

Mary Wardrop by her daughter Alison Davies

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Tributes have been paid to the former headteacher of **Southborough** Junior School, Mary Alison Wardrop, who died peacefully on November 4, 2021, aged 84.

Mary was born in Catford, South London in 1937, grew up in **Sevenoaks**, and attended Walthamstow Hall School and then completed teacher training at Bishop Otter College in Chichester. She lived in Hawkenbury for 43 years, before moving to be closer to her daughter's home.

During her career as a primary school teacher, she worked in Downham, Plaxtol and as a deputy head teacher in East Farleigh and finally served Southborough Junior School as headteacher for 15 years. She was a dedicated and diligent headteacher at school level, a Primary Advisory Head for Kent County Council and involved internationally in Delta Kappa Gamma, a Key Women Educators' organisation speaking in the USA, Sweden, The Netherlands and Iceland on Primary Education and Citizenship.

Mary was married to Nick and they celebrated their ruby wedding anniversary in 2000. Nick and Mary were active in promoting their community within Tunbridge Wells, contributing to the founding of the Hawkenbury Village Association. They produced a newsletter, encouraged the council to provide dog waste bins in the recreation ground and improving the children's play area with more diverse equipment.

They campaigned for appropriate planning for a local school encouraging town planners to consider the wider impact on the neighbourhood.

Nick helped to produce the Neighbourhood Watch newsletter until his unexpected death in 2004. Mary continued to deliver it locally until she was no longer able to, through reduced mobility

Mary was invited to serve on the Sherborne Close Housing Association committee, as member and then as chair, which she faithfully did for around ten years, taking a keen interest in the residents' welfare, attending many events and activities.

She was a member of Christ Church Southborough and served in various ways until, through ill health, she could no longer drive. Mary then attended Hawkenbury URC where she had many friends from Sherborne.

Mary was nominated to attend a Buckingham Palace tea party with the Queen in May 2019, for her commitment and service to her community. She was privileged to attend the last tea party to be held, to date, prior to the Covid pandemic and had to attend in a wheelchair having broken her hip four weeks previously.

Richard Akehurst, chairman of the Sherborne Close management committee, said: "I am sure I speak for all past and present committee members, staff, contractors and residents to say how thankful we all are for her leadership and many hours of service to the committee and the Close. For this we say a heartfelt thank-you."

Kate, scheme manager for the Sherborne Close Housing Association, said: "She will always be lovingly remembered and missed."

Chris Vellenoweth, a family friend of over 60 years, said, "A reflection on Mary's life - one that was truly devoted to her family and service in the community. Someone who gave more than she received."

Mary Wardrop leaves a daughter Alison, a son David who lives in Oregon, USA, four grandchildren and two great grandchildren.