts and management, and had consolidated the stock of publications in a single safe location. In addition, Stephen initiated a publicity campaign to recruit more members and increase sales of publications.

It worked. I joined on the strength of a most attractive flyer for Milne's Land Use Map, picked up in a local library. Membership numbers increased from just over 400 when Marjorie Honeybourne died to nearly 700 ten years later when Anthony Cooper was the first of the officers to retire.

Attending my first AGM in 1978, I was the only volunteer to take over the vacant role of the Publications Secretary. Stephen initiated me in the mysteries of the job, essentially packing and sending out publications, which were stored in a basement at the Bishopsgate Institute.

Stephen was the ideal Hon. Secretary, calm, good-humoured, conscientious and precise. Meetings ran smoothly and the minutes were always accurate and up to date. For the *Newsletter*, he did the typesetting and pasted it up ready for printing. He was always active in running the AGMs, which were attended by ever-increasing numbers of satisfied members. When I once complained that I had no time to enjoy them, he happily pointed out that was not why we were there.

Eventually Stephen relinquished his direct involvement with the Society, first after seventeen years as secretary in 1983, then after fourteen years as Newsletter Editor in 1989.