

Ann Pulleyn

Colleagues will be sorry to learn of the death, on 21 June 2020, of Mrs Ann Pulleyn, former Head of Central Records. The following tribute has been contributed by her son, Simon.

Ann was born in Haxby, near York, in 1939. At the close of the Second World War, her father became a member of the Control Commission for Germany. The family moved to that country and Ann went to British Forces Education Services schools and was brought up speaking fluent German. Her first job was in the Commercial Section of the British Consulate at Düsseldorf. She also taught English at the Berlitz Language School in Düsseldorf where one of her tasks was to help pilots in the German Air Force get up to a standard where they could work with their English-speaking colleagues.

The family moved back to England in 1964. In October 1966 Ann was appointed to a post in Department of Filing and Archives, part of Leeds University Registry. She rose to become Head of Department and remained in that role until her retirement in 1999. Overall, she served the University for thirty-three years.

She had a natural talent for administration – an orderly mind and a good memory coupled with a practical understanding of the developing technologies of her day such as microfilm, microfiche, and computer-assisted image retrieval. Aware that microfilm was acutely vulnerable not only to fire but also to drying out and gradual image degradation, she travelled all over the country to assess and acquire solutions for the University.

The department that she headed was large. She began with an office plus two archival rooms on Level 6 of the EC Stoner Building. As needs expanded, the number of staff grew and a further office was added on Level 11. Staff filed and retrieved paper files but also preserved older documents by the laborious expedient of feeding every sheet individually into a camera. The microfilm then went off to be developed and was returned either as a spool of film or a sheet of microfiche.

The conditions in which she worked seem scarcely imaginable today when computer databases and scanning are taken for granted. She had a hard-headed sense born from experience that it is unwise to throw data away. She knew that questions got asked long after events had faded from individual memory and it is prudent to have an antidote to that. It is a cruel irony that her final years should have been marred by a dementia that did away with so much of her own recollection.

Ann was essentially a private person. She was of an age and background where she expected all but those closest to her to call her Mrs Pulleyn. This could give the superficial impression of a certain *grande dame* detachment. But those who knew her well knew better. She spoke with affection and sometimes concern of many of her colleagues and knew a surprising amount about their lives and worries in a way that showed that she was a good listener. Since her death, two people in particular from her old department have said, quite independently of each other, that Ann had gone out of her way to help them in their jobs, sometimes when it was not in her own best interest to do so.

After retirement, she moved back to York. She spent happy years there with her husband Tony, whom she had met on holiday in Spain in 1966 and married in 1967. He died in 2013 after a long illness. Ann's own health began to deteriorate and she was diagnosed with Lewy Body Dementia. She went into residential care at Connaught Court in Fulford in York and died there of the sequelae of her dementia during the first lockdown of 2020.

Few who read this notice are likely to have known Ann well or for long. If one expression is to stand as her epitaph, let it be the recollection of a former colleague who said, "She was like that: she helped you if she could."