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OBITUARIES

FRANK PANTON

CBE (CIVIL), MBE (MILITARY), B.SC., PH.D. (CHEMISTRY),
PH.D. (HISTORY), C.CHEM., F.R.S.C., F.R.A.E.S., F.R.S.A.

Frank Panton, Hon. Librarian and Vice President of the Kent Archaeological Society, former Chairman of the Canterbury Archaeological Trust and the Dover Bronze Age Boat Trust, died on 8th April 2013.

Francis Harry Panton was born in Lincoln on 25 May 1923 and educated in City School. At the outbreak of the Second World War he was commissioned into the Royal Engineers as reconnaissance officer of No. 1 Bomb Disposal Company, responsible for locating and identifying enemy explosive devices throughout Northern Command. In 1948 his work in hazardous bomb disposal operations was recognised by his appointment as MBE (Military).

After demobilisation he went to Nottingham University, where he took a B.SC. in Chemistry and a PH.D. After a brief spell with ICI he was recruited by Military Intelligence for his special interest in atomic weapons and knowledge of Russian developments in the field. As a scientist, Frank remained in Government service from 1953-83. His posts included: Technical Adviser to the UK Delegation to the Conference on the Discontinuance of Nuclear Tests, Geneva, 1959-61; Defence Attaché, British Embassy, Washington DC, 1963-67; Assistant Chief Scientific Adviser (Nuclear), Ministry of Defence (MoD), 1969-75; Director, Propellants, Explosives and Rocket Motor Establishment (Waltham Abbey and Westcott) 1976-79; Director, Royal Army Research and Development Establishment, Fort Halstead, 1980-4. Post-retirement, he was Consultant to the Cabinet Secretary on Nuclear matters 1985-97 and Consultant to MoD, as Independent Member of Nuclear Weapon and Nuclear Propulsion Safety Committees, 1984-99. For his services to Government Frank was made CBE in 1997.

Frank joined the Kent Archaeological Society in 1973 and made a very considerable contribution academically and administratively over the years, and as an active member of Council from 1990; he was appointed Vice President in 2005.

In 1998 he completed his PH.D. thesis at the University of Kent: 'Finances and Government of Canterbury, eighteenth to mid nineteenth century'. A series of articles relating to this area of study appeared in *Archaeologia Cantiana* between 1985 and 2000. These papers describe the functioning and finances of the Canterbury Burghmote 1700-1835 and those of the Canterbury Council from 1836 to the mid 1850s; the role of the Alderman and of the Canterbury Courts of Justice 1727-1840; the care of the poor, including the Courts of Guardians 1727-

1840s; and the Commissioners of the Pavement 1787-1840s. A detailed study of James Simmons, Canterbury's foremost citizen in the late eighteenth century and the early part of the nineteenth, is also included in this series. A useful summary of the corpus and some further material is provided in volume CXX (2000). Frank also contributed a paper on a completely different subject area – examining the various theories relating to the problematic route of the Canterbury-Richborough Roman road (in CXIV).

He was appointed the Hon. Librarian of the KAS in 2000 and since then has revised and re-ordered its contents and encouraged the expansion of activities in the Library. Frank's talent for organisation was put to good use and he built up a dedicated team intent on making the widely varied documentary resources of the Society more readily available to members. A true bibliophile he spent a lot of time and effort on making the Library accessible, attractive and well stocked, but he also fully appreciated the value of the internet, actively championing the KAS websites. Even when his health started to deteriorate he was determined to attend the Wednesday morning meetings and continued a keen and active interest in the running of the Library.

In 1985 Frank joined the Canterbury Archaeological Trust as Chairman of the Management Committee. He was an exceptional Chairman, assisting the Director and the Committee to put the Trust on a sound financial footing. Frank helped the Trust to purchase its own premises at 92A Broad Street, and over time, to refit them. Frank was involved in many of the Trust's greatest discoveries. Following the recovery of the Dover Bronze Age Boat a decision was made to form a Board of Trustees to raise funds to preserve the remains and place them on display in a purpose-built gallery in Dover Museum. The Dover Bronze Age Boat Trust was formed in 1994, with Frank as the first Chairman. The internationally renowned, award-winning boat gallery in Dover Museum is one of Frank's greatest achievements and legacy to Dover and Kent.

