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## Kathleen Walker

### *An appreciation by Will Harris*

All who met Kathie knew immediately that they had her friendship. And it was a friendship worth having. Who among us could fail to respond to her charm, her good humour, her zest for life? Henry Williamson Society meetings at which Kathie was present seemed to have an extra sparkle. Her enthusiasm, her interest for everything she saw as we travelled in HW country, her eagerness to find out and share what she knew, were infectious. The Society has lost a loyal and devoted member, and we have all lost a good friend.

Throughout her life, Kathleen Walker was full of energy and loved to be active. She was a great organiser, in the best sense. She got the best out of people and situations. She was very much a leader, but always a wonderful companion, understanding and sympathetic. Her strong Quaker faith illuminated her belief in the goodness that can be found in everyone. She did much voluntary work, and she is remembered with affection and admiration by the Croydon branch of the United Nations Association of which she was for many years a hard working and effective secretary. The United Nations was an organisation close to her heart. The unity of people worldwide meant much to her. That was something she shared with Henry, and perhaps that was what drew her towards his books. Or perhaps it was Henry's Norfolk Farm, reminding her of her work on a Suffolk farm with her husband Ronald during the war. Certainly she was drawn particularly to books imbued with a love and understanding of Nature. And I feel sure she perceived Henry as a kindred spirit with his boundless energy and sense of fun.

For thirty years she and Ron were wardens of Croydon Friends Meeting House. Their home was a flat on the premises, a place I visited many times, where I always felt at ease in the surroundings reflecting Kathie's love for order and simple elegance. This is where I first met Phillip Maddison, and I badly miss the conversations the three of us had many times about Henry and his work. Ron has told me that Kathie liked the realism of Henry's writing. During the last stages of her illness, she was reading several of Henry's nature books, including *The Stag* and *The Lone Swallows*, and the book she read before going into hospital for the last time was his *Tales of Moorland and Estuary*. I am grateful to have memories of Ron and Kathie in their new home. And I am inspired by the great courage Kathie showed as she fought her last terrible illness, knowing in the end that her vitality and energy were succumbing. The fight was long and hard, and typical of Kathie's wonderful spirit.