

Avril Critchley (from p.1)

by animals and nature - this stamped my life. My first pond was a trough.

I went to local schools and Sunday School and played in Norfolk Park. We moved to Nether Edge when I was eleven. I had a second-hand bike for my birthday, otherwise we played with a skipping rope. The neighbours made me a concrete pond for my birthday but the fish died. My first dog was a stray, then a rescue but it had to go back as it chased buses! We always went to the market. One day my sister came back with a puppy with Mum's permission. Bess was our first dog and I've still got a dog to this day. I went to Grange (Hurlfield) Grammar School. I studied most forms of natural history and took Biology 'A' level. I won a flower contest and could name over 380 wild flowers. I wanted to be a vet but I wasn't good enough so I followed in my parents' footsteps and went to Matlock and became a teacher - Infants, then Special Needs, for 37 years.

I continued to attend Victoria Methodists, was in the Guides, then ran the Sunday School for many years. I took the Guides for over twenty years but a hospital operation meant I had to give up. I later asked to become either Division Commissioner or become Camp Advisor. I chose Camping which extended into Outdoor Activity Advisor. Great! I loved meeting other Guides from North East England. I'm still a member of the Guide Association as a Trefoil Guild member.

I became a member of the Sorby Natural History Society when I was still at school and I'm still a member. I attended Flatford Mill Field Study Centre when still at school then went to Monks' House Bird Observatory in Northumberland and with Dr Eric Ennion's help became a bird ringer. With Sheffield City Council I looked after over 100 nest boxes in Ecclesall Woods but gave up when my eyesight deteriorated.

I married my first husband John in 1960 who made a pond for me. I lost him to cancer after 13 years.

I met my second husband George in 1974. He was a warden for the RSPB. We had a wonderful time on North Uist (Outer Hebrides) at the Balranald RSPB Reserve. Camping on North Uist was too windy so I bought a VW Caravette and we went all over Scotland in it.

After retiring in 1984 I joined The Friends of the Botanical Gardens and was on the Committee as Deputy Chair. I organised the lecture programme for around twenty years. I was on the Totley Residents Association Committee for 10 years and was Chair, retiring when I lost my dear George. Since then I have enjoyed being a member of the Totley History Group and The Friends of Gillfield Wood. My rescue

Cocker Halle, loved by all, is a joy and cheers me up when I'm alone.

My life has been active and fun, surrounded by my beloved nature, especially trees. The natural world keeps me sane in a world which has become frightening.

Finally a big thank you to all my many Totley friends, medical staff and relatives who have been so wonderful to the end. Be happy. I have had a wonderful life."

Avril Critchley

Feisty. Formidable when on a mission, caring when it came to nature and Totley, a bit of a nosy parker always looking around and if she saw something amiss she was on the tail of Sheffield Council and particularly local councillors. She was like a dog with a bone and would see things through to the end. Councillors must have thought, "Oh no, it's Mrs Critchley again."



I served with Avril on the committee of TRA. We've stood with her to save the old oak tree at the entrance to the park and also in deep snow on Baslow Road protesting about the lights up near Broad Carr. On the other hand I used to go to Chairobics with her and she was a bit of a giggler as me and her could not do certain moves. Although I did not agree with her all the time, there is no doubt that she cared deeply about our local community and will be greatly missed. RIP Avril.

Ann Lee

She was certainly a force to be reckoned with.

I have known her from our Grammar School days, seventy years ago. Throughout all this time she loved the outdoors: plants, streams, ponds, bogs, small and larger creatures, animals and birds. And I guess for most of her life she had these with, or near to her.

She was always to the point: articulate, outspoken and unafraid to speak up at meetings on topics concerning all of us, such as speeding traffic on Baslow Road, the future of the library, the Totley Residents' Association of which she was once Chair, public footpaths, rubbish tipping and Gillfield Wood.

Avril and I were both in education so teaching was what we both often conversed about and her special interest in less able children was very obvious.

You will never be forgotten Avril, but remembered for all you did and meant to us. Thank you and may God bless you.

Judith Norris