

# OBITUARIES

In this Kent Bird Report, we mark the passing of the following members who, each in their own way contributed much to the work of the KOS and birdwatching in the county. The Society depends on the efforts of people such as these, to carry out surveys, recording, report preparation, administration and other tasks, and we are grateful for all they have done.

## James (Jim) Allen 1915 - 2015

A highly educated and unassuming man, Jim Allen gained a First in Modern Languages at Cambridge and a Blue for football. During the 1960s and 70s Jim worked as the Director of Education for North Kent. His great interests were languages, orchids, birds and bird ringing; he was still learning new languages in his 70s.

Jim was a KOS member from 1954: recorder West-Central 1955 - 57, assisted with and then edited the KBR from 1959 - 61 but of most significance he was KOS Treasurer from 1956 - 75. Jim was made a KOS Honorary Life Vice-President in 1976.

In 1974 Doug Burkett, Hon Sec of the KOS had convinced me to take over the secretarial role and thus I meet Jim and Doug at a penetrating interview; just a wee bit scary. Jim and I got on well; he overlooked my total failure to learn languages, and asked me to help with a BTO Common Bird Census he had run for many years in forest above Luddesdown. This proved to be a tough patch to cover being mainly pine trees which had grown over the years and eventually housed few birds, although Dormice made good use of the 40 bird nest boxes Jim had made and fixed around the site. We decided to start a new CBC in Churchlands Wood which was a tangled mixture of trees and brambles; it proved to be rich in birds and orchids. So, between us, we were covering two sites each requiring 14 visits in spring time. This level of commitment seemed light for Jim, I found it tough. The best part was being on these sites at dawn noting the birds and then stopping for a thermos and chat. Jim was one of those rare people, who could show an interest in many subjects and be willing to discuss and never show off his, often, superior knowledge. He imbued me with a strong sense of the importance of BTO style recording for conservation.

As Treasurer and Secretary we helped Richard Stone and Ernest Still put together the KOS monthly Bulletin. We met each month at Richard's home where Jim ensured the conversation stayed on track until the work was finished, only then did he allow long and fascinating conversations to take place; with me marvelling at their vast knowledge of Kent and its flora and fauna. These meetings were occasionally swelled by the presence of naval Captain Jim Humphreys, KOS Chairman and army Major Geoffrey Munns, BTO representative for Kent.

In the 1980's Jim moved to Petersfield in Sussex and promptly set up another very arduous CBC on downland, where he bravely, or perhaps madly, had to run across the A3 main road to gain coverage of the whole site. His enthusiasm for recording wildlife remained undimmed for the rest of his life.

Jim's funeral took place at the Surrey and Sussex Crematorium on Tuesday 17th February 2015. It was a beautiful, sunny, winter's day with birds actively using the shrubberies while Buzzards soared overhead.

A delightful, humanist service produced a great surprise about Jim. In WW2 he was called up to serve in the Army Intelligence Corps. He was demobbed in 1946 with the rank of Major, and a letter of commendation that entitled him to use the title of Major during his lifetime. Never once had this clever and modest man ever mentioned this to me.

I am proud to have been able to consider him my friend.

Ian Castle