

AFRICAN STUDIES & RESEARCH

Obituary

Bryan Langlands

Readers of *The Guardian* newspaper (18.1.89) will know already that amongst the casualties of the Kegworth air crash on 8 January 1989 was Professor Bryan Langlands. That obituary, by three former colleagues at the University of Ulster, eloquently paid tribute to Bryan's generosity in friendship symbolized for them by his speedy institutionalization of a convivial end-of-year party for students upon his arrival in Northern Ireland in 1977. In *Makerere Newsletter* 62, Margaret Macpherson too pays tribute to Bryan's 'boisterous sense of humour, his complete lack of side, and his refusal to toe the party line unless he was convinced'. She also remembers his inaugural at Makerere: 'a powerful plea for Geographical flexibility, delivered to a packed Main Hall (the venue a tribute in itself to Bryan - all the other inaugural lectures just about filled the Agricultural Lecture Theatre) on an evening when there was no electricity so that the last part of the lecture was delivered by the light of a torch with no microphonic aid'. It is a powerful and memorable image, as too must be any recollection of Bryan Langlands's overall contribution to the study of Uganda's geography, history and politics.

His geographical contributions must be left to those more knowledgeable to assess. But this much can be said. Born in 1928, and educated at the London School of Economics and Political Science, he taught geography at Makerere from 1954 until 1976. During this period he wrote innumerable papers on the political and population geography of Uganda's many districts, made important contributions to development administration, published an important atlas of disease distribution in Uganda, and edited the *Uganda Journal* with much distinction between 1965 and 1975 though as the 1970s advanced and Idi Amin came to power editorial difficulties multiplied along with all others in Uganda. It was the Amin dictatorship which expelled Bryan Langlands from the country, shortly after he has been appointed to chair a commission of inquiry into violent incidents between soldiers and students at Makerere earlier in 1976, and just as he was about to report upon them; instead, he published an article on 'Students and Politics in Uganda' in *African Affairs* for January 1977 and deposited a longer account of his findings in the archives of the Institute of Commonwealth Studies.

Bryan Langlands continued his bibliographical interests in Uganda after moving to Ulster, and at his death was preparing three volumes of 'retrospective bibliography' based upon the invaluable annual bibliographies he had published earlier in the *Uganda Journal*. It is very much to be hoped that arrangements can still be made for publication of this great work. In the mean-

time, one's memory of Bryan remains one of an eccentric who drove surely one of the most rickety vehicles ever to career around Makerere hill; of a courageous expatriate academic in Africa, confirming innumerable Nairobi graduates in possession of passable degrees as external examiner in geography at the Norfolk Hotel, all the time talking of life and death in Uganda and drinking innumerable cups of tea; and of the continuing friend of a country who wrote in a private letter on 18 September 1986:

'I have just come back from Makerere after three weeks' externally examining ... I found it very difficult to assess the situation. There is a great air of optimism. Generally there is relief that after 15/20 years there is now a great respect of the value of life and human rights. The only dissenting voice I heard was from a staunch UPC supporter who predicted that Obote will be back for a third term at the first election!! Apart from Italians few foreigners are giving aid - US/UK dragging their feet. I got the impression that Museveni was finding it difficult to establish a civil identity and to determine where he stood in terms of economic policy and internal political ideology. Nor is it possible to identify a unifying factor amongst his cabinet. At the same time there seems to be little in the way of political debate going on. Makerere seems to have survived - but is not yet poised for a resurgence. Visits to the Library, Mulago etc leave one rather depressed. Intellectual activity is still at a low ebb. I managed a day touring in the Luwero triangle. Devastated - Devastating.'

A meeting to commemorate the life of Bryan has been arranged for 11 am on Saturday 3 June 1989, in the Coram gallery near International Hall (in the Bloomsbury cluster of buildings at London University).

Michael Twaddle.

School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) - change of address

The School remains physically where it was, but has a new address:

Thornhaugh Street,
Russell Square,
London WC1H 0XG.

Tel: 01 637 2388 Telex: 291829 SOASP Fax: 01 436 3844

Commonwealth Archivists Association (CAA) - change of name

After four years of existence, the CAA has decided to incorporate records managers into membership, and has officially altered its title to: Association of Commonwealth Archivists & Records Managers (ACARM). The Executive

Secrétariat remains based at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, 27-28 Russell Square, London WC1B 5DS (01 589 5876)

The first issue of the newsletter under the new title *ACARM newsletter* was no. 6, November 1988.

Royal Commonwealth Society

WALTER FREWEN LORD PRIZE 1989

Applications are invited for a prize currently worth not less than £300, awarded for an essay of between 15,000 and 40,000 words, on any aspect of British Empire or Commonwealth history or the history of an individual Commonwealth country.

Essays, which must be typed, should be submitted in duplicate, by 30 September 1989 to: The Librarian, Royal Commonwealth Society, 18 Northumberland Avenue, London WC2N 5BJ.

The prize was first awarded in 1930 in memory of Walter Frewen Lord, Professor of Modern History at Durham University and author of several books on Imperial history. Past prize-winners have come from various parts of the Commonwealth and many have gone on to distinguished academic careers. Prize-winners on African topics have included J. Gallagher on 'Maclean of the Gold Coast' (1948), Michael Rich on "'Pushful Joe" and the Jameson Raid' (1957); C.C. Ifemesia 'Early British navigation of the Niger, 1830-54' (1958), B.A. Knox 'Lord Carnarvon, Robert Herbert and the Confederation dispute with the Cape Colony, 1874-76 (1960). (Copies of winning essays are held in the Society's Library).