

## JOAN E. DUNCAN, BSc, MBE (1916 – 2012)

Joan was a founder member of the Wharfedale Naturalists' Society. This society still flourishes, with a membership of over 500. She was interested in wildlife in general, but botany was her main love and she was an excellent field botanist, with the gift of enthusing others. She became a member of the BSBI in 1953.

Joan was an active member and became President of both the Yorkshire Naturalists' Trust (now the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust) and

the Yorkshire Naturalists' Union. She was awarded the MBE in 2001 for services to wildlife conservation in Yorkshire, partly for her work in Grass Wood YWT Reserve, beginning when the Trust managed small areas of the wood, to the acquisition of the whole wood in 1983. Joan chaired the Grass Wood Committee until 1993.

NICHOLA VERNON

...he Hull  
hich  
h great

an accomplished singer herself,  
she had gained her Licentiate of  
the Royal Academy of Music in

Her marriage lasting 27 years  
to local author and playwright  
Ivor Wilson very nearly did not

Mrs Wilson is survived by their  
children Ian and Keren.

Although responsible for  
two departments at St N

# Joan Duncan

## Teacher and natural history enthusiast

A DEDICATED teacher and lifelong natural history enthusiast, Joan Elizabeth Duncan – who has died aged 96 – moved from Wales to Addingham, near Ilkley, in 1918 when her father, Arthur Bartle, was appointed to a post at Ilkley Grammar School.

The elder daughter of Mr Bartle and his wife Nora, she was born in Haverfordwest, Pembrokeshire.

After attending Prince Henry's Grammar School, Otley, she obtained a BSc in Botany and Zoology at Leeds University, where she was an early member of the women's athletics team alongside 1936 Olympians Grethe Whitehead and Kathleen Connall.

Qualifying as a teacher in 1938, Mrs Duncan's first job in Hull saw her taking part in wartime fire-watching duties and involved the evacuation of the school's pupils and staff to a village in the East Riding.

She subsequently taught biology at Casterion, Otley, Doncaster, and then in Ilkley at Oaklands and the Grammar School.

Mrs Duncan joined the Wharfedale Naturalists Society in 1946, serving for many years as secretary and president, and more recently as honorary life vice-president, steering it to become one of Ilkley's largest and most successful voluntary organisations.

She compiled the society's annual records of species, observed in Wharfedale, and her study of the decline of heather on Ilkley Moor proved invaluable to conservationists and university researchers.

She also served as president of the Yorkshire Naturalists Union, and as a prominent member of the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust was instrumental in the establishment of the Grass Wood

www.yorkshirepost.co.uk

**B**  
**OF**  
**RUN**  
**THE**

Robbie  
journey  
to an it  
back of

**RO**  
**RUGBY**

**YORKSHIRE POST** READER OFFER

**YORK**

Please see  
Robbie F  
Please m  
Title  
Surname  
Address  
Daytime  
When can  
Yorkshire  
by giving us  
by phone or  
small post,  
not interest  
The free lift



**PROUD MOMENT:** A smiling Joan Duncan shows off her medal in 2001 after being appointed an MBE for her services to Yorkshire wildlife.

Nature Reserve. In 2001 she was appointed MBE for services to Yorkshire wildlife.

Mrs Duncan was the author of two books, *Pennine Flowers* (with RW Robson, 1977) and *Aunt J* (1999), recording the memoirs of a YMCA volunteer in the First World War.

Before her marriage she attended St John's Church, Ben Rhyddling, where she was secretary to the parochial church council, sang alto in the choir and was active in the Social Guild. She later took on similar roles at All Saints' Church, Ilkley, and for many years co-ordinated the church's support for missionary work.

In 1957 she married Colin Duncan of Otley, with whom she shared a love of natural history, photography and sailing.

After her retirement, in 1972 she developed a love of Australia and its wildlife, and following her husband's death in 1980, she continued her many voluntary activities until well into her 80s.

She had no children of her own, but inspired generations of young people – including Ilkley boy Alan Titchmarsh – to understand and respect the natural world around them.