

Yolanda C.S. Courtney (1953- 2025)

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It is with sadness that I record the recent death of my friend Yolanda Courtney. I had known Yolanda for over forty years, having first met her in Cardiff, when I was introduced by her future husband Paul Courtney.

Originally from Exeter, where she attended Bishop Blacknall School, Yolanda studied at the University of Wales in Cardiff, gaining a 2.1 in History. Yolanda then worked at the National Museum of Wales in Cardiff as an Assistant Keeper of Social History. Further study at Oxford University resulted in Yolanda gaining a Post-Graduate Diploma in Prehistoric Archaeology in 1979, this was followed by a return to the University of Wales, Cardiff where Yolanda was awarded a PhD in Historical Archaeology in 1989. Yolanda's work was subsequently published under the title "Public House Tokens in England and Wales 1830-1920: material culture in the industrial age", a reviewer, Andrew Wager writing in "The Numismatic Chronicle" published by the Royal Numismatic Society commented that it "represents a landmark in the history of token literature". Yolanda also actively contributed to the Token Corresponding Society.

It was in the National Museum of Wales, Cardiff that Yolanda Stanton had met Paul Courtney, her future husband, who was working there on excavated ceramics from Wales. They married in 1987; it was to be a meeting of minds, taking enjoyment in their mutual interests in history and archaeology and it also led to the joint publication of articles. They were both active members of the Finds Research Group, regularly attending meetings and contributing their knowledge.

Moving to Leicester, Yolanda worked at the Newarke Houses Museum as a Social History Curator. In 2005, she was appointed Head of Museums for Leicestershire County Council overseeing their Museums and having managerial responsibility for the staff. During that time, Leicester gained international attention with the discovery of the unmarked buried remains of King Richard III and Yolanda lectured on the subject. Yolanda's extensive experience included working on collections, heritage buildings and grant applications for the Museum service. She worked on local initiatives and took the lead, for example, as Project Executive on a Knitting Together project,

celebrating the history of the East Midlands knitting industry, this enabled objects from museum collections to be digitised as a virtual museum, offering access to collections in various regional museums and galleries that were not on permanent display. Yolanda also encouraged an oral testimony project, successfully obtaining funding to support that work. In addition, she wrote about local subjects, contributing to their wider knowledge and interpretation.

Yolanda retired from her role in the Museum service in 2012. Sadly, the following year her beloved husband Paul died. Yolanda had been a devoted wife, especially during Paul's final illness. It was in Paul's memory that in 2014 Yolanda jointly organised the Paul Courtney Memorial Conference in Leicester and set up a Society for Post-Medieval Archaeology bursary for students entitled the Paul Courtney Student Travel Award. Both Yolanda and Paul appreciated the importance for students who are studying archaeology and history to travel for their studies. In 2015 Yolanda prepared a bibliography of Paul's extensive archaeological publications.

Together Paul and Yolanda had enjoyed travelling internationally, sometimes, over some distance, visiting castles and monastic sites on foot. As 'foodies', they very much appreciated the excellent food offerings on the continent, especially in Belgium. I recall interesting and enjoyable trips that I made with them to France and Belgium.

Coming from a musical family, which included the composer Walter Stanton, Yolanda had from an early age a great love of music, which stayed throughout her life. She performed a wide musical repertoire ranging from Bach to Frank Bridge and Shostakovich. A talented musician, Yolanda sang, played the piano, organ and violin. Having sung in the Oriel Chapel Choir while at Oxford, Yolanda played an active role during her retirement as a parishioner and member of St. Guthlac's church, Leicester and joined their choir, where she also played the organ and generously set up an organ scholarship to support an

organ scholar. She followed the scholar's achievements with interest in their progress.

In retirement, Yolanda was also able to pursue her interests in studying Ancient Greek and Theology and learning Welsh, while maintaining her contact with her friends in Cardiff. Yolanda was very knowledgeable about Lord Nelson and the naval warfare of his time. Her diverse interests ranged from pub tokens, church bells and bell ringing. Yolanda was a bibliophile and read widely on an extensive range of subjects. Together, we enjoyed attending the Geoff Egan Memorial lectures organised by the Society for Post-Medieval Archaeology. Geoff Egan had been a mutual friend.

One of Yolanda's great qualities was to encourage others to develop an interest in history and archaeology, and she organised lectures for the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society. She supported a project about recording the war memories of members of the local community in Leicester and gave talks herself on the subject. This included one at St.Guthlac's on "A Zeppelin flew gaily over my house" about the experiences of Yolanda's great-grandfather and his cousin on the home front in the First World War.

My friend Yolanda was one of a kind, highly intelligent, hard-working, modest, straightforward, very knowledgeable on many aspects of archaeology and history and with a keen interest in Post-Medieval Archaeology. Yolanda was well liked and respected and was noted for her generosity and support to good causes and her community.

Publications

Yolanda Courtney jointly with Paul Courtney, BSc, MA, PhD, FSA (1955-2013):

(1992) "A siege examined: the Civil War archaeology of Leicester. Post-Medieval Archaeology 26, vol. 26 pp. 47-90

(1995) "The Changing Face of Leicester (Britain in Old Photographs). Sutton Publishing Ltd.

and

Yolanda Courtney publications included:

(1995) "Royal Tigers: A Guide to the Royal Leicestershire Regiment Gallery at New Walk Museum and a Short Listing of the Regiment. Leicester City Council

(2000) "Pub Tokens: Material Culture and Regional Marketing Patterns in Victorian England and Wales" International Journal of Historical Archaeology vol.4, pages 159-190

(2002) "Reinterpreting Daniel Lambert" Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society

(2004) "British Public House Tokens c.1830-c.1920 : material culture in the industrial age" Royal Numismatic Society Special Publication No.38

(2004) "For their own convenience: the archaeology of 19th century pub tokens". The Archaeology of Industrialisation: Society for Post-Medieval Archaeology Monographs: v2 (Routledge)