

## Robert Sephton's contribution to local history

Robert, who died in February 2017 after a short illness, had been a member of Radley History Club since at least 2005/2006 and a regular attendee at meetings until the last few months. He lived for many years in Kennington, travelling by bus to and from RHC meetings, only moving to Radley in 2013. He was also an active member of the Oxfordshire Local History Association (OLHA).

Originally from Lancashire, Robert was a Bevin Boy and later moved to Oxfordshire, where he was for many years Librarian at what was then the College of Further Education in Oxford.

Robert was a very unassuming man but he made a valuable contribution to local history research, having a particular interest in Kennington and the development of the railways in Oxford. He wrote the RHC publication, *A Brief Account of Oxford University Golf Club*, contributed to the RHC farms and church books, and published extensively in his own name (see list overleaf).



*Robert at Radley Fete, June 2012  
(image courtesy Les Hemsworth)*

Robert gave a talk to RHC in January 2012 on 'The early days of the Salvation Army in Oxfordshire' and had been due to talk at the members' interests meeting on 13 March 2017 about Una Duval, the 'Sunningwell Suffragette'. He was always happy to support RHC events – taking a turn to man the Club stall at Radley Fete or volunteering to help at Club exhibitions (even with the washing up!).

On hearing of Robert's death:

Chris Hall, editor of the OLHA journal, wrote:

"Robert was an *apparently* insignificant person (rather small and very deaf) who was in fact a scholar with a probing mind, and the ability to expound clearly his findings. A serious loss to local history. To my knowledge he made two original and definitive contributions: (1) through his work on railways and (2) through his examination of district nursing in Radley and Kennington which demonstrated the move towards publicly-funded health care several decades before the NHS was born. So far as I am aware this was a quite original and ground-breaking piece of work. No doubt there were other areas of research that I don't know about where his findings and analysis were just as important."

Liz Woolley, OLHA treasurer and membership secretary wrote:

"His research on railways was particularly useful to me, and he was always an interesting and interested companion at local history events."

He will be missed.

### British Association for Local History award

The news came through between Robert's death and his funeral that he had received an award from the British Association for Local History for published research and in Robert's case was for the article 'The Striking Women' which was published in the Winter 2015/15 issue of *Oxfordshire Local History*.



*Robert in the kitchen at the farm  
exhibition, July 2011  
(image courtesy Les Hemsworth)*

## Radley History Club

### Publications by Robert Sephton

NB These are the ones that RHC is aware of – there may well be others.

#### Books

*A Brief Account of Oxford University Golf Club*, published by Radley History Club, 2009\*

*S.P. Grundy (1880–1942) – a life of social service in Manchester and North Berkshire*, 2009\*

*Bagley Wood District Nursing Association 1925–1948*, 2008\*

*Bertrand and Alys Russell in Bagley Wood*, 2007\*

*A Kennington Miscellany – some diverse events in its history*, 2006\*

*Thomas Pratt is Shooting Rabbits in Bagley Wood – an account of a dispute with an Oxford College over rights of common in a Berkshire Wood*, 2nd edition, 2005\* (first published 2000)

*William Seymour Blackstone (1809–1881) – a Wallingford MP\**

*The Oxford of J J Faulkner (1798–1857): Grocer, chartist and temperance advocate*, 2001\*

*The Leasing of City Farm, Garsington, Oxfordshire, 1750-1900*, c.1997

*Oxford and the General Strike 1926*, 1993\*

\* Copy held in RHC Books archive

#### Articles

'The striking women' [about the Chipping Norton Bliss Mill strike of 1913-1914], *OLHA Journal*, Vol. 10, No. 1, Winter 2015/16, pp. 52-59.

'From riots to respectability: the early days of the Salvation Army in Oxford', *OLHA Journal*, Vol. 9, No. 2, Spring 2011, pp. 20-37.†

'Bagley Wood Nursing Association 1925-48: moving towards socialised healthcare', *OLHA Journal*, Vol. 8, No. 3, Spring 2008, pp. 3-41.†

'Before the National Health Service – District Nursing Associations', *Oxfordshire Local History News*, Issue III, Summer 2007.\*

'Drama in court [the prosecution of Samuel Griffith, occupant of the Star Hotel, Oxford, 1857]', *OLHA Journal*, Vol. 7, No. 1, Summer 2002, pp. 34-45.†

'Third time lucky: the GWR gets its Act at last; How the railway came to Oxford [part 3]', *OLHA Journal*, No. 6, No. 4, Winter 2000-1, pp. 17-35.†

'The University opposes: the defeat of the second Oxford and Great Western Railway Bill, 1838; How the railway came to Oxford [part 2]', *OLHA Journal*, Vol. 6, No. 3, Summer 2000, pp. 18-37.†

'City fathers, farmers and Folly Bridge; How the railway came to Oxford [part 1]', *OLHA Journal*, Vol. 6, No. 2, Winter 1999-2000, pp. 3-28.†

'The grocer and the baron: the second battle of Chalgrove', *OLHA Journal*, Vol. 5, No. 5, Winter 1998-9, pp. 26-44.†

'John Towle 1796-1885, maverick mayor of Oxford', *OLHA Journal*, Vol. 5, No. 2, Winter 1997-8, pp. 18-28.†

\* Copy held in RHC archives at D.120(ii)

† Scanned copy available to download as a PDF from the searchable index of all past OLHA journal articles on the OLHA website ([www.olha.org.uk/wp-content/OLHAJournalIndex.pdf](http://www.olha.org.uk/wp-content/OLHAJournalIndex.pdf))

#### Other

Research report relating to 'Halshanger', Bagley Wood Road, Kennington, once owned by Bertrand Russell. Compiled and published for Kennington History Society, 2006.\*\*

Copy held in RHC archives at D.88