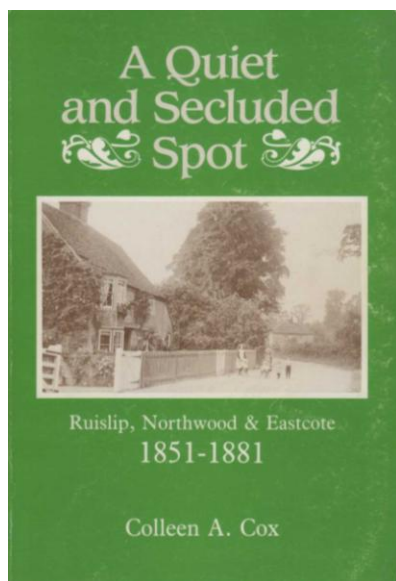


Obituary ~ Colleen Cox (1931-2016)

by Karen Spink

Colleen Cox, who died on the 8 March this year, within three weeks of her 85th birthday, was an active member of the RNELHS for many years. A serving committee member, she was at one time joint editor with Eileen Bowlt of this Journal and from 1998-2001 chairman of the Society. Her 1991 book, *A Quiet and Secluded Spot, Ruislip, Northwood & Eastcote, 1851-1881* remains one of the Society's most important publications and is still in print.



Colleen was born in Nottingham in 1931. Her father, Robert Green, was a caretaker of labourers' hostels during the 1930s and 1940s, which resulted in the family moving to different areas around England. Despite the frequent disruptions to her education, however, Colleen's ambition and determination to become a doctor, still quite unusual for a woman at this time, never faltered. She gained a place at Sheffield Medical School, graduating in 1956. This was followed by a period as a research assistant into tetanus which led to her getting an MD in Medicine.

In 1957 she married Alan Cox, whom she met at university. They continued to live in Sheffield until 1963, and, after a couple of years in Glasgow, moved to Ruislip with their young children, Robert and Caroline. Following the break-up of her

marriage a few years later, Colleen resumed her medical career in Hounslow. She worked firstly in family planning before embarking on a groundbreaking 5-year project on the development of children born in Hounslow, writing several articles about this for the *British Medical Journal* and *The Lancet*. She subsequently became a community paediatrician, working with children with special needs, and held the role of consultant community paediatrician by the time of her retirement in 1996.

As a single working mother, though supported by her widowed mother who lived with her, it was not until her children were older that Colleen was able to pursue her growing interest in local history by joining the RNELHS. One of her key interests was local families, into which she did extensive research via the census returns for the Parish of Ruislip; all done in the years before easy access to information on the internet. It entailed many trips to record offices and endless annotation that in time would be the basis for *A Quiet and Secluded Spot*.

Throughout the 1990s, Colleen led the Society's Research Group on its many projects, and assisted with the publication of *Highways and Byways, 10 Walks around Historic Ruislip, Northwood & Eastcote*. She helped with displays and conferences, gave talks, led local walks and wrote articles. I have many happy memories of our working together: visits to record offices and local archives and then sitting at Colleen's dining-room table, her dog asleep at our feet, making sense of our researches.

In 2004, Colleen was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease and moved to Southampton to be near her daughter, Caroline. Though now turning her local history interest to her new location, she still maintained an interest in the area she had left behind and, until the end of her life, enjoyed hearing about Ruislip, Northwood and Eastcote where, along with her considerable involvement in our Society, she had enjoyed many lasting friendships.