Frank was an exceptionally talented man, a great friend, mentor and teacher to many. He gave freely and unstintingly of his time, considerable talents and experience to all those organisations he supported. His wise counsel, wit and friendship will be sadly missed by all of us.

PAUL BENNETT AND TERENCE LAWSON

JOAN THIRSK

C.B.E., M.A.(OXON.), PH.D., D.LITT., F.B.A., F.R.HIST.S.

Joan Thirsk, one of the twentieth century's leading social and economic historians, died in October 2013 at the age of 91. She was born in north London and began a degree course in Modern Languages at the University of London in 1940, interrupted when her German language skills led to a posting at Bletchley Park where she assisted in the breaking of the Enigma ciphers. After the war she resumed her degree course, but moved over to History. She was a Senior Research Fellow at the University of Leicester from 1951-65 and in that role honed her knowledge

and skills in agrarian history. In 1965 she succeeded W.G. Hoskins as Reader in Economic History at Oxford until retirement in 1983 by which time she and her husband Jimmy had moved to their home in Hadlow, near Tonbridge.

Joan made a very major contribution to the ground-breaking eight-volume *Agrarian History of England and Wales*, especially to volumes four and five which covered the period 1450-1650, and as General Editor and as a contributor and to the series. She published numerous other works on aspects of agricultural history, exploring a wide range of hitherto neglected sources and thereby greatly expanding its scope and interest; she was particularly keen to analyse the significance of regional variations in agricultural practice. Joan always sought to shed light on the day-to-day life of rural workers both those engaged directly in farming and the many others in related crafts. Her *Food in Early Modern England* (2007) details the changing diet and tastes of the period and how these impacted upon the patterns of agriculture.

Joan joined the Kent Archaeological Society in 1960 and was a member of Council from 1987-90. She was a stalwart member of the Publications committee from 1988 until 2012, offering wise advice, encouragement and calm counsel as she helped to steer new ideas in the right direction. One of her great ambitions was for a Kent Record Society, a longing unfortunately never fulfilled.

Joan was closely involved in the production of two important publications of the Society. After Kenneth Witney's death she did sterling work in getting his material on *The Survey of Archbishop Peckham's Kentish Manors 1283-5* ready for publication and drafted the Foreword. By a very happy chance a fifteenth-century survey of Hadlow manor came to light in 2002 which led to *Hadlow: Life, Land & People in a Wealden Parish 1460-1600* being published on the KAS website and in hard copy in 2007. With skill and characteristic generosity Joan led a team of resident local historians in a thorough analysis of this remarkable document. Her other contribution to the village in which she and her husband Jimmy lived for so many years, was to support and encourage the work of restoring Hadlow Tower, the grade 1 listed building, and making it accessible to visitors.

Joan Thirsk was elected a Patron of the Society in 2002 in recognition of her outstanding contribution to historical studies.

TERENCE LAWSON AND DAVID KILLINGRAY

Joan Thirsk was a great friend and support to many local societies in Kent including Tonbridge Historical Society. She became its President after the retirement of Dr Christopher Chalklin in 1997 and continued in this role until 2004. She was certainly not just a figurehead but always available with advice on so many different subjects. She gave interesting and very listenable lectures, sometimes in partnership with her husband, to the Tonbridge and Hadlow societies, and to other local societies. She was a founder member, and then President from 1992-1999, of the Kent History Federation.

Meeting her in Tonbridge High Street, in the local reference library or indeed anywhere was always a joy wherever the conversation led. She was a most erudite, interesting and approachable academic and a pleasure to know. She is much missed by so many in all walks of life.

SHIELA BROOMFIELD

