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OBITUARY: EDITH LENTON **Vice President of The George Eliot Fellowship**

Edith Lenton, who has died at the age of 81, was a Vice President of the Fellowship, a former treasurer and a very active and loyal member for nearly thirty years. Born in Nuneaton, the only child of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Starkey, she had an early contact with George Eliot the novelist as she took part as a child in the centenary celebrations in 1919 of Nuneaton's famous daughter. These celebrations were organised by Nuneaton Borough Council and the principal participants were the schoolchildren of the town who gave their performances, consisting of dancing, singing, tableaux vivant and sketches, in the grounds of Arbury Hall.

Educated at Vicarage Street Church of England School and Nuneaton High School for Girls, Edith chose a teaching career. She attended St. Catherine's Teacher Training College in London (which later became All Saints) and specialised in English Literature. It gave her particular pleasure, later in life, to meet Dr. Graham Handley, another Vice President of the Fellowship, who was a lecturer at All Saints. She established a particular rapport with him and was an enthusiastic member of the Fellowship Study Group which he led in Nuneaton. On finishing her training her first teaching post was at Chilvers Coton Church of England School for Girls (George Eliot's 'Shepperton' in *Scenes of Clerical Life*) where doubtless she came under the influence of Miss Florence Towe, the headmistress, who was an avid admirer of George Eliot and very aware of all the local associations with her.

Edith's next appointment was to Park Avenue Council School at Attleborough where she met her future husband who was senior master there. She still pursued her literary interests and was an active member of Nuneaton Literary Society which met to read and discuss poems, novels and plays. Like many societies this was disbanded during the 1939-1945 War and has been defunct ever since. She was also a member of the St. Nicolas Players, an amateur dramatic group attached to Nuneaton ('Milby') Parish Church, who achieved a high level of performance.

When her husband retired from teaching she did so, too, and looked for a society to join which would give her another interest. She joined the George Eliot Fellowship and was elected to the office of treasurer in 1967. In her ten years of office the amount she handled grew from a few pounds each year (the annual subscription was then 8s.6d. (42¹/₂p)) to literally thousands. It was during her term of office that the Westminster Abbey Memorial Stone project was conceived so the accounting for all the funds raised fell to Edith and she did this in her usual quiet and efficient way. As

a thank you for all her hard work in this she was honoured with a Vice Presidency when she retired from office in 1977.

As a Vice President she continued to be very active in the Fellowship and loyally supported all events. Her last appearance at a Fellowship gathering was at the 1990 Wreath-laying in Nuneaton. Sadly she was too ill to attend the Diamond Jubilee of the Fellowship and this was a considerable disappointment to her.

Edith married in 1947 Percy Lenton, also of Nuneaton, who predeceased her.

Hilda Gunn