

In memoriam Cynthia Lydiard Cannings (1946 - 2016)



“Cynthia was a short lady with a big personality, one arm and always with a dog in attendance”. This was how she was recently described by a friend.

Born in London in 1946, the last of three children who were 14 and 15 years ahead of her in age. As people asked ‘what happened to your arm?’ - the reply was ‘I was born like it’. And coped with it without fuss. An artificial limb was considered once she had ceased growing, however she never got on well with it and ceased to use them. She did however help Roehampton Hospital test the artificial hands being developed for the thalidomide children.

Never daunted she learned to swim, and at thirteen was the first one-armed cyclist to pass the Cycling Proficiency Test. After teacher training in Chester she went travelling with a friend, hitch hiking through 13 countries in three months - enduring two car crashes, the second of which in Bulgaria, fractured Cynthia’s jaw.

She taught for a while in Australia and New Zealand where she was affectionately referred to as” the one-armed bandit.”

Flying lessons and learning to crochet came within her challenges, also appearing on two TV quiz programmes “15 to 1” and “Master Mind “where she came second - her chosen subject - Cowboys and Indians of the 19th century.

Employed by Post Office telephones in Credit Control (good grounding for a society Treasurer), with her brother Ray she moved to Norfolk from Newbury after the death of their mother, and latterly to Midsomer Norton in Somerset, where she worked at a weighbridge station and last of all as a double glazing salesman in a local supermarket. Cynthia became a member of The City of Bath Heraldic Society.

Cynthia was a very effective and efficient Treasurer for our Society (despite pleas to be released from her post) and we are in a healthy financial position because of her guardianship. Her talks to the society were ever illuminating, well researched and entertaining. Visits to many churches in Somerset to which she hoped to produce an heraldic record, provided the society meetings with many examples of her expertise at research and photography.



Cynthia and her brother Ray never married and remained close, when Ray died several years ago, Cynthia lost a little of her sparkle. Dogs were an important element in her life; when her own dog died she worked for Barking Mad, hosting dogs of all shapes and sizes when their owners went on holiday.

Cynthia’s death has taken from us a quirky, sometimes spikey, but always engaging friend of many interests, whose presence will be greatly missed.

Michael Furlong