

Obituary

Hilary Shuard, born November 14, 1928; died December 24, 1992.

A prime mover in the way that mathematics is taught in schools, Hilary Shuard died suddenly at the age of 64 just before Christmas 1992. As part of the writing team for the Mathematics National Curriculum, she was labelled as “progressive” by Duncan Graham, the first Chairman and Chief Executive of the National Curriculum Council. Whatever pictures “right-wing” thinkers would like us to have of progressive educationalists, Hilary Shuard did not fit any of them. She did, however, believe that we have to take note of the present and look to the future in order to build on the past rather to enshrine ourselves in the mythical past of recollection.

She held degrees in mathematics from both Oxford and Cambridge Universities gaining “Blues” in both hockey and cricket at the latter. She maintained her interest in both sports, having a flat which overlooked Fenner’s Cricket Ground in Cambridge and being the President of the Cambridgeshire Women’s Hockey Association from 1979 to 1989. She started her teaching career in 1953 at Christ’s Hospital School, Hertford before moving to Homerton College, Cambridge in 1959 where she was almost entirely concerned with the education of teachers. She retired from Homerton in 1986 as Deputy Principal, a post that she had held for twenty years. Her work was recognised by the award of a CBE in 1987.

Hilary Shuard never joined anything and stayed in the background. In many ways her life was her work, and she brought an enthusiasm and drive, as well as a formidable intellect, to everything that she was involved with. These qualities brought her invitations to join working parties and committees. Many of these were part of the work of the Mathematical Association of which she was President in 1985–86. Hilary’s involvement with the MA was spread over many years. She was an examiner for the original Diploma in Mathematics and was instrumental in the establishment of the Diploma in Mathematics Education. She worked on the second MA report on mathematics in primary schools and lately sat on the Finance and General Purposes Committee as Chair of the Primary Education Initiatives Committee.

Outside the MA, the most notable committee that she was a member of was the Government’s inquiry into the teaching of mathematics in schools. The outcome of this committee’s work, the Cockcroft Report, published in 1982, had a major effect on the curriculum. For Shuard, there was a realisation that the new technology that was becoming available, especially cheap calculators, could have a profound effect on the way that children learn mathematics. From 1985 to 1989 she was the

Director of the Primary Initiatives in Mathematics Education (PrIME) Project instigated by the School Curriculum Development Committee and taken on by the National Curriculum Council. Whilst the Project was addressing many aspects of the teaching and learning of mathematics in primary schools, a major component, the Calculator Aware Number (CAN) Curriculum gave children from the age of six the opportunity to have access to a calculator.

For Shuard this was not an attempt to replace thinking with a machine; on the contrary she saw the calculator increasing mathematical thinking as part of a balance between mental calculation, pencil and paper and the calculator.

She emphasised this in her Presidential Address to the Mathematical Association in 1986: "Some teachers will say "Surely they must still learn their tables": we must answer "Yes" to that – the number bonds for addition and multiplication are the foundation of the mental calculation which becomes more important rather than less in this technological age." Her work in this area is recognised not only in the UK but also internationally as was evidenced by the reception that her work received at the International Congress on Mathematics Education held in Quebec in August 1992.

Her writing was extensive and covered all age ranges but she will have a special place for very many primary teachers. The book written with Elizabeth Williams, *Primary Mathematics Today* was first published in 1970 and, with numerous updated editions undertaken by Shuard following the death of Elizabeth Williams, has remained on the reading lists of many teacher education courses. Not only her writing but the talks that Shuard gave have provided for many. An inspirational speaker who was in great demand, she would present her case concisely with the clear intention of getting people thinking.

Shuard's determination to provoke debate on the issues that she held dear was matched by her determination in life. In 1987 she suffered a serious head injury when a "cat's eye" came through the windscreen of her car. This was not just the rubber inset, but also the full metal casing. Her recovery had much to do with her insistence that she was not ill.

She will be greatly missed not only for her enthusiasm and commitment but also her laugh which punctuated all discussion and her ready greeting which was offered to all – and not forgetting her never empty sherry bottle.

JEFFREY GOODWIN