

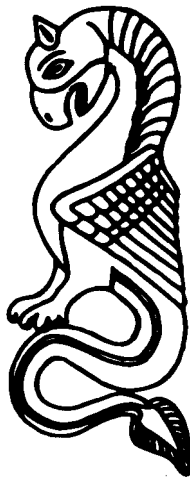
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KENNETH CAMERON AND THE ENGLISH DEPARTMENT AT NOTTINGHAM

Kenneth Cameron arrived in Nottingham in 1950 at the age of 28. He had been a student of Bruce Dickins at Leeds, and had served in the War as an RAF pilot before his first appointment in 1947 as assistant lecturer at Sheffield, where he took his doctorate.

The curriculum of the Department of English at Nottingham had until 1948 been that of the University of London. When Nottingham became independent, the head of the Department, Vivian de Sola Pinto, was determined that its new syllabus should reflect his own views on the function of a liberal education. He set out his policy in an essay published the year after Kenneth's arrival, in which he said:

I decided, therefore, that the first consideration in planning my new school would be the liberation of English studies from the incubus of compulsory Anglo-Saxon with the accompanying apparatus of Germanic philology.¹

This was hardly a warm welcome to the new lecturer!

Though unsympathetic towards language-study, Pinto was in practice not as determinedly hostile as these comments suggest, and he was willing to back his colleagues when they asked for his support. Old English remained, and so did Kenneth, and indeed Nottingham is one of the small number of English departments that still asks all its single-honours students to take an introductory course in Old English.

During the 1950s, Ken shared the teaching of language and medieval literature with Ray Page, who recalls the enormous range the two of them had to cover, as well as the heavy teaching load they had to carry. The students who chose these subjects joined a small and close-knit group, the friendliness of which was maintained equally by Ken and his wife Kath, who supported him in all that he did. Only he can speak for the assistance she gave him in his work on place-names. His colleagues remember her extraordinary warmth and generosity and her lavish Lancastrian hospitality - high teas and currant cake - and were deeply grieved at her death of multiple sclerosis in 1977.

On Pinto's retirement in 1961, James Kinsley took over as Head of Department. Kinsley argued strongly for the unity of English studies:

At Nottingham we have removed the barriers between

medieval and modern literature We take the view that the "modernist" who knows little or nothing about medieval literature at *first hand* is not properly equipped for his own work.²

This was a view which Ken fully shared and to which he was also temperamentally inclined, since he has always been strongly opposed to any kind of division. In 1962 he was promoted to Reader, and the following year he was appointed to the first chair of English Language in the University. He was now in a position to give the study of language and medieval literature the importance in the Department that he felt it deserved.

Under Ken's leadership and with his determined and unwavering support, "English language" (in the extended sense of that term) has flourished at Nottingham. Over the years new teachers have been appointed to the Department, with the result that today Old and Middle English, Icelandic, Modern English Language and the teaching of English to overseas students are all firmly established, and the strength of Linguistic studies led to the development of a separate Department of Linguistics in 1979. At the same time the Department has become fully integrated, so that students whose principal interests lie in one field of study are often attracted to topics from another range of the Department's activities. The variety of subjects covered by the contributions to this collection of essays indicates the general appreciation of the vital part Kenneth has played in establishing a working team.

The stiffest challenge came in 1984 on the sad death of James Kinsley. Ken took over as head of Department pledging "open government", a strategy that accorded well with his frank and spontaneous manner. He has always been firm in support of his colleagues, willing to listen and to give his own views plainly but always with kindness. He was determined that he would leave the Department a united one, with none of the traditional hostility between language and literature. This he has triumphantly achieved.

I have concentrated upon Kenneth Cameron's service to the Department of English, but it would be impossible to ignore his great contribution to the life of the University as a whole. There can be few committees on which he has not sat, few in the administration who do not immediately recognise his robust Lancashire voice. In recent years his most memorable achievements have been as Chairman of the University Staff Club when it built the extension to the bar which will always be known as "Cameron's Folly", and as Chairman of the Disabled Students Committee which has done so much to ensure that Nottingham would be a university that makes real provision for the happiness and comfort of disabled students. It is a lasting memorial to Kath. It is, moreover, entirely fitting that Ken's services to the Department, to the University and to Place-Name Studies should have received national recognition with the award of the CBE in the 1987 New Year's Honours list.

Fortunately, Ken is not really leaving us. The call of duty will summon him to the Place-Names Library which is housed in the

University, so that he will be able to check that we are keeping to the path on which he led us, despite the difficulties that lie ahead. Ken, we wish you a very happy and productive retirement.

Thorlac Turville-Petre

- ¹ V. de S. Pinto, "Notes on the School of English Studies in the University of Nottingham", *Universities Quarterly* 5 (1951) pp.225-31.
- ² J. Kinsley, "English Studies at Nottingham", *The Critical Survey* 1 (1963) pp.118-22.