

OBITUARY

Dr Annette Rawson OBE

Annette Rawson died at home on December 22, 2010 after many months of deteriorating health. She had arranged for a Humanist funeral service and requested it be without music out of respect for her deafness. This took place at Hendon Cemetery on Monday, 10th January 2011.

Rosalind Josephs was able to attend and represent lipspeakers, much to the delight of Annette's family and friends.

Lipspeakers may remember Dr Rawson as their examiner at the higher level exams as she was the senior examiner of Lipspeaking for many years and instrumental in the last phase of development of both the curriculum and examination procedure before lipspeaking passed over to CACDP. She remained an examiner of lipspeakers on assignment, into the 1990's.

Annette came from a long line of medics and followed both her parents into the profession. She was the first woman to be appointed a consultant at a time when only 10% of women were accepted at medical school. Sadly, illness prevented her from taking up this appointment. After her illness in 1962 (Cogan syndrome) she became a civil servant, working at the Department of Health and Social Security, later to become The Department of Health, until her retirement. Her report, published in 1973, for the Department of Health and Social Security, in the series Reports on Health and Social Subjects, No 4: Deafness: Report of a Departmental Enquiry into the Promotion of Research was afterwards held to be a model for all such reports. For anyone working with deaf/deafened and hard of hearing people it makes as interesting reading now as it did when first published.

Annette's job as a Senior Medical Officer at the Department of Health required her to attend and participate in very many meetings, conferences and visits around the UK. She used the services of her first lipspeaker, Brenda Sutcliffe, for many of these but a more formal structure of support became necessary and in 1987 Lynne Dubin began to be employed for regular monthly meetings and conferences. The Department sent Dr Rawson's secretary, Rosemary Ashcroft, to train at the first level and she was able to cover telephone calls and many small 'in house' meetings.

After her official retirement Annette went back to the Department of Health on a part time basis for two and half days a week and a Level 3 lipspeaker was employed full time to cover those days. This was the first 'official' lipspeaker post created within government and meant that Annette had full access and was able to undertake work anywhere in the country as well as attending all meetings, conferences, seminars etc. It was a very useful and important tool for the recognition and development of lipspeaking as a profession.

When Annette recovered from the illness that left her profoundly deaf she not only wore two hearing aids but took herself off to the City Lit to learn to lipread. She was an analytic lipreader and worked very hard to achieve an

impressive level of accuracy. She maintained this by not only attending group classes after work but also by individual one to one lipreading sessions with Phyl Morton at the City Lit and with extra sessions with a lipreading teacher at home. By the time she lost the last of her hearing she was also maintaining her speech clarity through regular speech therapy sessions at home. In some settings Annette had difficulty in controlling the volume of her speech and it was together with her lipspeaker that they devised a gesture for lowering the volume of speech that is still used by lipspeakers today.

The visual arts, nature and travel were sources of continued pleasure throughout her life. She was very successful in the ballot for tickets for Wimbledon for the Lawn Tennis Championships and loved to visit the ballet. A visit to exhibitions and supporting lectures always offered new challenges for her lipspeakers, and for her friends who regularly accompanied her. She was a member of her local National Trust group and enjoyed their programme of events in her region, which she often enjoyed with her friend and lipspeaker Joyce Phillips.

She drove for many years and visited friends for weekends away from London. When meeting people for the first time she put them at their ease and encouraged them to talk to her, very tactfully encouraging them to use clear communication and never afraid to compliment or point out further areas for improvement!

She was an enormous support to Glenda Bateman and her first ALS Committee, offering advice and encouragement as well as attending all the early workshops and conferences. She will be sadly missed.

Lynne Dubin