

Roy Maycock Remembered – Helen Wilson

These are my memories of Roy as a good friend to me personally as well as President of our Society.

I first met Roy in 2004 when I attended a meeting of MKNHS with Martin. After a short while, we were surprised to discover how much we had in common, especially with our north-east ties. This pleased Roy as he loved Teesdale and its beautiful countryside – an area I knew well from family holidays and my childhood in Sunderland. For Roy, this connection began in the early 1960s when he was studying at Durham University (where members of my family also studied). He shared accommodation with Jack Knight who would become his lifelong friend, along with Jack's family which continued to the end of Roy's life. When we were reminiscing, it transpired that my late husband and Jack taught together at the same school in the 1970s whilst Jack was Headmaster. My family and I had in fact spent time with Jack and his. Small world! As Roy loved the north-east so much he did return whenever his working life allowed to catch up with Jack and his family. Thus ensued hours of telephone conversations about the north-east!

Roy would often talk fondly of his parents and his childhood. His father was a Master Baker for the Co-op and Roy recalled joining him on his daily rounds, including deliveries to Station X at Bletchley Park! Remarkably, Roy lived at his family home in Osborne Street, Bletchley for his entire life. In the last few years, when he was largely confined to home, we would sometimes sit out in his garden admiring the plants he had collected over the years – or with tea and cake in the summerhouse.

He was a true friend to me especially in 2014 when he sat by my hospital bed for over three hours in Oxford following my spinal surgery.

Of course Roy loved MKNHS and was very proud of it. His amazing botanical knowledge and interest in nature was something to be beheld. The summer walks (with me and others trailing at the back as Roy examined plants through his hand lens) were just the best. At the walks' end, he would often test me to see if I could remember what he had told me that day and probably many times before! He was aware that I spent much of the time chatting away to fellow members. Roy had interests outside of natural history and had a great love of the theatre. Our meetings would sometimes start with a short review of the latest play or musical he had attended!

I also shared a friendship with Joan West, another of his lifelong friends. Joan was Headmistress at several local schools and their respective families had known each other for many years. Joan was a great character and raconteur and often accompanied Roy on theatre visits until her death in 2014.

Martin fondly remembers field trips with Roy, on some occasions scribbling down scientific names as Roy rattled them off and earning a raised eyebrow when asking for the spellings! He would also try with little success to enthuse Roy about amphibians – although he made some progress in getting him to admire grass snakes!

The loss of Roy Maycock to MKNHS and to botany is immense – but we shall miss him most as a storyteller and a generous friend.

Helen Wilson

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