

## Chris Day, 1946–2021

The untimely death of Chris Day on 3 March after a two-month illness, marks a sad loss, not only to his family and friends, but to the academic and local history community, both in Oxfordshire and elsewhere.

Chris and his wife, Alison, moved to Deddington from Oxford in 1996. Shortly afterwards Chris, with a few enthusiastic villagers, set up the Deddington and District History Society which he chaired until recently. He was a member of Deddington Map Group which produced hand drawn maps, recording what the parish looked like in 2000, displayed in Deddington, Clifton and Hempton as well as in a book, *Discovering Deddington*.



Chris regularly took part in the Deddington Festival, leading the history walk around the village in his own peerless style. The walk was extremely popular with villagers and other local history societies; his last was at the request of 1st Deddington Brownies, which he enjoyed enormously.

Christopher John Day, MA, FSA, was born in Stoke-on-Trent in 1946 and remained a life-long supporter of Stoke City Football Club. His secondary education took place at Cotton College, now defunct. At 18 he was sent to a seminary for training catholic priests but after four years decided the Catholic ministry was not for him. He was accepted at Manchester University where he obtained a First in History and then embarked on a PhD.

Historical research brought him to Oxford in 1975 to join the staff of the Victoria County History. There he was immediately thrown in the deep end, his first task being to research the modern history (since 1771) of Oxford city. His work on Oxford, published in 1979, was an outstanding achievement and during his 20 years with the VCH he contributed to a further four volumes, remaining a much-loved figure within a harmonious team, his humour and vitality enlivening the routines of co-operative research. He published outside the VCH, contributing a substantial chapter to the multi-volume *History of the University of Oxford*, a chapter for a *Festschrift* on the historiography of Warwickshire focused on early county histories, and book reviews in *Oxoniensia* and elsewhere.

Chris's talents as a communicator were already evident during his VCH years and in 1994 (perhaps also spurred by the experience of surviving a near fatal attack of lymphoma in the early 1980s) he decided to split his time between the VCH and Oxford University Department for Continuing Education. In 1996 he moved to the Department fulltime, where he directed and taught the Undergraduate Certificate (later Diploma) in English Local History, initiated the Advanced Diploma in Local History (taught via the internet), and contributed to the MSt (later MSc) in English Local History.

In 2004 he became Director of Studies in English Local History, before moving in 2006 to the Department's International Programmes Division as Director of Academic Programmes. Underpinning all that was Chris's passion for teaching and his genuine interest in people. A Fellow of Kellogg College since 1994, he served as Admissions Tutor (2002–05), and Senior Fellow in 2007. He was elected to an Emeritus Fellowship in 2011.

Chris somehow found time to continue as Honorary General Editor of the Oxfordshire Record Society (serving a 25-year stint) and had a long connection with the Oxfordshire Local History Association. Retirement meant no such thing – not only did he serve as a popular and effective President of the Oxford Architectural and Historical Society from 2012 to 2017 but continued to direct the Oxford Berkeley Program at Merton College, a three-week summer school partnership with the University of Berkeley California, on which he had taught for many years. In recent years he also edited *Cake and Cockhorse*, the Banbury Historical Society's journal, as well as continuing his own research interests, including a long-term project on Thomas Walker of Woodstock, town clerk and agent to the Duke of Marlborough in the late 18th century.

To those of us who knew him, however, Chris's manifold professional and academic achievements are almost secondary compared with the delights of his company and his less well-known talents as, amongst others, a brilliant cook and host. In the words of one former colleague, 'simply one of the best people we have ever known'.

***Simon Townley***  
***with contributions from Alison Day***