

OBITUARIES

JANE FRANCIS (1931–2010)

Jane Francis was educated at the North London Collegiate School in Edgware and Exeter University. She then obtained a qualification in Librarianship at Simmons Graduate School of Library and Information Science in Boston, USA. She worked for the National Geological Institute for a few years, before joining the steel company Richard Thomas and Baldwin Ltd. When that company was nationalised in 1967, she became an employee of the British Steel Corporation (later British Steel plc) as Library and Information Officer, staying there until 1990, when she retired.

In 1991 Jane was invited to become Honorary Librarian to the Trustees of Sir John Kederminster's Library at Langley Marish. This post, which she held until 2009, had been specially created for her on the initiative of Dr E. V. Wright, the BAS representative on the Trust, in order that the Trustees could avail themselves of her professional experience, which included assisting with the catalogue to Thomas Plume's Library at Maldon, Essex, published in 1959.

Jane had known about the Kederminster Library (or Kederminster, to use the form of the founder's surname that she preferred) since her earliest childhood, because her father, Sir Frank Francis, Director of the British Museum and a Vice-President of BAS (obituary in *Records*, 30, 191), had, while an Assistant Keeper in the Printed Books Department of the British Museum, provided the Trustees with a report on the condition of the books in the 1930s. It was Jane's producing her father's notes, which she later deposited in the Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies (CBS) that gave Dr Wright the inspiration for involving her in the Library.

As Honorary Librarian, she researched the history of the collection, focussing in particular on the manuscript catalogue of 1638, which she used to establish the original contents of the Library and to re-construct the original arrangement. She also produced a short-title catalogue to the present-day holdings, including volumes which she identified on the 1638 catalogue but which were no longer

present. All this was no easy task in view of the faded writing in parts of the catalogue and the elliptical nature of some of the entries. The results of her research were published in 1996 in her article, 'The Kederminster Library: an account of its origins and a reconstruction of its contents and arrangement' (*Records*, 36, 62–85). She also contributed an article on the Library to *St Mary's, Langley: Essays for the Millennium* (1999), while her knowledge of the Library's history provided an invaluable resource for the new guide-book that was published by the Trustees in 1999.

Jane also developed an interest in schoolmasters' libraries of the 17th and 18th centuries, many no longer extant. This arose out of William Beasley's Library, donated to Mentmore Vicarage, and Dr Robertshaw's Library at Amersham, but extended beyond Buckinghamshire to similar libraries throughout England. She never completed her research but shortly before she died she deposited her extensive notes in CBS for the benefit of others researching the same field.

It was a source of great pleasure to Jane to be able to follow in her father's footsteps at the Kederminster Library and to make her own contribution to what has been described as 'the most beautiful parish library in England'. In her resignation letter, she expressed the view that its association with BAS would be extremely important in securing its long-term future.

Jane had a sharp intellect and as a regular attendee at BAS lectures and at meetings of the Buckinghamshire Branch of the Historical Association she could always be relied upon to ask the speaker challenging questions. In Haddenham, where she lived for over 40 years, she was actively involved with the Village Society and on a wider front was Chairman of the Vale of Aylesbury Branch of the Council for the Protection of Rural England. She gave a lot of support to her parents when they were living in Nether Winchendon as they got older, very often going straight to their house on returning from work in London in the evening. She also dedicated a great deal of time

and love to her nephews and nieces and moved from Buckinghamshire to live near them in the final year of her life.

Diana Gulland and Roger Bettridge