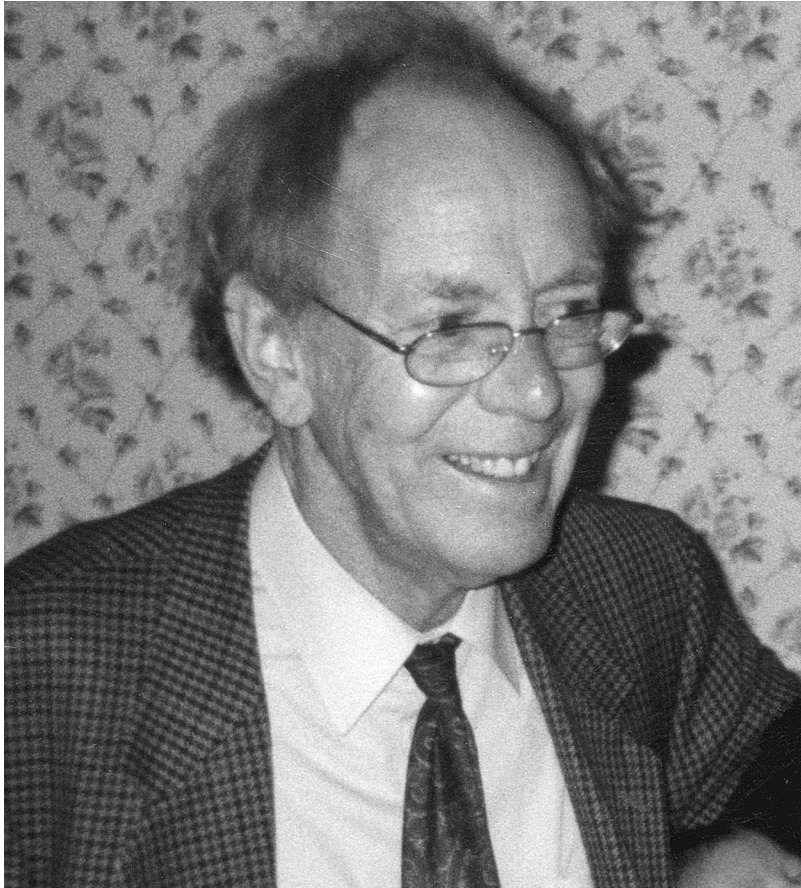


Obituary



Stephen Henry Billson (1918–2002)

Honorary Treasurer of the Society 1981–2000

Stephen Billson was a long-standing member of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society who served for 19 years as its Honorary Treasurer. In many ways his life could be seen as an archive of twentieth-century social history. Stephen was born posthumously on 15th December 1918, his father having died in the Spanish flu epidemic of 1918, and in the first three years of his life his mother had to cope with the death of her husband and two sons plus bringing up Stephen, his remaining five sisters and one brother on the frugal allowance granted by the Poor Law Guardians. Nevertheless this determined woman allowed neither her widowhood nor her pregnancy to prevent her casting her vote in the 1918 General Election, and thus being among the first women to exercise this privilege.

From an early age Stephen had an agile and enquiring mind and a scholarship to Alderman Newtons Grammar School procured him a good education. He remained throughout his life an active Old Newtonian. Like so many of his generation financial constraints and the intervention of the Second World War prevented him gaining a university degree but to the end of his life Stephen never lost his thirst for learning. Always keen to encourage others to fulfil their academic potential he lectured in accountancy to evening classes and felt privileged to serve as a governor of Mundella School.

After the war he studied in his spare time to gain his professional accountancy qualifications, becoming a Member of the Cost and Management Accountants. Most of his professional life was spent as Company Secretary of Goodwin Barsby Ltd. He was for many years an active member of the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants of which he was a Fellow and his service to the CIMA Benevolent Fund was honoured by the award of a Silver Medal.

Stephen's interest in archaeology led him in the 1960s to membership of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society with whom he and his wife, Nora, frequently enjoyed field trips. Never satisfied with scratching the surface of any subject Stephen deepened his knowledge and understanding by studying for the University of Leicester Diploma in Archaeology which he was awarded in 1972.

When, in 1981, the Society was looking for an Honorary Treasurer, Stephen was approached and he willingly agreed to become treasurer of the Society. He continued for almost twenty years finally resigning at the beginning of 2000. He was a meticulous treasurer who kept the Society's accounts in good order and advised the committee wisely on subscription rates and other financial matters. He was friendly with members Mr and Mrs Jack Willett, and it was Stephen who first dealt with the bequest left to the Society by Jack Willett. It may well have been this friendship that prompted Jack to leave such a generous gift to the Society.

Stephen was a benevolent man whose strong Christian faith and social conscience led him to give his time and quiet support to many voluntary organisations. His wide interests involved him in many organisations including the Royal British Legion, Leicester Family History Society, Leicester Railway Historical Society and St Luke's Church, Thurnby, where he served as Parish Treasurer for several years. Officers and members of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society attended Stephen's funeral in St Luke's Church, Thurnby on 10th January, 2003. He leaves a wife, Nora, a son and a daughter.

Stephanie Beacon
Alan McWhirr