

YVONNE JUNE LEONARD (1940–2021)

Yvonne Leonard died of cancer on 4 August 2021, a few weeks after entering Mildenhall Lodge Care Home where her husband David was already residing following a stroke, and a week after their sixtieth wedding anniversary.

Born on 31 October 1940 as Yvonne Pettitt and brought up in Dalham and then in Mildenhall, Yvonne lived in Suffolk all her life except for the period at Bletchley Park Teacher Training College. In Mildenhall she taught first at St Mary's Primary and later at Riverside Middle School. On arrival there she took over the greenhouse and provided plants that were on window sills all over the school. Pupils in her class were responsible for their care and watering. In the early 1980s Yvonne hosted at her home and garden a nature study group, under the auspices of the Suffolk Wildlife Trust, for children aged five to eight years. The youngsters loved it and absorbed the enthusiasm she had for wildlife.

Yvonne had been staunch supporter of Mildenhall Museum since its early years, she and David even undertaking some Sunday afternoon duties in their courting days, and after retirement Yvonne did a regular duty until a few years ago. For the Parish Council, in millennium year, she wrote *The Flowers and Wildlife of Mildenhall Parish*.



David and Yvonne Leonard, Northern Ireland, 2011.
Jenny Reeve

For many years Yvonne recorded Breckland plants for Natural England. This work began with *Rare plant survey of the Suffolk Breckland, 1991*, a contract survey she undertook with David. She subsequently continued with a rolling programme of species' surveys, as well as recording sites such as SSSIs, county wildlife sites, churchyards and roadside verges and devising conservation plans for them. Her 'patch' included the

vast Elveden Estate, and she obtained permission to visit other private areas which many recorders found it difficult to access. She contributed accounts of four of the region's rarities, *Artemisia campestris*, *Muscari neglectum*, *Scleranthus perennis* and *Thymus serpyllum*, to the third edition of the *British Red Data Book* edited by M.J. Wigginton (1999). In 2020 she was received the NBN Award for Wildlife Recording – Terrestrial for her 'regular and sustained recording of rare plants in the Suffolk Brecklands for over 30 years'.

For fourteen years she and David also monitored the Military Orchids (*Orchis militaris*) in the Suffolk Wildlife Trust Reserve in Mildenhall Woods and organised several very successful annual open days there, many botanists making long journeys to see this rarity. Working as a team, Yvonne speaking and David showing his excellent colour transparencies, they gave countless talks to Wildlife Trust groups. During the years when the Mildenhall group of the SWT held plant sales David and Yvonne gave many specimens from the beautiful and productive garden they had created at their home called 'Crossbills', so named because these birds were nesting in the Scots pines on the perimeter of the plot on which the house was built. *Scleranthus perennis* (an especial favourite of hers) and *Euphorbia peplis* colonised the gravel paths

of the garden and there was a colony of the rare Sandy Stiltball (*Battarea phalloides*) under the hedge.

From 2008 until 2021 Yvonne was a county team member of the National Garden Scheme. She attended regional meetings and annual conferences in London with great enthusiasm. Yvonne and David opened their own garden four times – 2006, 2008, 2010 and 2014 – raising substantial sums for the charity. During her tenure, Yvonne supported her friend Jenny Reeve, county organiser for the Scheme, driving her to locations across Suffolk to assess their suitability (and the quality of the home-made cakes) for inclusion in the Scheme, which supports many medical charities.

Yvonne and David visited gardens with Jenny and her late husband every weekend throughout the season and thoroughly enjoyed the experience of seeing gardens across the county and meeting their owners, many of whom became friends. The photo shows them on a 'gardens holiday'. She is greatly missed by Jenny, who always relied on her to give sound advice when problems occurred, and by all the members of the Suffolk team and many other friends as well as by David and their daughter Jane.

Norma Chapman