

JOAN WHEELER-BENNETT

Member of Roehampton Club 1967-2025



Joan Wheeler-Bennett was a member of the Roehampton Club for over 57 years. Born in Nova Scotia in 1928, she went to BSS High School in Toronto before her parents moved to Cambridge, Massachusetts when her father Professor Eric Havelock was appointed head of Classics at Harvard. She graduated from Vassar College, and then travelled to London to study at the LSE. It was while working at the then First National City Bank that she met the young English banker and Oxford graduate Rick Wheeler-Bennett, whom she married in 1954.

Joan and her family lived in Barnes for many years; for a period in her early married life she managed the Citizens Advice Bureau in Sheen, and later successfully campaigned and fundraised for a branch of Citizens Advice to be established within the Royal Courts of Justice, where it still operates. She was one of the founders of the Barnes Community Association, and helped secure its tenure of Rose House, which had been threatened with demolition. In the 1960s she co-authored two books on women returning to careers after having children. She became a Justice of the Peace in 1971, was appointed chairman of the first inner London family court, and in 1989 to 1990 she served as the first woman High Sheriff of Greater London. She was created a deputy lieutenant by Lord Bramall in 1991.

Joan has been a devoted member of Roehampton Club since 1967. Her husband Rick Wheeler-Bennett was chairman from 1988 to 1992 and was key in securing its future by

transforming the Club to being members-owned. Innovations under Rick's chairmanship such as the building of an indoor pool, complete with sauna and steam room, and the establishing of a children's crèche, had the benefit of Joan's wise input. She remained passionate about the club and its unique environment, writing to the chairman in 2023 of its 'quality of congeniality...without the pressure of profit which besets commercially owned clubs'; and '...the...lawns, hedges and green spaces which...offer an atmosphere of tranquillity which is difficult to describe'. She referred to her enjoyment of '...the welcoming atmosphere and universally helpful staff. Deserving of particular praise are the skills and devotion of the groundsman who provide an oasis for the membership.'

Latterly she took up croquet and aquarobics, making many close friendships amongst the members. She was still coming for gentle outdoor swims up until autumn last year. She remained grateful that at the end the club generously recognised the loyalty of lifelong members such as her with honorary membership.

In her later life, in between extensive and adventurous travelling, she was a volunteer at the Wetlands Centre, Barnes from when it first opened, helping secure its herd of four cows for them which still graze there happily; and a volunteer at the Pembroke Lodge office at Richmond Park. In the last few years she has had two articles published in the *Oldie* Magazine, and was penning another right up until a few weeks before she died.

Joan Ellen Wheeler-Bennett, born 28/9/28, died 25/8/25; survived by daughters Joanna and Emily and their families; pre-deceased by beloved son Clement, who died in 1986.



The family is planning a thanksgiving service at St Mary's Church, Barnes, at noon on 14th November 2025, at which Joan's Roehampton Club friends would be welcome. For further information please contact Emily Monson, emily.monson11@gmail.com