

Aelfthryth Gittings

1939 - 2012

Aelfthryth Gittings read history at Somerville College, Oxford (1958 -61) where she became committed to radical causes such as the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament - a commitment she maintained with her husband John to the end of her life. Aelfthryth's unusual (and in modern terms probably unique) Anglo-Saxon name was given to her by her diplomat father, a keen philologist. Her mother was Polish: many of Aelfthryth's Jewish relatives died during the war. In 1947 during her father's posting to Moscow, Aelfthryth went to a Russian primary school.

During the 1960s Aelfthryth and John travelled and worked in the US, Chile and Hong Kong. Returning to England, they brought up four sons in north London. Aelfthryth was a strong supporter of the comprehensive school system, was an active school governor and was involved in the William Tyndale Junior School controversy over progressive education (1973-74).

Having gained a social work diploma at LSE after Oxford, Aelfthryth resumed working at the SPCR (now NatCen Social

Research), as an interviewer and later training manager (1978-2000). Joining John in Shanghai in 2001-03, Aelfthryth taught business English at Jiaotong University and did volunteer work at the Shanghai Children's Orphanage.

When they moved after retirement to Shipton, Aelfthryth became an enthusiastic campaigner for the Labour Party on the doorstep. Enrolment in a Continuing Education course in palaeography led to the formation of the Burford (later Oxfordshire) Probate Group, which working for the Victoria County History, transcribed wills for Burford and Henley. This led in turn to the Wychwood Probate Group in which Aelfthryth played a leading part in transcribing and collating the Wychwood documents. Aelfthryth was also active in the Wychwoods History Society and was a fund-raiser for *Save the Children*. She continued to travel widely with John, visiting much loved grand-children in East Cork and Hong Kong, and delighting most recently in the Cathar castles of South-west France.

John Gittings

Cotswold Decorative and Fine Arts Society

On **Wednesday 13th February** Dr Paula Nuttall will lecture to the Cotswold Decorative and Fine Arts Society on the topic: *The Bruges of van Eyck and Memling*.

This lecture evokes Bruges during its late-medieval heyday, when it was the richest and most vibrant city in Northern Europe. On **Wednesday 13th March** broadcaster and author Steven Desmond will lecture on: *The Odd Couple: the Gardens of Edwin Lutyens and Gertrude Jekyll*.

Lutyens' and Jekyll's work set a standard of excellence which has been admired ever since.

Lectures are held at the **Bradwell Village Hall, Burford**, and begin at **11am** with coffee available from 10.15. The March lecture follows our AGM which begins at 10.30. Non-members are very welcome to attend (suggested donation £8). For more information please visit our website www.cotswolddfas.org